

## **Lois & Clark Collection**

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## Lois and the Unicorn

Disclaimers: I don't own any recognizable characters from the Lois and Clark TV show. As far as I know, they are owned by DC comics. This was not written for profit. No infringement or plagiarism is intended.

This was inspired by Lois & Clark, the whole Enron/WorldCom thing, and probably a number of fairy tales I read as a child. A very special thanks to Brightfeather for helping me to get past my writer's block in the final scene.

\* \* \* \* \*

Once upon a time, the beautiful Princess Lois was out for a walk. She often snuck outside for little excursions in the forest. Even though she was in her early 20's, she often felt like a child under the royal guards' strict watch. It felt good to be away from the stifling castle. Suddenly the glint of gold caught her eye. Bending down, Lois saw a ring engraved with the initials "C.K." She looked around in case the ring's owner was nearby.

"Hello," she said. "Is anyone here?"

Then she heard a faint whinny like that from a horse. Princess Lois turned around and saw a flash of white among emerald leaves. If her eyes were not mistaken, she could barely discern an equine shape. C.K. must have lost his or her mount and wouldn't be far behind. The horse took a tentative step forward, and a silver horn was visible now. It was most definitely not a horse.

"A unicorn," Lois breathed in awe. She reached out to touch it and make certain that she wasn't dreaming.

As soon as her hand got close, it turned and bolted, sending a flurry of foliage in her direction.

"Ugh," she said, brushing away the leaves and dirt from her hair.

She couldn't believe that she had seen a unicorn! And a live one! The only unicorns in the kingdom were long-dead. Only brave adventurers and merchants who traveled the long, winding roads between the kingdoms of Metropolis and Gotham had found their bones. Well, she would have to return the ring to its rightful owner. There was no question about that. Lois turned around and headed back to the castle, determined to discover the identity of C.K.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tempus leaned back and tried his best to appear good-natured as the next peasant in line made his petition to the king. It was something about paving the roads, or at least making it safer. To be honest, he was completely bored and had been for some time. King Sam was intelligent -- he'd have gotten rid of the man long ago otherwise, but the king insisted on hearing ideas from the people for at least one hour a week.

These peasants were so shortsighted. All they could think of was the immediate present and how it affected them and not the kingdom's coffers, which Tempus kept an eye on personally. Every once in a while he snuck a few coins out from under the king's nose, but King Sam was too occupied with running the kingdom to notice, which Tempus also made sure of.

His thoughts drifted back to last week, when one peasant had made the suggestion of letting the people know exactly how much money the kingdom had. Why, the nerve! It was all that Tempus could do to restrain himself from advising the king to chop off the young man's head for his insolence. Instead, he'd suggested giving the young man a much milder punishment: a transformation curse, and the king had agreed. Sam responded well to hypnotic suggestions.

\*\*\*\*\* Flashback \*\*\*\*\*

Clark nervously stood as his mother straightened his tunic. "You look wonderful, dear."

"I'm proud of you, son," Jonathan added. "Meeting the King, that's not something everyone gets to do."

"Mr. Kent?" The guard opened the door to the throne room. "The King will see you now."

Jonathon and Martha Kent waited as Clark strode confidently into the throne room. There were so many people, and all of them dressed much better than he was, being a peasant. But Clark wasn't nervous. He'd rehearsed his speech several times, and his parents agreed that the idea of distributing some sort of statement to the public about how their taxes were being spent was good. Not everyone would be able to read it, but the statement could be posted in libraries and other public places around the kingdom, where those who could read it might explain it to those who couldn't.

The roads were in disarray, and most of the time the king's soldiers could be seen frequenting taverns. Meanwhile, the king and his advisors, including the wizard Tempus, were getting wealthier while the people were getting quite poor. It was obvious to Clark and his family where the taxes were going, but no one else seemed to notice.

"Your Majesty," Clark began, "on my way here, my parents and I passed a tavern called the Metropolis Inn. We saw several soldiers outside who could barely stand up because they'd had too much ale. Not only that, but you'd be amazed by the number of potholes in the main road. If the kingdom's money is not being spent to improve the roads and having soldiers patrol them so we can be safe, where is it being spent? It is time to let the people of Metropolis know where our taxes are going."

"And how do you propose I do this?" King Sam inquired.

"I propose a statement, perhaps done every few months, that shows what our taxes are being spent on. It could be put up in libraries, churches...wherever people gather."

"What do you think, Wizard Tempus?"

"It's galactically stupid, your Majesty! What are we supposed to do, teach every peasant how to do accounting? Most of them can barely count to 100. Heck, most of them can't even read."

"Why not? When I was a child, everyone had to go to school."

"Yes, but we abandoned that policy because the peasants need their children to be working on their farms, remember? I think we need to show this peasant the error of his ways," Tempus said.

He fingered the magical green stone around his neck that he'd had for years. It had odd effects on different people, but it also gave him the power to control the king's mind...unbeknownst to anyone else.

"Perhaps we ought to transform him into something else for a while. Then, when he comes back and apologizes for his impertinence, we'll cancel the spell."

"Sounds like a good idea," King Sam said, though his voice was different somehow.

Clark couldn't put his finger on it, but something was odd about the green amulet Tempus wore and the way the king was acting. This was the first time he'd met the king, but King Sam didn't sound normal. There was also a strange gleam in the wizard's eyes. Nobody else seemed to notice.

Tempus chanted something. Immediately the air around Clark began to shimmer. A few moments later, there stood not a peasant but a unicorn. It reared. Tempus ducked to avoid its hooves and shouted, "Guards!"

Then two guards got the unicorn under control and escorted it out of the palace, along with Clark's parents, as Tempus snickered.

Coming out of his daze, King Sam inquired, "What was that?"

"Er...nothing, Your Majesty. Just an impertinent peasant who had nothing better to do than to insult you. Remember?"

King Sam blinked. "Right. He was punished, wasn't he?"

"Of course, Your Majesty. Now, shall we get down to business? What's next on the agenda?"

The king held up his scroll. "A meeting with a group of women who want equal rights to vote..."

"Vote? This is a Monarchy." Tempus laughed. "Cancel that, Your Highness."

"Then we have a peasant who was caught stealing an apple from the marketplace."

"Really? This should be entertaining. Bring him in."

The guards escorted a young scruffy-looking man and forced him to bow before the king.

"What's your name, son?" King Sam asked.

"James Olsen. They call me Jimmy."

"Why'd you do it?" Tempus asked.

"I didn't do anything! I was framed!"

"Riiiiight. I'm the Royal Wizard, and I can tell if you're lying, young man."

"But I didn't do it. Honest! I was in the marketplace looking for some potatoes to take home, and suddenly a guard stopped me. He put an apple in my pocket and said that he was really bored and needed something to do, so he arrested me for stealing."

The king turned to Tempus. "Is it possible that he's telling the truth?"

"No way. I advise throwing him in the dungeon, Your Highness." Tempus brushed one of his fingers against the amulet while he pretended to stroke his beard.

"Fine," King Sam said, getting glassy-eyed. "In the dungeon it is."

Jimmy was hauled off as the wizard sneered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Footsteps approaching brought Tempus out of his reverie. It was Princess Lois, looking more beautiful than ever. But her clothes were slightly rumpled. As she curtsied, Tempus reached down and pulled a leaf out of her hair. "You've been outside against the rules again, I see."

Lois nodded, feeling furious with herself for not checking in the mirror first. Now she was more than likely going to have an extra contingent of guards following her around and breathing down her neck. She envied the peasants' freedom and wished, for not the first time, that she could have an adventure. "I found this. Perhaps you can find out who the owner is for me by casting a spell or something." She handed the ring to him.

"C.K.? That looks intriguing. Unfortunately, I don't have the time."

Disappointed, Lois turned away after taking the ring back from him. She would just have to find out who its owner was the hard way.

\* \* \* \* \*

Clark and his parents, meanwhile, were doing everything they could to adapt to the strange situation. The curse Tempus had put on him only lasted for a few hours at a time, but it had a habit of happening whenever Clark least wanted it to, like in the forest earlier. He was sure that he had heard the voice of a young woman, and was about to reply, but then he'd changed. Luckily, she hadn't seen him. However, he'd dropped his ring, a gold ring with the initials of C.K. He needed to go back and look for it.

The ring was very special, for it had been given to him by his birth parents to wear when he was old enough. His adoptive parents had taken it to a jeweler and had his initials engraved into it. On his 18th birthday, it had fit perfectly, and he'd worn it ever since. Clark had never met his birth parents. He'd been adopted by the Kents as a baby. While he loved them very much, he wondered sometimes who his real parents were and where they were from.

Meanwhile, Tempus had apparently proceeded to win over the royal court and most of the peasants with his smooth talk. After meeting him, Clark was convinced that the green amulet had something to do with his powers. If only he could get it from Tempus! But with the curse, he had no chance of sneaking into the palace undetected, for he might transform into the unicorn at any time. If he met someone inside the palace who could help him, then he might stand a chance.

Clark finished up his chores and went into the house, where his mother was cooking. The wonderful smells of beef, barley, carrots, and potatoes wafted through the air. "Hi, Mom," he said. "That smells good."

"Thank you, Dear."

"Except I can't stay for dinner."

"Why not?"

"I need to go back and look for my ring. I dropped it in the forest earlier when I changed into the unicorn."

"Be careful," Martha said.

"I'm always careful, Mom. See you later."

\* \* \* \* \*

Princess Lois had asked all of the servants and guards she could find, and none of them knew anyone with the initials C.K. She was about to give up when she nearly ran into her father in one of the corridors, who was walking as if he were in some sort of daze.

"Dad? Are you okay?"

"Yes, Dear. I'm fine."

Peering into his glassy eyes, she said, "You don't look all right. What's the last thing you remember?"

"Tempus...I remember Tempus's voice. Why?"

"That's it?" Lois was beginning to worry. What did the Royal Wizard have to do with her father's strange condition? "What did he say?"

King Sam closed his eyes. "I don't remember, but I recall hearing his voice."

"All right, Dad." She escorted him into one of the many empty bedrooms reserved for guests. "Lie down. I'll find a physician."

"Tempus will know what to do."

"No," she replied. "Not him. Promise me you won't speak to him until we find out what's wrong with you, Daddy. Please?"

"Okay," he answered. His eyelids soon became too heavy to keep open and he fell asleep.

Lois turned around. The nearest physician was in one of the villages, which meant going through the forest. After changing clothes into riding breeches and a tunic, she set out for the stables. She wasn't going to walk all that way.

\* \* \* \* \*

Clark had been searching for his ring for hours, but with no luck. Speckles of red light could be seen between dark green leaves as the sun slowly set. He knew that he should head for home before it got too dark. Many creatures were said to lurk in the forest at night, like evil spirits and mischievous gnomes. Wild animals such as wolves also roamed at night, and they were more likely to be dangerous...perhaps not as dangerous to a human, but if Clark inadvertently turned into the unicorn, they would surely prey on him.

Meanwhile, Princess Lois was in the forest. She rode a chestnut mare which she had named Lucy, for no apparent reason other than it had seemed appropriate. Determined to find a physician for her father, Lois set out on the path that led to the village. However, she chanced to see a young man on the same path, looking as though he'd lost something or someone dear to him. Ordinarily, it would have been beneath a princess such as herself to speak to a peasant, but something stirred Lois's heart.

"Excuse me, Sir. Are you all right?" she heard herself ask.

Clark looked up. He recognized the princess, of course. It was just that he couldn't believe she was talking to him. "Yes, your Highness. Thanks for asking. I lost something very precious, that's all. I thought I might have found it here, but I've looked everywhere."

Lois's eyes widened. "It wasn't a ring, was it?"

"Yes! It's gold and has the letters C.K. on it."

Lois climbed off the horse and showed him the ring she'd found. "Is this it?"

"Yes. Thank you, your Highness."

"I found it earlier today."

Clark accepted the ring back and put it on his finger. "Forgive me if I seem rude, but what are you doing in the forest alone? It is a dangerous place, your Highness."

"I was on my way to the village to find a physician for my father. He is acting very strangely."

Thinking of his encounter with Tempus, Clark asked, "What do you mean?"

"He doesn't remember anything that happened today. The last thing he remembers is hearing the Royal Wizard's voice. Please don't tell anyone. If word should get out that the king is ill..."

"I won't," he promised. "But you must hear my story, as strange as it will sound."

"All right. I'm listening."

He told her all about his meeting with the king, including the part about Tempus putting a curse on him. He finished, "It has something to do with that green amulet the wizard wears. I'm sure of it!"

"We have to get it away from him somehow," she agreed. "But how?"

"Let's find the physician first," he said.

Suddenly an amazing thing happened. As the last rays of the sun vanished, the air around Clark shimmered and rippled. When the air returned to normal, there stood not a peasant but a unicorn. Lois gasped.

"Clark!"

The unicorn whinnied in response.

"Great. Now what?"

In reply, the unicorn turned toward the direction of the village.

Lois sighed. "All right. You lead the way."

\* \* \* \* \*

Physician Herb Wells was writing his latest medical reference guide when he heard a knock on his door. "Come in," he said.

"Dr. Wells, I presume?" Lois asked, stepping over the threshold.

He gasped. "Princess Lois? I trust that everything is all right, your Highness."

"Actually, it isn't. But you must promise to keep this a secret."

"Certainly, milady."

"My father has taken ill, and I think the Royal Wizard Tempus has something to do with it."

As she spoke, the unicorn poked his head through the doorway.

"Good heavens," Herb exclaimed. "A unicorn must have followed you, my dear."

"He was cursed by Tempus," she replied. "He's not a unicorn, but a peasant named Clark."

"Surely not Clark Kent?"

The unicorn whinnied in response.

"When he was only six, young Clark broke his arm while climbing a tree to rescue a cat. His parents entrusted me with his care. He was a brave lad. Tempus I know all too well. He was once a student of mine. I finally had to let him go because he refused to follow the physician's ways. He cared more about gaining knowledge and power than about helping others. I suppose he has finally found the position which he sought for so long. Who knows what other trouble he's caused?"

"Yes. I need you to come and look at my father," Princess Lois said. "I don't know exactly what Tempus has done to him."

"What are his symptoms?"

"He doesn't remember very much. He barely recognized me this afternoon."

"Ah, amnesia. He needs time to recover. There's not much I can do, I'm afraid," he said.

"But there's more," she replied. "All he can remember is Tempus's voice, and his eyes look very strange." Then Princess Lois related Clark's tale.

Herb grew pale. "Oh, dear." Quickly, he began to gather supplies. "Time is of the essence if we are to break Tempus's spells. Please go into my bedroom and get my bag."

Lois resented being told what to do like a common servant, but it was necessary to help her father, so she did it. As she was in the physician's bedroom, Clark changed back into his normal self, which didn't phase Herb.

"Clark, I need a book that's on the top shelf of my bookcase. It's bound with purple leather. You can't miss it."

He grabbed a chair and perused the books on the shelf. They had titles like Ancient Herbal Remedies, Twenty-One Different Uses For Hemlock, Herbal Gardening, and How to Break Evil Curses. The final book was the one Clark needed. As he stepped down, Princess Lois returned with a bag.

"Thank you," the physician said, and put everything he needed into the bag. Then he reached for a walking staff. Lois couldn't help but notice that it appeared unusually sturdy and had some sort of red crystal embedded near the top, which reminded her a bit of the amulet Tempus wore. "Let's go."

"Wait," Lois said.

"My dear, we have no time to waste."

"Why is there a red crystal in your staff? Is it magical?"

"I don't believe so. I've certainly never seen it do anything, and I've had it since I was a young man. My teacher gave it to me as a gift after I left the university of Metropolis, which sadly no longer remains in use, thanks to Tempus's meddling with your father. We really should be going."

They left the village. By this time it was night. Stars were sprinkled across the sky like crumbs on a dark tablecloth. The full moon shone overhead. As they walked down the path leading into the dark forest, Clark's ring glinted as a moonbeam touched it. The light happened to reflect and hit the physician's staff. Its crystal glowed.

"Look," Princess Lois exclaimed. "Your staff must be magical."

Herb glanced at it. "I've never seen it do that before. Perhaps you're right. My instructor, Catherine Grant, said that it might prove useful in times of need, but I really thought she meant for more practical uses. I've been using it as a walking staff for years."

"Maybe it'll come in handy when we deal with Tempus," Clark said. "Let's keep going."

They continued down the dark, winding path until they reached the castle. King Sam was asleep now. He lay nearly comatose on the bed.

"Watch the door to make sure no one interrupts us," Herb said. "I need total concentration."

"Of course," Clark answered.

As the physician took the purple leather-bound book and herbal potions from his bag, Princess Lois watched the corridor. She couldn't help but notice how well-defined Clark's muscles were. Of course, he'd probably gotten them from working in the field every day since he'd been a boy. She also could not ignore the effect his slightly wavy black hair and his twinkling brown eyes had on her. Then she gave herself a mental kick in the head. What was she thinking? He was a peasant and she was a princess. It was her duty to marry someone royal -- most likely the king of Gotham, Bruce Wayne, or his son, Prince Richard.

"Are you all right, your Highness?" Clark asked.

"Yes," she snapped.

"Sorry if I sounded rude, but your father's illness and the news about the Royal Wizard's treachery must be an awful lot to take in one day."

"We are fine. Do not presume to know how we feel, farm boy." She replied, deliberately using the royal 'we' to distance herself. She had never cared much for it before, but apparently it did have its uses.

"Please keep it down, you two," Herb whispered.

Clark sighed and continued his vigilant watch. But it was definitely hard to ignore the beautiful Princess Lois, whose passionate anger only enhanced her beauty. Her luxurious brown hair cascaded in waves down her shoulders, the curves of which... quickly, he put a stop to that thought. What chance did he have of any sort of relationship with Princess Lois? He was just a peasant, for crying out loud. Better not to think about that sort of thing and to concentrate on the problem at hand, which was how to defeat Tempus. Since the green stone was the source of his power, they needed to figure out how to get it away from him.

"We need to get Tempus's green amulet," Lois mused out loud.

"Funny, I was just thinking the same thing, your Highness. We need a plan."

"I'm the Princess. I make the plans."

"Okay," he replied. "What's the plan?"

She was about to answer when her father unexpectedly sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Lois?" King Sam muttered.

Quickly she rushed to his side. "Father, you're awake!"

"Yes, I am...and alert too, thanks to the physician you've brought. Oh, I had no idea what Tempus was doing to me. He must be stopped! That amulet he wears has to be the source of his power. I'll order the guards to detain him."

"That won't work. It's too obvious. He'll trick them the same way he tricked you. We need a plan."

Suddenly, they heard the sound of footsteps approaching. Clark looked out into the hallway. "It's Tempus!"

"Fools," the Royal Wizard's voice rang out, echoing through the corridor. "Do you really think you can stop me?"

"Yes," Clark answered. "We can and we will!"

"That's right," Princess Lois added.

Herb took his staff. "Stand back," he said, stepping out of the room.

"Tempus, your acts of treason have not gone unnoticed," the king shouted. "You are no longer the Royal Wizard."

"Imbeciles! You cannot hope to match my power."

"No, but we can beat it," the physician responded.

As he tilted the staff, soft yellow light from one of the candles lighting the hallway struck it. The beam hit the staff's red crystal and activated its power, which created a cone of ruby-colored light that swept through the hallway. Tempus grasped the green amulet, countering the magical energy with an emerald-hued beam of his own. Herb concentrated with all his mental strength to fight it, but Tempus's evil was too much for him.

"No," Clark exclaimed and grabbed the staff when Herb collapsed. Princess Lois caught him.

"For the sake of the kingdom, do not let Tempus win," the physician whispered as unconsciousness barked like the King's hunting dogs at his heels.

"We won't fail you," Lois whispered.

For what seemed like an eternity, the duelists faced each other in the palace corridor. Beads of sweat poured down Clark's forehead as he concentrated. They were at an impasse. It was going to take a lot to beat Tempus. He thought of all the good things in his life: his adoptive parents, his biological parents who surely cared about him somewhere. Then he thought about Princess Lois. What would happen to her if he lost? He couldn't bear to imagine the horrors that the former Royal Wizard might inflict upon the kingdom.

The red cone of light from the staff grew noticeably brighter. Clark had to shield his eyes and hold it up with one hand. Even as hopeless as it seemed, there was still a chance that he and Princess Lois might be able to be together -- but not if Tempus won. He couldn't lose that chance.

Suddenly his magical ray grew blindingly bright. The sound of Tempus's amulet shattering was the sweetest thing Clark had ever heard (next to Princess Lois's voice, of course). It was followed by an inhuman cry of anguish. He opened his eyes and saw his opponent writhing on the floor, no longer recognizable as anything human.

Herb sat up and rubbed his head. "What happened?"

"You're all right," Lois exclaimed.

"Yes, my dear. Except for a slight headache, that is. But I'll live."

"Thank goodness" King Sam announced. "The Kingdom is saved!"

"Clark," Lois said, "are you all right?"

"Yeah," he replied, feeling like a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. "I think the curse is broken."

"That's wonderful!"

He glanced at the misshapen creature that had once been the Royal Wizard. "What do we do with him?"

"Throw him in the dungeon for now," the King replied. "I'll think of something else later."

Clark looked into Princess Lois's eyes. "Are you all right?" he asked in a husky tone.

"Yes," she replied. Then she added, "I'm sorry."

"About what?"

"Being rude to you earlier."

"You're a princess. You have every right to be rude."

Lois shook her head. "No, I don't." She leaned over and kissed him. "Thank you for saving the kingdom."

He blushed. "I couldn't have done it without you."

Herb cleared his throat, and the two of them looked sheepish. "That can wait. He can't."

"Right." Princess Lois raised her voice. "Guards!"

Two disheveled-looking guards wandered around the corner. "Your Highness?"

"Lock him up."

"Right," said the second, and belched. "Excuse me, your Highness."

"When you're done, take a shower and change your clothes. There are going to be a few changes around here."

"Yes, your Highness." The guards hauled the creature that had been Tempus off to the dungeons.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eventually, Lois and Clark got married, after it was discovered that a little-known law allowed peasants to marry royalty as long as they were knighted. King Sam immediately made Clark a knight and the ceremony was carried out henceforth. Jimmy, who they later rescued from the dungeons, proved to be useful as a royal spy. The creature formerly known as Tempus was cast out and exiled to the Great Caverns, which lay many leagues beyond the Dark Forest. Martha and Jonathan were content to remain on their farm, but often visited Clark and Princess Lois in the palace. And they lived happily ever after.

The End

## **Ruminations of a Coffee Mug**

Disclaimer: The characters of Lois & Clark are not mine, I'm just borrowing them for a while. This is just a short, bizarre, experimental story. Feedback is welcome.

\* \* \* \* \*

I sit on Lois Lane's desk, filled with dark liquid, as she types her newest article. She never looks down at her keyboard as her fingers fly across it. Occasionally, she grabs the thesaurus next to me and flips through it, searching for the perfect word to make her point.

Then he comes, the tall one with the dark hair and glasses leading a secret life, puts an arm around her and whispers "Hi, honey," into her ear. I wonder why no one else but Lois has figured it out. Clark Kent isn't stupid, I'll give him that. But the disguise is so thin that one day, I think someone will be able to see through the veil.

Lois smiles and relaxes as Clark puts something on her desk. It's a steaming container of Chinese food. "Where'd you get this from?" She asks.

"Hong Kong."

Lois takes a sip of coffee and puts me down. "Thanks, Clark." He grins as she tries a bite of the food. "Mmmm."

"Glad you like it," he says.

The Daily Planet's owner and Editor in Chief, Perry White, pokes his head out of his office. "Lois, how are you coming on that story?"

"Almost done, Perry."

"I need that article in ten minutes."

"You'll get it."

Clark heads back to his desk as Lois finishes her story and sends it to her boss. She drinks the rest of the coffee and asks Jimmy Olsen, who is walking by, to fill me up. Soon everyone will be going home for the day, and I'll be left here in the dark, waiting for tomorrow. As people leave one by one, Clark gets up from his desk and walks Lois out. Perry White is the last to leave, long after everyone else is gone. He turns out the lights and takes one final look at the newsroom, before going home for the night.

The End

## Reflections of a Silver Ball Point Pen

This is another experimental story. I got the idea from watching an episode in which Lois gives Clark a pen she was about to throw away, which turned out to be a lot more than just a pen.

\* \* \* \* \*

"That's the problem with society today," Clark ranted as Lois dropped me into her wastebasket. "Everything's disposable."

Lois picked me up as he continued to rant about disposable objects, disposable relationships, and disposable lives. "Okay, fine. You want this? You can have it. It's just a pen, Clark."

Ha! Little do they know what secrets I have. I am not just a pen, I'm an invention by a genius. That's right, I was invented by a bona fide genius named Dr. Faraday. Only eight people in the world understand his theories. Lois and Clark don't even realize what power they held in their hands when they touched me.

Clark put me in the container on his desk. Later, when he selected me to write, he accidentally activated me. A bright light flashed. At that second, I thought he'd figure out my secret. But then he said, "It's not a pen, Lois, it's a flashlight." A flashlight! As if a mere flashlight could do what I can. He still doesn't know my true potential.

For the next few days, Lois continued to spout phrases that would have given away my secret, if only she had known. But she didn't. I was nearly swept up by a janitor and kicked around the office, as though I were just a disposable pen. I tried to tell them that I was much more than that, but they wouldn't listen to me. Nobody did, until the last day of the week.

It was evening and everyone had gone home for the day. Jimmy Olsen picked me up off the floor. I thought for sure he would trigger my power, but he just set me on a desk and went home. The scientist and his goon, who had used me to hypnotize Lois while they killed Dr. Faraday and stole his secrets showed up, holding her at gunpoint. Then Superman found me. I had a feeling he would listen as he blindly groped on the desk and discovered me there, camouflaged among real pens and pencils. Little did I know that my story was about to end.

I was tossed into the air by Superman in hopes of releasing Lois from the bad guys. As Lois and Superman argued with the scientist, she managed to break free of their grasp and grab one of their devices to restore his sight. Then the bad guys grabbed me. I watched in horror as they struggled. No, you idiots, I tried to tell them. They wouldn't listen, of course. But I knew what was coming as Superman focused his newly regained vision onto me. I was the invention of a genius, after all. The Man of Steel is so predictable.

I felt searing heat, then suddenly, I found myself here in this strange dimension. Mostly, this place is populated by millions of lost socks and coins, but some famous objects are here. They brag about their history. The key that Benjamin Franklin tied to a kite to discover the properties of lightning is notorious. People joke about such a place existing, but it does.

Anyway, I watched as Lois and Mayson spoke to Clark the following day. I noticed the way Lois looked at him. She was definitely jealous until she learned that he hadn't spent the past few days with Mayson. There was definitely something between them, but they either didn't recognize it or couldn't acknowledge it. I hope they will soon realize that like me, their relationship is not disposable.

The End

## **Kidnapped by Redneck Kryptonians**

Disclaimer: This story started as an idea from a message thread on the Lois & Clark message board about Country Western song titles. One of them was "Redneck Martians Stole My Baby." I am not a country fan, so I have no idea who sings this, nor do I know the words. This is not a song fic. I do not own the characters from Lois & Clark.

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Lois and Clark were out on the town on a perfectly normal night. They were going to see Lord of the Rings, which Clark had to convince Lois to see. She was more than skeptical of seeing a movie with elves, dwarves, and "short guys running around barefoot," as she put it. But he figured it would be worth it. They were standing in line at the ticket counter when his cell phone rang.

Clark answered it. "Hello?"

Their baby sitter was frantic. It took him a few minutes to calm the teenaged girl down, as Lois kept asking what was wrong. Finally, he managed to get the information.

"I...I'm so sorry, it happened so suddenly. Mr. Kent, your baby was kidnapped."

He fought off the urge to panic. "By whom?"

"You're going to think I'm crazy," the girl said between sniffles.

"No, I won't. Go on."

"Okay. It was aliens. They looked like humans, but they were wearing these outfits, and they all had symbols on them. One of the symbols was an S, like on Superman's costume. They spoke English, but they sounded like...well, kind of like hicks."

"Clark, will you please tell me what is going on?" Lois demanded.

He cupped the phone with his hand. "Our baby's been kidnapped. I'm trying to talk to the baby sitter."

"Is she all right?"

"I don't know." He took his hand away from the phone. "Are you all right, Jenny? What did the kidnappers say? Did they make any ransom demands?"

"They said, and I swear I'm not making this up, 'We're-a takin' junior with us back to New Krypton. His ma and pa better not follow us, or there's-a gonna be more trouble than you kin shake a stick at.' New Krypton? Why would Superman's people want to kidnap a human baby?"

"I have no idea," Clark replied, "but I'm going to get in touch with Superman. Maybe he can help us. We'll be home as soon as we can. Have you called the police yet?"

"Not yet."

"Okay. Call Inspector Henderson at this number. He knows us." Clark gave her the number, then said goodbye and hung up.

"So, let me get this straight," Lois remarked. "Our baby was kidnapped by redneck Kryptonians?"

He shrugged. "Stranger things have happened, honey. Let's get home and make sure Jenny's all right. I guess we'll have to take a rain check on this movie."

"Fine by me. Watching little guys run around on a suicidal mission doesn't sound like very much fun."

"They're not all little people. You'd like Aragorn."

"Who?"

"Well, I don't want to give too much away, but he's the descendant of the last king," Clark explained as Lois pulled out of the parking lot.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jenny jumped in surprise as she heard the sound of a key being turned in the lock. She realized with relief that it was Lois and Clark.!"

"Are you all right?" He asked with concern.

"I'm fine, but the baby..." she let the unspoken thought trail off. "I'm so sorry!"

"Jenny, it's not your fault. Everything will be all right," Lois said as Clark used his X-ray vision to search for clues.

He went into the bedroom and picked up something. "It's a note."

"What does it say?" Lois asked.

"To Junior's ma and pa: We're taking your baby back to New Krypton, where he belongs. After we refuel, that is."

"Refuel?" Lois remarked. "Clark, you'd better contact Superman. He might know what kind of fuel they need."

"Probably rocket fuel," Jenny answered and then blushed. "I mean, assuming the kidnapers are really Kryptonians and have a UFO."

"I remember Superman telling me once that Kryptonian spaceships can use regular fuel. They just have to convert it into what they need." His ears suddenly picked up a cry for help. "Speaking of Superman, I'd better try to find him."

Lois nodded in realization. "Go ahead. I'll stay here with Jenny and wait for the police."

He rushed off, glad that she was there to cover for him.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the gas station, the attendants and cashier shrank back as three gangly men wearing black and silver suits grabbed several containers of milk and juice from the beverage aisle, as well as several packages of beef jerky. Their spaceship took up the whole parking lot and part of the highway beyond, causing lots of traffic problems. Nearby, a baby cried. The sound of Superman's boots hitting the pavement startled the Kryptonian who was at the gas pump. He turned around.

"Kal-E! I was wonderin' if you'd show yer ugly face. Why don't you just git on home? There ain't nothin' ya kin do. Yer kid will be happier than a drunk doggie on New Krypton."

"What makes you think my son will be happier on New Krypton than Earth? And why are you talking so strangely?" Superman asked.

"How do ya mean?" asked the bewildered Kryptonian. "We bin watchin' that there TV to learn English. It ain't easy ta learn an alien language, ya know. That there Elly May Clampett is shore a pretty thang. But I think ya better git movin'."

"I'm not leaving without my son."

"All right, ya asked fer it."

The Kryptonian aimed his heat vision at Clark, who ducked. The ray hit the gas pump, melting the plastic and setting off sparks. Superman froze it with his breath before a fire could start. Then he rushed into the UFO and found his son in the back of the ship, gurgling happily. A glowing green meteorite had somehow had found its way inside. Taking the Kryptonite and the baby, Clark rushed out.

"Where do you think you're going? It is not logical for you to leave." One of the other Kryptonians said. He raised an eyebrow as he blocked Superman's path.

"I'm going home, which is what I advise you and your friends to do."

"It would not be logical for us to leave without your child. We came all this way for him."

"But why?"

"He will not be exposed to any part of his Kryptonian heritage here on Earth, except that small part which you already know. Therefore, it would be logical to take him back to New Krypton. When he is of age, he can decide where he wants to live."

Clark suddenly realized what was going on. If the other Kryptonians had watched the Beverly Hillbillies, this one must have seen Star Trek. He sounded very much like the Vulcan, and Spock could be reasoned with. "Surely there must be a way for my son to remain. Don't you have any information on Krypton stored in the computer?"

"There are some data crystals, but there is no way to use them anywhere other than this ship or a Kryptonian data device."

"Do you have a spare Kryptonian data device?"

The logical Kryptonian's eyebrow shot up in surprise. "Possibly. Will you remain here while I search?"

"As long as I don't have to fight off your friends."

A few orders were given. Then the Kryptonian went inside the UFO. Clark looked down at his baby, feeling relieved that everything would be fine. A few minutes later, the other Kryptonian returned with a device resembling the globe, only much larger. "If you insert the data crystal, the recorded information will play. This device is virtually indestructible and should last for many human lifetimes. It can be used more than once, and humans can also use it."

"Thank you," Clark said, feeling slightly overwhelmed by the gift.

"We must go."

"Wait. You should pay for the things you took."

"Pay?"

"It is customary."

"Oh." Reaching into his pocket, the logical Kryptonian produced a glittering gem. Scanning it with his X-ray vision, Clark realized it was a diamond of much higher quality than most diamonds on Earth. "I hope this will be enough for a trade. We do not have any local currency."

The gas station owner's eyes widened. "Yeah, that's fine. Right, Superman? I have kids, and I want them to go to college someday. The other guys who work here could use a raise. We'll give some of it to charity, of course."

"All right," said Clark. "You can keep it. But don't get greedy."

"Sure. Is, uh, is that really your kid? He looks a lot like mine did at that age."

"Thanks. I have to go."

Superman flew off and the Kryptonians returned to their space ship. The gas station owner gasped as the UFO hovered for a moment, then ascended into the sky until it couldn't be discerned from the stars.

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Inspector Henderson was interrogating Jenny and Lois when Clark got back. He stopped in mid-sentence.

"Superman!" the teenager exclaimed. "Wow. You found the baby! Is Clark all right?"

"Yes. The kidnapers have left Earth. Everything is fine."

"Left Earth? You mean they really were aliens?" Henderson asked in astonishment.

"They were from New Krypton," Superman replied. "They had good but misguided intentions. They won't be coming back."

"Then this case is closed. Thanks, Superman." The inspector put his notepad and pen in his pocket before leaving.

"I guess I should be going home too," Jenny said. "I'm sorry. If you guys don't want to pay me, I'll understand."

"What? Now just a minute," Lois said. "Of course, we're going to pay you. It wasn't your fault. Let's see, it's almost 9:30, and you've been here since 6:30."

Clark reached into his pocket, took out his wallet and handed some cash. "That includes hazard pay, which I think you've more than earned."

"Thanks, Mr. Kent."

After Jenny had left, Lois and Clark sat on the couch with the baby between them. "What did the New Kryptonians say?" she asked.

"They were concerned that our child wouldn't get to learn about being Kryptonian on Earth. They gave me this." Clark pointed to the globe, which he had set on the floor.

"It looks like the one Lex Luthor had, from the way you described it."

He nodded. "When junior's old enough, he can watch Kryptonian history unfold in front of his eyes. Unlike my globe, it can be replayed, and non-Kryptonians can also see it."

"Maybe we should test it," Lois suggested.

"That's not a bad idea." Clark picked up the globe and inserted a data crystal into it. Both he and his wife watched the scene unfold. The baby made babbling sounds and raised an arm, as if pointing to it.

"This is much better than any movie," she remarked.

"Oh, you think so?" he replied.

"Definitely."

As they snuggled in each others' arms, the night went on. Neither of them noticed a particularly bright star, but Clark thought he could hear the faint strains of a fiddle and a guitar being played for all they were worth, and laughter in the background.

The End

## Coming Out of the Closet

About the title: It was inspired by the second part of the Lois & Clark series premiere, in which Perry White catches Clark Kent in the supply closet, about to fly through the window, and asks him when he's coming out. This is *\*not\** a sequel to Purple Chaos.

Disclaimers: I do not own the characters that are recognizable from Lois & Clark.

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It had been 25 years since Superman first made his appearance by saving space station Prometheus. Most cities across the world had extremely low crime rates -- some areas had virtually non-existent crime, which the news reports connected directly to the red-and-blue-clad hero. The mayor of Metropolis was being interviewed on a morning news show by a tall blonde woman.

"Several years ago, Superman was quoted as saying that Metropolis was like a second home to him. How does that make you feel?"

"I'm very honored. I don't know why he chose Metropolis, as opposed to a more international city like London or Paris, or even New York. But he did, so we're going all out."

"Beginning today, Metropolis is having one of the largest anniversary celebrations around the world. Tell me, what is Metropolis doing differently from other cities?"

"Starting at 7:00 pm, most of the movie theaters in town will be showing historic news footage and interviews of Superman until 10:00 pm. One hundred percent of the proceeds from concessions will be going to charity. We're also having a charity ball and an auction, with proceeds going to the Red Cross. Superman is expected to make an appearance later in the evening at the auction. He donated an extra cape, which I've been told could go for as much as one hundred million dollars."

"Wow. That's incredible." The interviewer looked at her watch. "I'm sorry to say that we're out of time. Thank you very much for coming, Mayor Smith."

He smiled. "My pleasure."

\* \* \* \* \*

Lois Lane exchanged glances with her husband, Clark Kent. They'd been watching TV during breakfast. "One hundred million dollars for a cape?"

"Not just any cape, Lois," he reminded her. "I'm going to model it for them, so it will actually have been worn by Superman."

"Have you told Martha yet? I'm sure she'll be thrilled."

"She will be," Clark said as the phone rang. "Hello? Hi, Mom."

"Hi, honey," Martha said. "We just saw the morning show."

"So, Mom, how do you feel about being a hundred-million-dollar clothing designer?"

Martha laughed. "Thrilled, but I'm happy for you. It's your party, Clark." She whispered conspiringly, "Even if no one else knows it is."

Clark chuckled. "Yeah. I want to talk to you and Dad about that."

"About what?"

"I think it's time for me to stop hiding." Clark had talked about the idea with Lois for hours the previous night. He knew that she would be supportive. The only question was, how would his parents feel? They would also be affected if he 'came out of the closet,' so to speak. Their lives would be changed forever.

"Are you sure, Clark? We've talked about this before," Martha said.

"Yeah. I've been doing a lot of thinking," Clark replied. "I'm tired of lying to my friends, and I'm tired of pretending to be someone I'm not."

"Honey, you'll never have any privacy again. News reporters will camp outside your front door 24 hours a day. Your phone will ring off the hook. Your picture will be plastered on every newspaper from here to Tibet. Thousands of people on the internet will make fan sites. Okay, there are plenty of Superman web sites, but they'll be devoted to your real identity as well. People will recognize you everywhere in the world. You'd be giving up a lot, Clark."

"It's a sacrifice I'm willing to make."

"What about Lois?" Martha asked.

"I'm fine with it," she said, having overheard.

"Lois says that she's fine with it. Do you want me to come home so we can talk?"

"Do you have time?"

"Lois and I took the day off. I have plenty of time, Mom."

"All right. I'll tell Jonathan that you're coming."

"Thanks. I should be there in a few minutes." Clark hung up the phone and looked at Lois. "Honey, are you really okay?"

"Of course. Okay, I'm a little apprehensive. I mean, what if some psychos like Trask show up at the door? But, if you think the world is ready, then so am I."

They kissed, then he grabbed his black leather jacket. "See you in a little while." Clark opened the bedroom window and flew out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jonathan Kent sat at the table with Martha. They were both drinking coffee. Jonathan had to do some convincing, but his wife finally agreed to pour a cup after lecturing him about caffeine's negative effects. Jonathan couldn't really argue, but he still wanted the coffee. Footsteps outside meant that Clark had arrived. The front door swung open.

"Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad," Clark said, taking off his jacket.

"Hello, son," Jonathan said. "Happy anniversary."

"Thanks."

"Your mother tells me you've been thinking about telling the world that you're really Superman."

"Yes, I'm considering it."

"Are you really sure about this, Clark?" Jonathan inquired.

"All of Superman's arch-enemies are either in maximum security prisons or, like Lex Luthor, they're dead. I'm tired of not being the real me -- the Clark Kent who's also Superman, whom you know and Lois knows, but no one else does. I'm tired of lying to my closest friends, and having to make excuses all the time whenever I have to go and save someone. I'm tired of carrying this secret around. It's like a ten-ton weight around my neck, and it's getting heavier every day."

"Have you thought about how you're going to do this?" Martha asked.

Clark nodded. "I'm supposed to be at the charity auction tonight as Superman. I can tell everyone then."

"Well," Jonathan said, "if that's what you really want to do, I think you should go ahead."

"It's your decision to make," Martha added.

"I really want to do this," Clark replied.

"No matter what happens, we'll support you," Jonathan said.

"Thanks, Dad. You guys are the best."

Martha stood up and hugged her son. "So are you."

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At 8:00 pm, Lois and Clark arrived at the charity ball. Lois looked stunning in a sparkly black dress and Clark was very handsome in a tuxedo. Jimmy Olsen came with his wife, Lucy. Perry was even there, but since Alice had passed away recently, he came alone. Lois spotted Catherine "Cat" Grant on the dance floor with her fiancé, a very good-looking man from England. Even Ralph was there, dancing with a woman in her thirties who could have been his daughter.

"Hi," Jimmy said. "Lois, you look great, as always."

"Thank you."

"Jimmy, Lois and I would like to talk to you and Lucy," Clark said. "And Perry, and Cat. Can you meet us outside in the parking lot in five minutes?"

"Sure, CK. What's up?"

"You'll find out soon enough."

After recruiting their other friends from the Daily Planet, Clark and Lois headed outside. Noticing that Lois had a few goose bumps, Clark took off his suit jacket and handed it to her without a word.

"Clark, you are so good," she remarked, giving him a kiss.

"I try," he replied.

"What's this about?" Perry asked. "Are you going to tell us, or are we going to freeze our buns off?"

"In a minute, Chief," Clark said. "I'm waiting for Cat."

Perry White had been retired from the Daily Planet for eight years, but most of his former employees still called him Chief. Jimmy Olsen was the editor-in-chief now, and doing an excellent job, too. "All right, but don't wait too long," he replied.

Catherine Grant walked outside. She wore a black fur coat over a red glittery dress and didn't look a day over thirty.

"I hope I'm not late," Cat said.

"You're just in time," Clark answered. "Now, here's the reason I asked you all to come outside. I'm going to make an announcement at the charity auction, but I wanted my closest friends to know about it first."

"What kind of announcement are you going to make, CK?" Jimmy asked.

"Well...you know how I'm always running off and making excuses?"

"Kent, you're the king of excuses," Perry remarked. "But I always figured you had a good reason for them."

"I do, Chief. Do you remember the first week when I started working at the Planet?"

"How could I forget? You were hired exactly 25 years ago, to the day."

Clark nodded and saw Jimmy's look of sudden comprehension. "Remember when you found me in the supply closet?"

"Yes! You were so nervous. I also remember that the window was open, and I couldn't think of why anyone would be standing in the supply closet." Perry had a hunch what Clark was trying to tell them. "That was also the same day Superman made his first appearance."

"On space station Prometheus," Jimmy added.

"Right," Perry said. "Years later, it occurred to me that Kent was frequently spotted coming in and out of that supply closet, usually just after he'd made some excuse. Now, why would he need an excuse to go into the closet...unless he had something to hide?"

"You know," Clark realized.

"It took me nearly nine years to piece together all the evidence I had," Perry responded. "I'm not certain, but I think Jimmy also figured it out."

Jimmy nodded.

"Figured what out?" Lucy inquired.

Clark took a deep breath. "That I'm Superman."

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Cat's eyes widened. It wasn't a complete surprise -- she'd had her hunches before -- but she hadn't expected the confirmation of something so astounding.

Lucy gasped. "All this time it was you?"

Clark nodded.

"Jimmy, why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I didn't have any hard evidence, and besides, it wasn't my secret to tell. Why are you telling us?"

"I think it's time. Besides, I also have an idea." It was crazy, he had to admit, but sometimes the craziest ideas were the best ones. The plan had been niggling at him the last few days, so much that Clark believed it was meant to be. Lois was a little more skeptical when he told her during one sleepless night, but she would support him.

\* \* \* Flashback \* \* \*

Lois sighed as Clark turned over for the sixth time in the past two minutes, taking more than his share of the blanket with him. "Clark, what's wrong?"

"I can't sleep," he admitted.

"Well, at least give me the blanket. I'm cold."

Clark obligingly untangled it. "Sorry, Lois."

"Aren't you going to tell me why you can't sleep?" She asked, looking at him pointedly.

"I can't get this idea out of my mind."

"What idea?"

"It's nothing. Go back to sleep, honey."

"So, nothing is keeping us both awake?"

Lois had a point. "It's crazy. Completely crazy." Clark shook his head as if to emphasize.

"You're going to tell me, aren't you?"

Clark sighed. "All right. I was just thinking...what if we had a society in which there was no crime, where people could leave their doors unlocked and walk at night in the city without fear? What if it were possible?"

"If it were possible, it would've happened by now," she said.

"I'm sure you're right," he replied. "But I just can't stop thinking about it."

"Utopia is nothing more than a dream, Clark. Go back to sleep." Lois kissed him.

But Clark couldn't sleep. He lay awake thinking the whole night. When morning came, Lois turned over and saw that he was staring at the ceiling.

"Have you been awake all night?" She asked.

Clark nodded.

Lois sighed. She could tell that her husband was seriously considering the idea. Sleepless nights were nothing new to him -- he was Superman, after all. But they usually weren't caused by crazy ideas. Maybe, she conceded to herself, Utopia could be possible. Clark obviously thought so. "I'm not going to be able to talk you out of this?"

"Nope."

"Well then, I guess if you can't beat 'em, joining 'em is the next best option." She leaned over and kissed him.

\* \* \* End Flashback \* \* \*

"What kind of idea?" Perry asked.

"Well..." Clark hesitated. "You'll think I'm crazy."

"Kent, if you had told me 25 years ago that you could fly and eat bombs, I'd have said you were crazy. Now that I've seen it, I believe just about anything is possible."

"Anything, huh? Okay, how about a place where no crime exists, where everyone can feel safe, and even Superman can reveal his secret identity without worrying about whether or not his family and friends will be targeted by criminals."

"Utopia?" Cat Grant remarked. "That would be incredible, Clark, but it's impossible."

"Why?"

"Because you can't get rid of greed. Someone, somewhere, will always want something that they don't have."

"But what if people can have everything they need?"

"It's not what people don't need," Cat said, "it's what they want. Wanting and needing things are two different things. Does a thief need everything that he steals to survive, physically? Something makes those people want things they don't have, and it's not common sense. It's greed."

"You have a good point," Clark admitted, "but it's society that makes people want things. It's the pressure to keep up with the Joneses...or even to surpass them. There are cultures where everything is owned by the community. Historically in many Native American cultures, people didn't own things, the entire tribe did. Why can't we do something similar?"

"You'd have to completely change Western culture," Jimmy remarked. "That wouldn't be an easy thing to do. Lots of people are set in their ways."

"True, but we can start with Metropolis."

"Do you really think this will work, Kent?" Perry asked.

"I don't know, Chief. But I have to try."

Perry nodded. Clark's plans usually had a way of working out, especially when Lois supported them. "Have you talked to your folks about this? What did they say?"

"Well, I haven't really told them about my plan yet. I was going to take it kind of slow, since the media's going to be wrapped up in finding out Superman's secret identity, anyhow."

"Aren't you putting the chicken before the egg? I mean, if there's still a chance for crime, there's still a chance that your folks could become targets. It would be better to do it the other way around."

"You think so, Chief?"

"I have a strong hunch about this. And you know something about my hunches, son, they're usually right."

Clark looked at his wristwatch. "Looks like there's half an hour until the auction starts. I'm going to call my folks, Lois, and then I'll meet you inside."

"Okay."

They shared a brief kiss.

\* \* \* \* \*

HG Wells checked the chronometer as his time machine landed in an alley nearby. "Thirty minutes," he said to nobody in particular. "There's plenty of time left." Herb patted the stun weapon in his pocket to make sure it was still there, then went to find Clark Kent and Lois Lane. They needed to be warned about Tempus' escape, since he was almost certainly coming to stop them.

Clark used the speed-dial on his cell phone to get in touch with his parents. Their picture appeared on the small video display.

"Hi, honey," Martha said. "How's everything going?"

"Great, Mom. I need to talk to you and Dad again. How's Lara?"

Lara was Lois and Clark's 14 year-old daughter. She and her 11 year-old brother, Johnny, were staying with their grandparents for the night.

"She's just fine. She and Johnny are both playing computer games."

"How are you?" Jonathan asked.

"Fine. There's something else I need to tell you."

"Really," said a familiar voice behind him.

"Who's that?" Martha asked.

Clark turned around. His jaw dropped as he saw who was standing behind him. "Tempus! Mom, Dad, I'll call you back later."

Martha and Jonathan exchanged worried glances. Their son had dealt with the time-traveling villain, Tempus, over 20 years ago. "Be careful," Martha said, then the screen went black.

"You see," Tempus continued, "I have a plan. It involves stopping you and Lois Lane from founding Utopia. That will never happen in this time line, or any other."

"No!" HG Wells exclaimed. He'd just caught sight of them, and took out the stun weapon. "I'm afraid you'll have to change your plans, Tempus."

"You're so predictable, Herb. I knew you'd show up."

As HG Wells fired the stun weapon, Tempus took a small shiny device from his pocket and pressed a button. The energy beam hit him...but it was completely dissipated by the force field's effects. Then, Tempus took something that looked like a laser pen out of his pocket, and he fired a green burst at Clark.

"You won't get away with this," Clark gasped as he collapsed from the effects of the Kryptonite ray.

Tempus laughed. "In your dreams, Superman."

HG Wells bravely swung a punch, realizing that the stun weapons he'd brought would be ineffective against the shield.

"You're not going to stop me. You don't have what it takes." Tempus ducked, then he took out another laser and fired it. There was a bright blast of red, and HG Wells was out. "Au revoir, so long, farewell, Herb. Until we meet again." Tempus picked up the unconscious body of Clark Kent, pressed a button on his wristwatch, and vanished into a shimmering portal.

With this new technology he'd gotten from the 26th century, Tempus no longer needed a time machine. Herb had qualms about borrowing technology from the future, and he couldn't think creatively enough to invent it himself. That was why Tempus wouldn't fail. He couldn't. Not when the future -- his future -- depended upon him stopping the foundation of Utopia. He had to reverse the direction of this timeline, or Herb would go after him again. There was only one place to go: the past.

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In the ballroom, Lois wondered where her husband was. "Clark should be here by now. The auction starts in five minutes."

"Relax, Lois," Jimmy said. "I'm sure that CK's fine."

"Yeah. You're probably right. I'm going to look for him, anyway. Just in case."

"I'm going with you."

They found HG Wells in the parking lot, unconscious. Lois recognized him, but Jimmy didn't. Lois tried to wake him up. "Herb! Are you all right? What are you doing here?"

Startled, he sat up. "Lois Lane? Jimmy Olsen?"

"How do you know our names?" Jimmy asked.

"It's a long story. I'm afraid I have some bad news. Clark has been captured by Tempus."

"Oh, no!" Lois exclaimed. They hadn't expected him, but it made sense in a twisted way. He'd always been trying to stop Superman, and this was the night Clark had planned to make his announcement.

"Who's Tempus?" Jimmy asked.

"A time traveler, like HG Wells here. He's been trying for years to stop Superman from creating Utopia. I thought he was in prison," Lois said.

"He escaped, I'm sorry to say," Herb replied.

Jimmy was gaping in astonishment at the older man. "You're HG Wells? I'm a huge fan. I loved your stuff when I was younger."

"Thank you. I'm afraid I don't have time to discuss books, however. I must find Superman and Tempus."

"Let me help," Lois said.

"Yeah," Jimmy added. "I didn't know that CK was Superman until today, but we've always been friends. We'll help you."

"The time line might be contaminated even more than it already has been. I can't risk it."

"Good luck, Mr. Wells," Jimmy said.

Herb went back to the alley where he'd parked the time machine. By using a tracking device he'd installed after Tempus escaped, he was able to locate his rival. Suddenly, he realized what Tempus' plan must be. It was downright devious. His opponent had to be stopped as soon as possible. As HG Wells turned a key, the time machine came to life and vanished into the past.

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Perry White took a sip of steaming coffee that one of his employees had just gotten for him. "Thanks."

The young man turned to go, but hesitated. "Chief?"

"What is it, son?"

"I just happened to walk by the supply closet. Normally I mind my own business, but I thought it was kind of funny that someone's been in there for so long. I thought you should know."

"Who's in the closet?"

"Clark Kent. I saw him go in. It's been over five minutes, and he hasn't come out yet."

"Is he in there with anyone else?" Perry had seen Cat's advances toward the new hire, although he suspected that Kent was more attracted to Lois Lane.

"Cat and Lois are both at their desks, so he's probably not with anyone."

"Thanks. I'll check it out."

Clark had just opened the window and was about to change into his Superman suit when a shimmering portal appeared and a man stepped through. The stranger was carrying someone unconscious, who looked suspiciously like a 50 year-old Clark Kent.

"Who are you? What's going on here?"

"I'm Tempus," he said and fired the Kryptonite ray at the younger Clark. "I am a time traveler from the future. I came here to prevent you from becoming Superman."

Tempus knew about the supply closet from reading Clark Kent's autobiography. This was where Clark frequently went, usually after making the most ridiculously unbelievable excuses Tempus had ever heard in his life. Clark could quickly change clothes, lock the door, and fly out the window as Superman. When he returned, dressed as Clark, no one would guess that he had just been rescuing the inept citizens of Metropolis from whatever had befallen them.

Clark gasped as he fell with a thud, feeling more pain than he'd ever felt in his life. He didn't recognize the name Superman, but he felt a powerful connection with it. Had using his unique powers led to Clark becoming some sort of super criminal? Was that why Tempus was trying to stop him? Or was Tempus the criminal?

Realizing that someone was listening outside, Tempus responded, "I'm sure once the Daily Planet learns that their newest reporter is really an alien with super human powers, they'll want to print it on the front page."

Suddenly, Perry White opened the closet door. He glared at the supposed time traveler. "Stop, or I'll call security! Kent, are you all right?"

Tempus used his stun ray on Perry, then pressed a button on his watch and disappeared. As he vanished, Clark's future self also faded away.

\* \* \* \* \*

HG Wells entered the Editor in Chief's office and was surprised to see that Perry wasn't there. Clark hadn't been at his desk, either. Glancing around, HG Wells spotted someone at the copy machine. Surely that young man would know.

"Excuse me," Herb began. "Do you know where I can find Clark Kent or Perry White? It's urgent."

"I saw them go into the supply closet. Do you know them?"

"Yes. Thank you."

"No," HG Wells gasped, realizing that Tempus had already been here.

Perry White mumbled something, but it was so soft that Herb couldn't catch it.

"What was that?"

"There was a nasty fellow here just a minute ago. He had a stun gun...must've used it on Kent, too. He said his name was Tempus." Perry sat up.

"Ah. Do you know where he went?"

"No. He just vanished." Perry turned and tried to wake up the younger man, but it was no use. The young man was completely out. His face was pale and his glasses had fallen off. They were on the floor next to him. "Kent, wake up!"

"It's no use," Herb said. "Tempus had a kryptonite ray gun, too."

"What's kryptonite? Does it have something to do with Superman...or Clark?" Perry added.

"Yes." Suddenly, Herb looked more closely at Perry. "How exactly do you know about Superman?"

"I was looking for Clark, and I just happened to hear the argument he was having with Tempus." Perry glanced at his newest hire, who was still unconscious. "Should I call 911?"

"No. The hospital won't know what to do with him, and his secret might be exposed."

"What do you know about Clark Kent?" Perry asked. "Mr. Wells...if that's who you really are, why don't you tell us?"

"Because the future could be ruined. I'm taking Clark with me. We're going to stop Tempus."

"Now, hold on just a minute," Perry said. "You're not taking that man anywhere."

"Lois," Clark mumbled.

"What's that?" Perry asked.

"Lois is in trouble." Clark lifted his head and realized that his glasses were off. He also had a pounding headache.

"Where do you think she is?" HG Wells asked.

Clark sat up slowly and put his glasses back on. "Who are you?"

"A friend. Can you tell me where Lois is?"

"We're investigating a story about the space station Prometheus. I think she went back to EPRAD to find some evidence."

"I haven't seen Olsen around lately. He must be with Lois," Perry said.

"I have to find them." As Clark struggled to get up, HG Wells gave him a hand.

"Now wait just a minute. You've been injured. Don't tell me you're thinking of going after them," Perry remarked.

"If I don't, who will?"

"That's awfully brave, but you need to see a doctor."

Clark shook his head. "No doctors, Chief. Please."

Perry started to say something else, then stopped. Was his newest hire really an alien? No, he couldn't be. That was impossible... wasn't it? "All right, Kent. Good luck."

"Thanks, Chief."

Perry headed back to his office.

"I believe Tempus means to stop you from rescuing Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen. The kryptonite ray has disrupted your abilities, so you won't be able to travel your usual way," Herb said.

Clark's jaw dropped. "How do you know about that?"

"I've been to the future. Now, let's go. We don't have any more time to waste."

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, at EPRAD, Jimmy and Lois had just been caught snooping around, and were tied up by Dr. Baines and her associates.

"Everyone knows where I am. You'll never get away with this," Lois said. Her confident tone masked the apprehension she felt. What if nobody at the Planet knew where she and Jimmy were? Lois and Jimmy had left on the spur of the moment. Clark was intelligent enough to figure out where they were, but would he realize it in time?

Suddenly, Tempus appeared out of nowhere. "Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen. We meet again."

"What are you talking about?" Lois replied. "I don't have any idea who you are."

"Oh, but you will." Dr. Baines' henchmen aimed their guns at Tempus, but he stunned them all except for Baines. "Dr. Baines, I presume."

"And you are...?"

"Tempus. We're on the same side. Lex Luthor and I want the same thing -- he just doesn't know it yet. But he will."

She blinked in surprise. "How did you know about Lex?"

"I'm from the future. You can choose whether or not to believe me, I really don't care at the moment. The point is, soon your plans will be thwarted by these reporters and a stranger from another planet called Superman. Supes and Luthor are going to be archenemies. Lex will spend the rest of his days plotting Superman's downfall, but he'll only realize in the very end what Superman's real Achilles heel is."

"What's that?"

"His secret identity, known only to his adoptive parents from Kansas, and eventually his wife. But that's not my point. You see, I'm going to give you a hand. If I get rid of these two, and reveal Superman's identity early, history will be forever changed. Supes will be so busy fending off the paparazzi, he won't have time to use his powers to save the world."

"I've never heard of Superman," Lois remarked, her curiosity getting the best of her. If she was going to die, she might as well learn a few things. "Who is he? What does he have to do with me and Jimmy?"

"Everything, Lois," Tempus replied. "Superman has everything to do with you and the Daily Planet. I might as well tell you, since you're not going to live much longer. Superman is really Clark Kent."

Lois forced herself to laugh. "My partner is an alien? You have got to be kidding."

"I'd suggest asking him yourself, but under the circumstances, you're not going anywhere...except to your grave."

"I don't think so," said a familiar voice.

"Clark!" Lois exclaimed. "I've never been so happy to see you in my life. Oh, watch out, this guy is a raving lunatic. He claims to be from the future and that you're an alien. Honestly, I've never heard anything more ridiculous."

"Give up, Tempus," Clark said. "I'm more than a match for you."

Tempus laughed. "Yeah, right. You and whose army, Superman?" As he aimed the kryptonite laser, HG Wells took out a weapon that resembled a remote control and fired it. Tempus' energy shield flickered, then vanished. "How'd you do that?"

"I went to the future and borrowed this device from myself. You'll find that all of your energy weapons have been rendered ineffective," Herb replied. "Oh, and I also had time to give Clark an anti-kryptonite radiation pill."

Tempus' eyes widened. How could Herb have outsmarted him? It just wasn't possible. "I don't believe it!" He took the kryptonite laser from his pocket and fired it.

"Nice try," Clark said. In the blink of an eye, he took the weapon from Tempus' hand, then disarmed Baines. He crumpled the gun like a piece of paper and dropped it.

Lois stared in amazement. She couldn't believe what Clark just did. It should have been impossible. "How did you do that? Jimmy, wake up. You're missing everything. Wake up!" She elbowed the unconscious young man behind her.

Jimmy groaned. "Ow, my head. Lois, are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

HG Wells grabbed Tempus' arm and placed a pair of glowing handcuffs around his wrists. "You're coming back to the future with me."

"What about Dr. Baines?" Lois asked.

Clark untied Lois and Jimmy, then used the same rope to tie Dr. Baines. "The police will be here soon. Lois, I know we have a lot to talk about, but..."

"It can wait. We need to get back to the Planet. Perry's waiting for my story."

"Right." He wondered just how much was going to be in the story. Would Lois print his secret on the front page?

As they left the building, Jimmy exclaimed, "Look!" A helicopter rose into the air, but exploded without warning. Flaming pieces of plastic and metal fell from the sky all around them. A shiver ran down Lois' spine as she wondered if Dr. Baines had somehow managed to escape, and had been on the helicopter.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the Daily Planet the next day, everyone was celebrating the exclusive story. Jimmy was excitedly telling a group of young women about his role. Perry noticed that Lois and Clark weren't mingling very much. In fact, it seemed as though they only had eyes for each other, just like he and Alice did when they were a lot younger.

"Lois," Clark said softly. "We really should talk about what happened yesterday." He had been relieved to see that nothing about him being an alien -- or the time travelers -- had made it into the paper.

She met his gaze. "You saved my life and Jimmy Olsen's. I don't think there's much else to discuss."

"But..."

She leaned over and whispered into his ear, "I don't care if you are from outer space, either." Before he could reply, Lois grinned. "Try and have fun, Clark. I know a lot's happened, but this is my scoop we're celebrating here."

He raised an eyebrow. "Your scoop? Don't you mean our scoop?"

"Clark, the only reason I let you have the byline was because I'm grateful for the rescue."

"Uh-huh." He folded his arms. "And what about all the other work I did?"

"I'm grateful for that, too."

Clark nodded. "Sure, Lois." Some things never changed.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night, Clark went home to visit his parents. He had an idea brewing, which he'd gotten from Lois' remark about having a change of clothes after saving someone who had fallen down a manhole. He'd been concocting the plan even before Tempus had said he knew about Superman's secret identity. That only cinched it.

Martha was more than happy to give it a try. She sewed costume after costume, and finally Clark decided on one that was bright red and blue. "I don't know about the cape, Mom."

"I like the cape. It'll look great when you're flying. But there's something missing." She reached under the bed and took out a box. "This was your old baby blanket. We found you in it." Also in the box was a piece of cloth with an "S" inside a geometric shape. "This was there, too." She held it up to the costume. "Perfect."

"Superman," Clark muttered.

"What?"

"That's what Tempus called me."

"Well, it fits. Do you think he really was from the future?"

"He knew a lot about me, Mom."

"Come on, let's go show Jonathan."

In the living room, Jonathan Kent was watching the launch on the news. It was on nearly every channel. "This is truly a historic occasion," he said as Martha and Clark entered the room. "Clark, remember watching the first moon landing when you were a kid? Clark?" He turned around and gaped at the outlandish costume his son was wearing.

"What do you think, Dad?" Clark turned around slowly.

"That's my boy." Jonathan grinned with a father's pride.

"Oh, no. What if someone recognizes you?" Martha asked.

"They're not going to recognize me, Mom, because it won't be me," Clark replied. He took his glasses off and put them back on again.

"Hmm," Martha said thoughtfully. "I think it'll work. You might have to do something about your voice, but it could work."

On TV, the launch countdown was getting close to the end.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lois Lane entered the launch vehicle wearing a space suit and glanced around to find a likely hiding place. When the shuttle docked, she could interview the colonists. She found a small room nearby and closed the door. As the countdown continued, Lois took another look around. Suddenly, she noticed a suspicious device attached to the wall with glowing red numbers. As she examined it more closely, Lois realized it was a bomb.

"Oh, my God!" She exclaimed. "It's a bomb!" Unfortunately, no one was going to hear her over the engines. Lois pried open a panel nearby and grabbed a pair of pliers. She was no explosives expert, but if she could cut some wires elsewhere, maybe someone would realize that something was wrong. As the launch was halted due to mechanical failure, Lois nervously waited. The bomb's countdown continued.

As Clark entered the shuttle, he saw Lois Lane inside, staring in fear at a small beeping box.

"Are you crazy?" Lois demanded, not recognizing Clark as he picked up the box. "That's a bomb!"

"Cross your fingers," he told her, and swallowed it.

Lois gaped. This guy was totally insane. He had to be. There was no other possible explanation. Tears streamed down her face as she realized they were going to die. The bomb exploded, and the man in the bizarre outfit burped.

"Excuse me," Clark said, grinning.

Lois' jaw dropped. She was alive. They were both alive. "How...?" Then she recognized Clark. It could only be him. As her eyes widened, Clark held a finger to his lips and pointed at the security screen overhead. Lois nodded. She couldn't announce his name, not when the whole world was watching them. So she followed him outside, where the crowd waited.

"He...he ate a bomb," Lois said, still shaky from her experience.

"I like your costume," said a little girl in a wheelchair.

"Thank you," Clark said. "My mother made it for me. What's your name?"

"Amy Platt. Can you show me how to fly?"

"No, but once this space station is functional, you may eventually walk."

"The launch has been scrubbed," one of the colonists said, obviously disappointed.

"Why? The vehicle hasn't been damaged. It's only the engines that aren't working. I can get you up there."

The colonists exchanged wary glances. "How?" Someone else asked.

"I'll just give you a boost."

After the colonists were in place, Clark lifted the space shuttle up. Lois stared in astonishment as he flew, pushing the rocket higher. It was incredibly amazing. No wonder her partner wanted to keep his identity secret. The press would be all over this, if they knew.

\* \* \* \* \*

Twenty-five years later, Superman stood on the auction floor as his spare cape was auctioned off for charity. HG Wells watched from the back of the room, and suddenly noticed Lois standing nearby.

"HG Wells," she whispered in sudden recognition. "What are you doing here?"

"I never tire of watching this momentous occasion. It's always a pleasure, Lois. How are you and Clark?"

"Just fine." She smiled.

Superman's cape went for \$125 million dollars, which was even more than anticipated. "And now," the mayor of Metropolis said, "Superman has an important announcement to make." Handing his microphone to the Man of Steel, the mayor stepped aside.

"Thank you, everyone, for coming together to celebrate this anniversary," Superman said. "The past 25 years have been wonderful. America now has the lowest crime rate in history, and other countries are also enjoying a new era of peace and security. We still have poverty, though, and people who sacrifice their education so they can get jobs in order to feed their families. The crime rate hasn't reached zero yet. More needs to be done. I have an idea, and it may sound a little crazy. But I know that if you read history books, you'll see that many crazy ideas have worked in the past."

Superman took a deep breath. "My plan is to create a completely safe haven where there is no crime and no poverty. Everyone will receive enough food and shelter. You'll be able to do whatever you want, as long as no laws are broken. I know it sounds impossible, but I have a plan. I've spoken to the mayor of Metropolis, and he's agreed to work with me on this. I know that we can do this. Nothing is impossible, as long as you believe it can be done."

The audience gave him a standing ovation. Superman handed the microphone back to the mayor. "I'll be having a press conference tomorrow at 9 am sharp. I'm sure there will be lots of questions," said the mayor. "Superman, thanks for coming tonight. Happy anniversary."

"Thank you," Superman said and flew off.

"The future is right on track," HG Wells remarked, looking at his watch. "And I have to be going. Goodbye, Lois, and good luck."

"Well, how'd I do?" Clark asked, sitting in Herb's empty seat.

"Wonderful. You missed HG Wells, though."

"Oh. Was he here?"

"Yes. He wished us luck."

"That's great. I think we're going to need a lot of it." Clark gave his wife a kiss, then relaxed to watch the rest of the charity auction.

\* \* \* \* \*

The End



## The Little Ant

Disclaimers: The characters recognizable from Lois & Clark are not mine and are owned by DC comics, as far as I know. Super Ant is my own original character.

This takes place sometime during the final season, but before the finale. I know, at first glance this doesn't look like a Lois & Clark fic, but keep reading. :)

\* \* \* \* \*

Once upon a time, there was a little ant who lived in Smallville...not that he cared. All that he cared about was finding enough food, keeping away from the bigger ants who liked to pick on their smaller siblings, and avoiding being stepped on or crushed by the giant humans who, in his opinion, were far too prolific. One day, the little ant was out foraging for food in a field when he happened to notice a huge green rock that was glowing as bright as the sun. Curious, he approached it.

Then the little ant felt sick. He'd never been this sick before, not even when he had sipped water from a pond near a large factory that was spewing black smoke into the air. That was nothing compared to how he felt now. The little ant eventually passed out.

Hours went by before the little ant woke up. The crimson sun slowly sank below the horizon. It reminded him of an apple, which in turn reminded him that he was hungry and hadn't eaten since at least morning. Intending to look for food in the field, the ant began to crawl. Suddenly he found himself in the driveway of a house that had been nowhere near the field.

A house meant that human giants would be nearby. The little ant realized that he had better hurry if he didn't want to be stepped on. He was crawling out of the driveway when Martha Kent opened the window and shouted, "Jonathan!"

From the garage, Jonathan replied, "What?"

"Lunch is ready!"

"All right," he answered, setting his tools down.

The ant moved quickly to avoid the human that was moving towards him, and found himself flying through the air. Jonathan blinked as the little ant flew past him and in through the window.

"I think a mosquito just flew in," he remarked.

Martha glanced around. "Well, I'm sure we'll get it eventually."

"When are Lois and Clark coming over?"

"They should be here anytime."

The sound of footsteps could be heard outside as Clark landed and set Lois down.

"Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad."

"Hello. Did you two have a nice trip?" Martha asked. "I heard that it was supposed to rain today in Metropolis."

"The weather was great, Mom."

While the Kent family got ready to eat lunch, the little ant hid under the table, hoping that someone might drop a crumb or two.

"Clark, are you okay?" Lois asked as he sat down. "You look a little pale."

"I'm fine, Lois," he replied. As he helped himself to roast beef and mashed potatoes, Clark soon realized that he was feeling weak.

"I think Lois is onto something," Martha said. "You don't look well, almost as if you've been exposed to Kryptonite...but that's impossible. You wouldn't have been able to fly here with Lois."

"I do feel kind of weird," Clark answered. "I'm sure it'll pass, though. This roast beef smells great, Mom."

"Thank you."

The little ant had to agree. He was so enticed by the smell that he found himself floating upwards towards it! Now, the little ant couldn't understand why or how he was defying gravity. He just knew that he was floating. It seemed reasonable that he might be able to control his direction, so he aimed for the space between Lois and Clark's chairs.

"What was that?" Lois asked as the little ant flew past her.

"I'm not sure," Clark said.

"Probably the mosquito that got in," Jonathan replied.

"I don't think that was a mosquito, Dad." Clark tried using his super vision. It wasn't working properly, so he squinted at the speck that had just landed on the table. "That's an ant!"

"What?"

"That can't be," Martha added.

"It is. I'm sure of it."

Lois bent down and looked at it. "He's right. It is an ant."

"Since when do ants fly?" Martha asked.

"They don't," Clark said. "But this one does."

"How is that possible?" Jonathan inquired.

"Beats me. Maybe it got exposed to radiation or something. You know, there's that factory north of town that's always polluting. I bet it wandered close to it and ingested some toxic waste."

"We should call Dr. Kline," Lois remarked.

"Yeah, but by then, its super powers will probably have worn off."

"Your toxic waste theory is good, but it doesn't explain why you're sick and your powers are gone," Martha said. "I wonder if that ant was exposed to Kryptonite."

Clark looked at her. "In that case, who knows how long its powers will last?"

The little ant suddenly took off and landed on the roast beef.

"Oh, no," Martha exclaimed. "It's on the meat!"

"Too bad we can't squish it," Jonathan said.

"Jonathan!"

"Well, it is an ant."

"But it's a super ant!"

"Are we supposed to just let it have that good pot roast?"

Martha sighed. "Ant, if you can understand me, get off the meat for just a minute. I'll cut you a piece."

The ant looked up. The giant human female was looking at him and moving her mouth. Sound was coming out, but it was incomprehensible. Was she trying to communicate? The ant waved its front right appendage, then attempted to tear off a little bit of meat. Big mistake! The entire roast beef flipped over along with the dish, drenching the little ant with meat juice.

"Oh, no!" Jonathan exclaimed. "There goes our lunch!"

Clark began to laugh. "You'll have to make him a costume if this keeps up, Mom."

"If he wants the roast beef that badly, let him have it," Martha said, also laughing.

"It's probably squished now," Lois said.

Slowly, the dish flipped back over along with the roast beef. The little ant couldn't believe he'd lifted something so huge. He crawled out of the puddle of meat juice and sat for a moment. All he had wanted was food. Why did this have to happen to him? The little ant sighed. Suddenly, Lois's glass of milk tipped over from the sudden gust of super breath.

The little ant was so confused by now that it didn't know what was happening. Finally Clark reached down and held out his hand. "Come on, little guy."

The ant looked up at him, wondering whether to trust this person. Somehow he sensed that it was safe to crawl onto the outstretched hand. Clark took the little ant into his old room and set him on the floor. "You stay in here for now, okay? Don't go anywhere." He closed the door.

When he returned to the kitchen, Martha was cleaning up the mess that the ant had made. "I still can't believe this. Can you, Jonathan?"

"No, Martha," he answered. "Who would have ever thought that an ant could get super powers from Kryptonite?"

"Here, Mom. Let me do that."

"All right." She sat down.

Clark took the rag and wiped up the table at super-speed. He had his powers back, now that the ant was no longer there. "I guess we'd better give it some food, or it might leave and cause who knows what kind of damage."

"Good idea," Martha said. She took two homemade chocolate-chip cookies out of a storage bag in the refrigerator and gave them to Clark. "This should be enough."

"All right."

Meanwhile, the little ant noticed a crack in the window that would be just wide enough for him to get through. It tried to fly, but all it could manage was levitating a few millimeters from the ground. Its powers were fading away.

Clark opened the bedroom door and set the cookies down on the bed. "Here you go. Enjoy."

But no little speck flew past him. Clark looked on the ground. He saw the ant crawling towards the cookies that he'd dropped. But it was crawling at normal speed. Clark tested his powers of flight. They were working perfectly.

"Guess you're back to normal, huh, little guy? See you around." He carefully backed away, being careful not to step on the ant. Slowly he closed the bedroom door.

The little ant was content to munch on chocolate cookies. Eventually, he found his way outside to another anthill, where the bigger ants were much nicer to him.

The End

## Wanda Sue

Disclaimers: The characters from Lois & Clark are not mine. As far as I know, they're owned by DC comics. The two typos in the Wanda Sue story are intentional, as this is a badfic parody.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was lunch hour and Lois Lane was bored. She set her box of Chinese take out aside as she turned to her computer and opened a file. This wasn't just any file, however. It was a story that she had been working on for quite a while. It was very nearly finished. It wasn't a news story, though. In fact, its title was "Wanda Sue Detroit Meets Superman."

She was almost finished with the scene in which Wanda and Superman fell in love at first sight. It went something like this...

\* \* \* \* \*

The alien Kal-El, otherwise known as Superman, was soaring through the afternoon sky when he heard a woman scream. He rushed to save her at the speed of light as she fell out of the window of a tall building. He appeared from out of nowhere and caught her. As he held her in his arms, Kal-El could not believe how beautiful she was. The gorgeous brunette clung to him.

"You are very lucky, ma'am," he said with a deep, husky voice.

Wanda Sue Detroit gazed into his crystal blue eyes. "You're absolutely right, handsome."

"You shouldn't stand near open windows in skyscrapers. They can be very dangerous," Superman warned.

"I wasn't standing near one on purpose. My cheating ex-boyfriend, Jerome, pushed me out."

"Jerome tried to murder you?" Superman asked in disbelief. How could someone try to kill this breathtakingly beautiful woman?

"He tried, but didn't succeed, thanks to you."

As Superman touched down gently, he looked into Wanda's soft brown eyes and tried to remember when he'd last seen anyone so beautiful. He couldn't. He was mesmerized by her good looks and soothing voice.

Wanda stood on her tiptoes (since he was taller than she by a few inches) and kissed him. "Thank you, Sugar."

Superman blushed. "Call me Kal-El, please."

"Kal-El," Wanda said, rolling the alien name off her tongue. It sounded good. "I'd like to see you again sometime."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Are you free tonight?" Kal-El said in Lois's head.

Lois blinked. Well, that sure sounded like a good way to end the scene. Yes, have him ask Wanda out.

"Earth to Lois Lane," Clark said, looking a bit amused. He could see part of the story she was working on. "Having fun, are we?"

Lois whirled around in her chair, obviously annoyed. "Clark! What do you think you're doing?"

"I was just wondering if you were free tonight so we could go over some of our notes together on our story."

"Oh, right. Sure," she replied. "Just don't sneak up on me like that again."

He chuckled. That must be some story she was working on. "Whatever you say, Lois."

After Clark went back to his desk, Lois returned to finish the rest of the story.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Are you free tonight, Miss...?" Kal-El asked.

"Detroit. Wanda Sue Detroit," she replied. "And yes, I'm free." She reached into her pocket for a business card. "You can call me on my cell phone anytime."

Kal-El nodded, then lifted off into the wild blue yonder.

Several hours later, Wanda Sue was at home when her cell phone rang. "This is Wanda Sue."

"Hello, this is me. Kal-El. Did you want to get together?"

Wanda's heart leapt. Did she? What kind of stupid question was that? Of course she did! "I'd love to!" Hurriedly, she gave him her address.

"I'll be right there," Kal-El assured her.

Right after she hung up, there was a knock on Wanda's window. She lived in a studio apartment, so she had a small balcony. She opened the window. Superman was outside with a bouquet of a dozen red roses.

"Come in, Super...Kal-El," Wanda said.

He smiled. "These are for you. Wow. Nice place. I wish I had one."

"Thanks," she said as she took the flowers and looked for a vase. "What do you mean?"

"I don't have an apartment. I just find shelter wherever I can."

"Oh...I'm so sorry to hear that. You deserve much better." Then a thought struck her. "If you really need a home, you can consider this your home away from home, or your home sweet home. Or...whatever."

Kal-El smiled. "That's very nice, but I don't want to take advantage of you, Miss Detroit."

"Call me Wanda Sue, please. And it wouldn't be taking advantage of me. Not at all."

Kal-El brightened. "All right. Maybe I will take you up on that sometime."

He looked and saw that Wanda had cooked a nice dinner for the two of them. There was steak, potatoes, and salad. The steak was medium-well done. It smelled delicious. A bottle of expensive champagne also sat on the table.

"That smells wonderful," Superman said.

Wanda smiled. "I'm a woman with many talents. Have a seat, please."

Superman sat down, and so did she. As he took the first bite of her steak, Kal-El thought it tasted delicious. "I can't believe you cook so well. I can't cook at all myself."

Another thought hit Wanda like a bolt of lightning out of the blue. "Why don't I teach you?"

"Teach me to cook?"

"Yes. It'll be fun."

"Okay," Kal-El agreed, and continued to eat Wanda's delicious dinner while gazing into her chocolate eyes.

Afterward, she turned on some romantic music. They waltzed for over an hour. Superman was a very good dance partner, better than any Wanda had ever had. He knew all the right moves -- and then some.

Wanda was in pure bliss. She'd never been happier. Jerome had treated her like dirt, but now she had Kal-El. He treated her like a queen. Did Jerome know what he'd just lost? Probably not. That two-timing jerk deserved whatever he got.

Wanda Sue gazed into Kal-El's sparkling azure eyes and smiled. Yep, Superman had her heart on a string, and what a string it was! She felt like she was dangling over a gaping abyss, but she felt perfectly safe, since Kal-El could save her from anything.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, at the Daily Planet, everyone had gone home except for the usual few who stayed late. Lois was trying to come up with an ending to her story, when she got a phone call from Clark.

"Lois, are you still there? Lois."

"Hi, Clark. Yeah, I'm still here. I'm just finishing up. I won't be much longer, I promise."

"Okay, but this Thai food is getting cold."

"Go ahead and eat yours. I'll be there in less than an hour."

"All right," Clark replied, but he sounded dubious.

Lois went back to her story and hurried to finish it...

\* \* \* \* \*

Kal-El had never been so much in love. He'd seen beautiful women before, but Wanda Sue was more gorgeous than anyone else. He gazed adoringly into her puppy-dog eyes.

"I love you, Wanda Sue."

She grinned. "I love you too, Kal-El. Will you stay with me tonight?"

"All right."

Wanda knew then that her life would never be the same. She was floating on air...literally. Superman had lifted her up and was kissing her. She snuggled up into his arms as he draped his cape over her and hovered over to the couch. They slowly sank down into the soft leather and remained that way for most of the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Glad that she had finally finished it, Lois posted her story onto the website [Supermanfans\\_fiction.net](#) and rushed to meet Clark at his place.

The next day, Clark was eating lunch. Every one in a while, he checked out the Superman fan fiction sites when he was bored, just to see what people thought of him. One particular story caught his attention. Who would come up with a name like Wanda Sue Detroit, he thought? Just out of curiosity, he read it.

Five minutes later, he wished he hadn't. It was horrible. It was filled with clichés and typos, and even worse, Superman was totally out of character. It made him wince. Who would write such a thing? Clark typed in the space reserved for reviews and hit the send button. When he was finished, he went to his scheduled meeting and completely forgot about the bad story.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lois returned to her computer after the meeting to find the review someone had sent her anonymously through the [Supermanfans\\_fiction.net](#) website. It read: This has got to be one of the worst stories I've seen here! You've got Superman completely out of character, it's totally filled with cliché's, apartment and bouquet are spelled wrong and even worse, this is a Mary Sue. Please get an editor or something.

Lois stared at the review in shock. How could anyone be so nasty? And what on Earth was a "Mary Sue"? Okay, so she hadn't done a spell check, but that didn't really mean she was a bad writer. And Superman was not out of character! She was sure that she knew him better than anyone else. Fuming, Lois wished she could tell the creep off, but the website had no way to reply because the reviewer had sent the message anonymously. Angrily, she stood up just as Clark was coming over.

"Lois? Is everything ok?"

"Yeah. Some idiot just flamed me, that's all. Jerk."

Clark glanced over her shoulder and recognized the review he'd left. He realized his jaw had dropped. He struggled to think of something to say.

"Oh...uh...well, I'm sure there was a good reason for it."

"Ha! That shows you how just much you know. Okay, so maybe I don't run the spell checker every time I write something, but that's what I've got you for. I don't write Superman out of character, and what exactly is a Mary Sue, anyway?"

"A self-insert," Clark said automatically and then regretted it.

Lois stopped in mid-rant. “You know what a Mary Sue is?”

“Um...”

She realized that he was looking extremely guilty, and there could only be one reason for that. “Clark Kent, did you read my story on the internet?”

He blushed. “Well, I was bored and it was there, and I didn’t know you wrote it. If I had, I’d probably have been nicer.”

“Probably?” she glared at him. “And just how do you know that Superman is out of character? How well do you know him?”

“Very well, actually,” Clark replied. “I’m sorry.”

“Oh, yeah. Sure.”

“No really, I am. I realize that what I wrote was hurtful, and for that, I’m sorry.”

Lois took a deep breath. “All right.”

“How can I make it up to you?”

The perfect idea came to her. “Write a Superman fanfic that’s even worse and post it on that website.”

The stunned look on Clark’s face made her smile.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Kent Stu**

(The sequel to Wanda Sue)

Disclaimers: I don't own Lois & Clark. I believe the characters are still owned by DC comics. Please note, all of the typos and grammar errors in Clark's story are on purpose, even the Lois one. ;)

\* \* \* \* \*

Clark stared at the computer screen. For the first time in his career as a journalist, he was unsure of what to write. However, this particular story was different than most. He was writing it because of Lois's badly written (at least, in his opinion) Superman fan fiction. He'd accidentally discovered it on the Internet, read it, and reviewed it, not knowing she had written it. But Lois found out anyway, and as a way to make it up to her, he was going to write an even worse story and post it on the Internet.

Deliberately writing a bad story was an idea that he was having trouble with. Clark believed in always doing the best that he could. He'd been brought up to value integrity and hard work. If it weren't for Lois, he wouldn't be doing it at all. Of course, if it weren't for her, Superman wouldn't exist. Clark would still help people as much as he could, but he wouldn't have a secret identity to hide behind. He wondered if there was any way he could let her know. Then an idea popped into his head, and he began to type.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was 9 am when Kent Stu arrived at work. He had a rather dull job as an accountant in a tax firm. However, Kent was happy because of one thing: his relationship with Wanda Sue Detroit. Granted, she didn't know it was him, for she only recognized one aspect of his personality – Superman. You see, Kent led a double life, and that meant a secret identity. He could never tell anyone his secret. They would try to kill him and the people he loved, especially Wanda. He refused to let that happen.

Kent sat down at his desk as his boss, Jim White, came out of his office. “Mr. Stu,” he barked, “why are you late?”

Kent sighed. He'd just rescued a whole village from a flood in China that morning. It had been on the news. But he had to come up with a suitable excuse. “I, ah, had a dentist appointment, sir. I'm sorry. It won't happen again.”

“Well, I hope it does, or you'll get cavities,” said Mr. White.

“Cavities, sir?”

“You know, when your teeth rot. Why, I remember the time Elvis had a cavity...” Mr. White trailed off, telling a story about his favorite rock star, who had not really died after all, but was currently the governor of California once they found him alive.

Kent did his best to look like he was paying attention, but his attention wanders to Lois, who was the love of his life. They were going to get married someday, he just knew it.

“Anyway, Mr. Stu, get back to work.”

“Yes, sir.”

Kent sighed as his boss left. Sometimes, he wondered if he was ever going to be able to tell Wanda Sue his secret. She was beautiful. He knew he could trust her, but when was the right time?

After work, he met Wanda at her apartment, dressed as Superman. She was wearing a glittery red dress that made his eyes pop, though he tried to control the reaction, since Superman would never react like that. “Good evening, Wanda Sue.”

She smiled. “Hello, Kal El. I’ve cooked a wonderful dinner.”

He could smell it. She’s fried shrimp, cooked rice and vegetables and put a nice wine on the table. Wanda had soft jazz playing in the background and the lights were turned down low.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Clark, what are you doing?” Lois’s voice cut into his thoughts.

He glanced up. “I’m working on that piece.”

“What piece?”

“You know. The piece.”

Lois suddenly realized he meant the fan fiction. “Oh, that story?”

He nodded.

“Can I read it?”

“Not until it’s finished.”

”Okay. But hurry up.”

Clark nodded and began to type some more after Lois left.

\* \* \* \* \*

As Wanda Sue and Superman sat down to dinner, Kent had a burning desire to tell her the truth. “Wanda,” he said, “what would you say if I told you I haven’t been completely honest with you?”

She looked stunned. “Kal El, you’re the most truthful person I’ve ever met. Whatever do you mean?”

“Well, there’s something about me you don’t know.”

“Oh?”

He nodded. “First you must promise never to tell anyone else.”

“I promise,” Wanda replied. Her soft brown eyes sparkled as she stared into his eyes.

“I have a secret identity. I’m not who you think I am.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I work as an accountant during the day, Wanda. My real name is Kent Stu.”

An accountant? She gaped at him in shock. Her fork fell from her hand and nearly tipped her wine glass over. “You have a day job?”

He nodded. “You see, I’ve always wanted to have a life and fit in. That’s all I’ve ever really wanted. And now that I have you, I can do that even more.” He smiled disarmingly.

Wanda’s expression turned to one of joy. “Oh, Kent! I am so much more in love with you now! Let’s get married!!!”

He grinned as he rushed around the table at super speed and hugged her. “I would love to marry you, Wanda.”

And they lived happily ever after.

\* \* \* \* \*

Clark sighed. Yes, it was a truly terrible Marty Stu fic, but it would do. He glanced at Lois’s desk. “I’m finished.”

She looked up. “Okay. Just e-mail it to me, and I’ll post it for you.”

He nodded. Clark wondered if Lois would see through his story and discover the true message behind it.

She read quickly. When she was finished, she walked over to his desk. “Clark, this is truly the worst Marty Stu fic I’ve seen. Superman has a secret identity? Come on. How could he live such a double life and hold down a day job? He’d be late all the time. He’d probably get fired within the first month.”

He tried not to look nervous. She didn’t believe him. Well, maybe it was for the best. “It was just a hunch I’ve always had.”

“Right. Well, I’ll post it.”

“Lois, does this make us even?”

She smiled. “Yes, Clark. We’re even.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The End

## **Wanda and Kent**

(The sequel to Kent Stu)

Disclaimers: I do not own the recognizable characters from Lois & Clark. As far as I know, they are owned by DC Comics.

Once again, the grammatical errors and typos in the badfic are intentional.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lois was reading through her e-mail when she happened to notice quite a few nasty messages related to Clark's "Marty Stu" story.

"Your story sux!!!! How could Superman possibly have a secret identity? He'd never be able to get a job, he's an alien!"

"You've got pretty much everything spelled wrong, and your grammar is atrocious. You really need a beta reader! You're a poor excuse for a writer."

"Your story is terrible. You have too many typos. And who is this Lois person that Superman is supposed to be in love with, anyway? Where did she even come from? You need to learn how to write."

Lois Lane blinked in surprise. What the...? She scanned the last comment again. Clearly, it said Lois. Perhaps Clark had made a Freudian slip. It was possible. But how could Superman be in love with her? Well, the story meant to be a Marty Stu. Maybe Clark had really fallen in love and couldn't bring himself to admit it under normal circumstances. What if this was his way of telling her, and she had missed it? What if he was afraid that she was in love with Superman and that it would affect their friendship?

She opened Clark's file and read the story again. How could she have missed that typo? She'd caught all of the others. That typo had not been deliberate, so it was easier to miss. Maybe she had wanted to miss it subconsciously. Maybe she didn't want to be in love with Clark or Superman. Was she afraid of falling in love?

Lois shook her head. No, that wasn't right. She was not afraid of having a loving relationship. She wanted one, but she wanted it to be with the right person. However, she realized that Superman was a fantasy. That was why she wrote fantasy stories in the first place, because she knew she couldn't have the real thing. A daydream was better than nothing.

On the other hand, she knew that Clark was real, but she felt that he was not being completely honest with her about something. For that reason, she could not love him. If he couldn't tell her everything, then how could he expect her to trust him?

But what if he had already told her the truth, a tiny voice inside her said. What if Clark had told her everything, but she had been too blind to see it?

Lois re-read Clark's story once more. Even with all the typos, Lois suddenly saw clearly what Clark had written. It was a Marty Stu, after all -- a self-insert. Clark could have been fantasizing about secretly being Superman, but she didn't think so. For one thing, the two men looked too much alike. For another thing, Clark was frequently gone when Superman was saving someone. And there were all of Clark's lame excuses to think about. He acted like a man who was covering up something. It made perfect sense.

Her expression of shock reflected on her computer screen behind the black monitor and the glowing white text. Lois felt galactically stupid. How could she have missed it all along? She had played right into his hands. Well, there was only one thing to do.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You've got new mail," Clark's computer announced cheerfully. He decided not to ignore it this time, since he hadn't checked it during the past hour anyway. The message was from Lois. He double-clicked on the e-mail and read it.

She had sent him another Mary Sue story. Inwardly groaning, he wondered if she was going to make him write another one. It was titled "Wanda Sue & Kent Stu," and it read like this.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wanda Sue Detroit gazed into Kal-El's brilliant blue eyes. They were the color of the night sky and clear as day. Super-man smiled charmingly.

"Wanda, there's something I have always wanted to tell you."

"Oh?" What could Superman have to tell here?

"He cleared his throat. "I'm not who you think. I have a secret identity."

Wanda was amazed. "A secret identity?"

"Yes. You see, I am not always the man you see before you. I have another life."

"Oh..." Wanda's jaw dropped. Next thing, he was going to tell her that he was married with six kids.

"My real name is not Kal-El. Well, it is, but it's not my Earth name."

"Of course not. It's Superman." Wanda smiled.

He shook his head. "Superamn is the name you gave me, but it's not mine. My real name is Kent Stu. You see, I'm an reporter. I work for a major metropolitan newspaper. I was afraid to tell you this before. I thought you might hate me for lieing to you." He looked sad and gazed at her with puppy dog eyes.

Wanda gasped. "Kal-El, Kent, I could never hate you!! I love you. I will always love you, no matter what!!!! This doesn't change anything."

He looked hopeful. "Really?"

She nodded. "Really. I love you, Kent Stu."

Kent grinned. "And I love you, Wanda Sue." From his pocket he took a ring. It was made of pure gold and had a huge sparkling diamond the size of Metropolis. "Will you marry me?"

Wanda's jaw dropped. "Yes, Kal...Kent! I will!! I do!!!"

They kissed and lived happily ever after.

\* \* \* \* \*

Clark rolled his eyes. It was the sappiest thing he'd ever read. Wait a minute...what was that? His eyes went back up to the part where Wanda had said that Kent Stu was a reporter. Clark could've sworn he'd used an accountant in his story before. Had Lois figured out his secret?

At the bottom of the e-mail was this line: P.S. Gotcha!

Uh oh. She had figured it out. He deleted the e-mail, then sat and tried to think of what to say to Lois. She was approaching him, and she looked immensely pleased with herself. He had to think of something fast.

"Um," he said. That was brilliant, Kent, he thought.

"You have a lot of explaining to do, buster," she said.

\* \* \* \* \*

The End

Author's note: Thanks to all who read my badfic trilogy and were able to get through Lois's terrible writing. This will be the last story in this mini-series.