

# Get the Story!

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Rated G

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Summary: Lois has just met the astounding Superman. And she's going to get the story on him, oh yes! Even her little sister Lucy coming into town won't stop her from getting the story, right?

Author's note:

This fic is for the 2009 Ficathon. It is for

Lois Lane Fan.

This is a fanfic based on the television show, "Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman". No copyright infringement is intended.

Special thanks to Dan Levine, writer of "Neverending Battle", from which I borrow liberally, both dialogue and situations. Also, for the purposes of this fic, the events of "Strange Visitor" haven't happened yet, and Lucy hasn't been living with Lois..

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Lois Lane stopped before the entrance to the Daily Planet newsroom and rubbed her eyes. She might be tired, but on this bright autumn morning she certainly wasn't going to show it.

It had been a hectic time. She'd been running for days, fueled by strong coffee and righteous indignation, tracking down the details of the space shuttle sabotage. She had been taken captive and almost killed, along with Clark Kent and Jimmy Olsen. But she'd gotten her revenge by exposing the machinations of her captor, Dr. Antoinette Baines.

Of course, that story had been knocked off the front page by an even bigger story - probably the biggest story of the century. Superman. The flying man with superhuman abilities. She'd been in the shuttle, almost resigned to dying, when this... this... whatever he was... had come in and *swallowed* the ticking time bomb. She'd practically fainted.

Having secured Superman's promise for a one-on-one interview, Lois had been up all night waiting for him to return to the EPRAD command center. And he'd given her that interview - tantalizingly brief and unsatisfactory - in a conference room at EPRAD, and then - what could be more surreal - he'd *flown* her back to the Daily Planet. He'd set her down carefully in the newsroom, and had soared away as her co-workers stared in astonishment. Even hard-bitten newsmen who swore they'd seen everything had stood there, eyes wide and jaws dropped.

She hadn't gotten any sleep that night, staying up and waiting for Superman to return. And then she'd spent most of the next day working on her story about the space program, the attempted sabotage, and the biggest story, Superman.

Unusually for the Planet, in terms of hard facts and front section "real estate", there was an interesting inverse order. Superman was the biggest story, and got the largest proportion of newsprint. But Lois and the Planet knew the least about him. Contrarily, she had the facts for just about everything in the space program - after all, it had been extensively reported on for months - but the dry facts about the space station and the colonist transport got the least amount of paper.

The attempted sabotage fell somewhere in the middle. Lois knew a little - not a lot, but she had more hard facts than she did about Superman. And the sabotage, which normally would have been the top story, was relegated to the middle pages due to the astonishing actions of Superman.

So by quitting time, Lois Lane was definitely exhausted and ready to leave. Then, of course, she'd been forced to stay later, kept there by the persnickety legal team, making sure her allegations were water-tight. She'd been exasperated. Couldn't they have done their job earlier? It wasn't like they hadn't had three hours, for cripes sake! She'd drowsed off in her cab, and the cabbie had actually had to shake her awake at her destination. She'd barely been able to brush her teeth and strip her clothing before she fell limply into bed.

And then, Lucy had come knocking. Two o'clock in the morning, and her sister had dropped in, literally out of the blue. Lois had staggered, muzzy with sleep, to her door, and opened it to find Lucy, newly arrived from Northern California. Lucy had managed to keep her up for what seemed an ungodly amount of time.

Sleep was impossible for a few more hours while Lucy invited herself to stay at Lois's for a few weeks (rent-free, of course) and chattered all about how she had lined up a job opportunity here in Metropolis, and she had the interview tomorrow, but her flight had been delayed over twelve hours, and not only that, the airline had lost her luggage, but she still had some emergency supplies in her carry-on, and she'd broken up with Billy, he didn't support her at all, and the breakup had been kind of acrimonious and she felt that she should really get away from Billy, you know, width-of-the-country away, because he was kind of creepy, you know, but it was probably for the best, because she was going to make a new life for herself here in Metropolis, and the best thing about that was that she would be able to see Lois all the time, and...

Lois had zoned out after about five minutes of this. She'd dragged out the air mattress she kept for company (hardly ever used, at least not since Lucy's last visit two years ago), put bedding on it, made sure Lucy had nightclothes, an alarm clock and a toothbrush, and had eventually bluntly announced that she was going back to bed.

So her hopefully-fourteen-hours of restorative sleep had been diminished to maybe six, and Lois definitely felt the lack. She stood at the newsroom door and took a deep breath. She pinched the bridge of her nose and rubbed her temples. She closed her eyes and took five deep breaths. She put on her mental armor. [[I'm ready. Today will be a day with a great story. Today I'll find things that no one else has found. Today Lois Lane will write what could be a Pulitzer-winning story.]] Then her self-talk turned more specific. [[Today I'll find out more about Superman.]]

She opened her eyes, straightened her shoulders, and strode confidently into the newsroom.

It was pandemonium. An electrician was re-wiring a light fixture. Loud conversation echoed across the room. Perry's voice rose over the hubbub.

"Olsen! Where are your blow-ups of Superman?"

"Lab's backed up. Turnaround might be a couple of hours," the youthful photographer pleaded.

"Turnaround! Great shades of Elvis! What are we, Daily Planet newsmen or second stringers for the Weehawken Gazette?!" Perry's voice rose to a thunderous crescendo and the newsroom fell nearly silent. Perry went into his office

and slammed the door.

Lois smiled. She'd been lucky to have Perry as her editor. As a rookie, he'd mentored her, led her, taught her that nothing less than the best was acceptable. And now, faced with the greatest story of the century, there was no way he would let the Daily Planet have coverage that was lacking.

Clark Kent strolled up to her and handed her a steaming cup. "Coffee, non-fat creamer, artificial sweetener. Good morning, Lois."

She took the coffee, nonplussed. "Good morning," she replied automatically. What was Clark doing? Everyone ignored Mad Dog Lane in the morning - *nobody* approached her until she'd had at least three cups of coffee! *Nobody* actually brought her coffee!

She narrowed her eyes. Maybe he was trying to steal her story. She'd been the only one to fly with Superman. Although, when she'd been working on the shuttle sabotage story, Clark had dropped a few comments that made her think that he'd gotten some face time with Superman too. Probably it had happened in the time after Superman had come back to EPRAD and before he'd met her in the conference room at the EPRAD complex for her exclusive interview. She really didn't know how much one-on-one Superman had done with the media members in the pack at the EPRAD Mission Control Media Room. So he could have talked with Clark for a few minutes.

[[Superman is *my* story!]] Lois thought reflexively. She deserved it. She'd seen him first. She'd bullied him into the interview. She'd even named him - he hadn't given his name, and her whispered eponym had gained wide currency.

She looked at Clark suspiciously, but he'd already turned around. Curiously disappointed that he hadn't waited for her to thank him ([are you sure you would have thanked him, Lois?]) - an inner voice nagged her), she noticed that he'd headed over to the small crowd standing around Stan, the sketch artist.

Lois quickly joined in the crowd. It didn't take her long to see that Stan was trying to depict Superman. She decided to make sure the artist got it right. After all, Superman had actually flown her to the Planet newsroom - nobody else had been that close to him!

So she felt justified in correcting the sketcher: "No, the eye color's wrong."

Stan retorted, "You said 'brown'".

"Not *brown* brown. Not dull, insipid, mud brown...like Clark's. No offense, Clark."

"Mud?" Clark said, offended.

"More vibrant, more radiant."

"Bedroom eyes," Cat Grant added in a sultry voice.

Jimmy Olsen felt the need to add his two cents. "But if he is an alien, maybe he doesn't get the old...you know, itch."

"One way to find out," Cat said lasciviously.

Indignant, Lois retorted, "A possible visitor from another planet arrives on Earth and all you can think of is hauling him off to your lair and trying him out?"

Cat responded with her usual insouciance. "Test drive, Lois. A couple hours behind the wheel, and I'd know for sure if we were talking import or domestic."

Lois caught Clark rolling his eyes. She could understand that. Cat Grant was enough to make any sane person roll their eyes. Although Lois couldn't deny that the thought of taking a "test drive" with Superman sent a frisson of excitement through her too. She cut through the

chatter with her final statement: "What we've got here is an example of human evolution, 'before' and 'after'. Clark is the 'before'. Superman is the 'after'." She looked again at Clark - heavens, how did the man manage to have his tie permanently askew? "Make that way, way after."

Clark seemed about to say something, but motion at the newsroom door distracted Lois's attention.

"Lucy? What are you doing here?" She strode to her sister. "I thought you said the airlines were going to deliver your luggage this morning. Why are you wearing my gray suit?"

"Hi, Lois!" Lucy chirped. "They *did* deliver my luggage. Your suit was just better than anything I brought."

Lois counted to ten, slowly. "What are you doing here?" she asked again, after she was certain she could hold her voice steady.

"I thought I'd come by and see where you worked. You talk about it all the time."

"I thought you had an appointment."

"I did. LNN NewsTime. Two blocks away. I've got half an hour to get there."

Newsroom members drifted closer, curious. Lois frowned when she saw Cat Grant, and realized that Cat had probably heard the comment Lucy made about the suit. Great. Now the newsroom gossip would know that Lois Lane's sister stole Lois Lane's clothing.

Clark stepped forward, interrupting Lois's angry ruminations. "Hello. Uh, Lois....?"

"Oh...everyone, this is my sister, Lucy. Lucy, Cat Grant. Jimmy Olsen. Clark Kent."

"I can see the family resemblance," Clark said, smiling as he shook Lucy's hand. Lois felt even crankier. Did Clark smile at all the women like that?

Jimmy just stared at Lucy for a moment, and Cat gave an outwardly cordial greeting that Lois was sure harbored an unseen trap. After a minute, Jimmy shook himself, and stepped forward a pace.

"Have you been to Metropolis before, Miss Lane?"

"Oh, call me Lucy...uh, Jimmy?"

"Yeah. Jimmy, uh, James Olsen."

"I grew up in Metropolis, but I haven't been here for years. Um, James." Lucy had moved closer to Jimmy, and he'd responded by stepping toward her. They stood, almost touching. "I've been in California for the last few years. Lois and I talk on the phone all the time but it's really different, you know, actually being here."

There was a moment of awkward silence, and Jimmy ignoring the opportunity to ask Lucy what she thought about California. Instead, he went in a different direction. "You can tell you two are sisters."

"Really?" Lucy asked, smiling.

"You two look a lot alike, but Lois is, um...." Jimmy belatedly realized he was in trouble.

"More mature?" Cat sniped. "Hard-boiled? Older-looking? As tough as a fifty-cent steak?"

"Cat...," Clark said chidingly. Lois fumed silently.

"Oh, all right," Cat sniffed.

"You should know all about being older," Lois said venomously.

Lucy stepped in. "Lois is only three years older than me."

"Oh? I would have said ten years, easy," Cat replied airily.

"Perhaps Lucy would be interested to know that you covered Rudolph Valentino's funeral." Lois knew she was failing miserably at the verbal swordplay. Cat was scoring

all the points.

Lucy fell for it. "Really?"

Cat grimaced. "That was in 1926, dear." She glared at Lois. "Quite a few years before I began working here."

"Speaking of 1926," Clark interjected desperately, "this newsroom was remodeled then - they set it up for radio reception." Everyone gave him a who cares? look. He plunged on. "They wired it for TV in the late forties, and then the computer revolution came. So they're constantly updating the Planet facilities."

Lois said nothing, but inwardly gave Clark points for re-directing the conversation. He'd managed to change the subject before she and Cat's argument got any more acrimonious.

"This is a really neat place," Lucy said, almost wistfully, looking around.

"Would you like a tour?" Clark jumped in.

"I'll be happy to show you," Jimmy added.

"Lucy doesn't need a tour, Clark, she's got to leave to get to her appointment."

"Now, Lois, I'm sure your sister can spare five minutes."

"Oh, all right," Lois conceded ungraciously. Clark was definitely too interested in Lucy, Lois thought. He should be working on a story! He shouldn't be wasting time with her little sister. And what was with Jimmy? He was staring at Lucy like she was a canteen of water and he was lost in the desert.

Clark ushered Lucy around the room. Jimmy and Lois followed. "This is Lois's desk...and mine...and there's Mr. White's office...I'd take you in to meet him, but I don't think it's a good time right now...and would you care for coffee, or a donut?...and..."

"What's he doing?" Lucy asked, looking at Stan.

Lois stepped in. "He's trying to sketch Superman."

"Ooh, Superman! Have you actually met him?" Lucy asked everyone in earshot.

Lois stared in disbelief. Her sister actually had her hand on Clark's lapel as she gazed soulfully into his eyes.

Clark stepped back slightly and Lois felt a little better. Why should she care, she asked herself. She didn't have any attraction to Clark. Clark was just that guy at the next desk over. Lucy shouldn't be manhandling him, that was all.

"Well, I saw him at EPRAD, but Lois actually flew with him," Clark said smoothly.

"You did?!" Lucy almost squealed. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"If you'd read my article, you would have known," Lois said coolly.

Lucy had the grace to look abashed. She turned her gaze to the sketchpad. "So this is what he looks like?"

"Not really," Lois said. She sniffed and addressed her comments to Stan. "The features are too coarse. Think noble. Think...Greek god."

Stan, lost, replied, "Greek god?"

"Let's take it a feature at a time. For example, the chin. Square, but not plain. The chin of a man who stands for something. And the nose. Definite, but not overbearing."

Clark was definitely annoyed now. Turning away from Lucy, he met Lois's eyes directly. "You know, he didn't seem that special to me. Except for the flying and the uniform, he could have been any ordinary guy."

"Ordinary? Give me a break." Lois stood straighter. "And I'm going to get the Superman story. An exclusive."

Lucy laughed, the sound breaking the tense atmosphere

between Lois and Clark. "Clark, you must be new. Haven't you seen my sister in her Big Reporter Mode before? Don't you know she always gets her story?"

Clark had actually paled, Lois noted with satisfaction. He rallied, though. "You won't be able to get the story if you can't get near him."

"I'll get near him!"

"And just how are you going to do that?"

"I found him."

"Actually, *he* found *you*."

Lucy broke into the incipient argument. "Oh, look at the time! I've got to get to my interview! Clark, thanks for showing me around the newsroom. Lois...uh, good luck."

Jimmy stepped forward. "I hope we'll see you again."

Lucy laughed nervously. "Well, James, if this job interview pans out and I stay in Metropolis, I'll probably stop by here to see Lois on occasion."

"That would be nice." Jimmy stared longingly at Lucy.

"Oh...um, yeah."

Lois escorted her sister to the newsroom door, while Lucy returned the waves from the staffers she'd met during Clark's mini-tour. "Lucy, I am going to get that story. No hack from Nowheresville is going to scoop me."

"I know you will, Lois." Lucy hugged her sister and left the newsroom.

As she left, Lois realized that she'd never wished her sister good-luck.

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The rest of the day went on like that. Nothing went right and Lois was tired and cranky. At the staff meeting, Lois had protested that she should have the follow-up on the Superman story, since she'd gotten the exclusive. Perry had overruled her, saying that the story was too big, Superman was fair game, and it was every reporter for him- or herself.

Clark had observed that Superman might be shy from all the media frenzy. Maybe he didn't want to be found. Clark was hiding something, Lois knew. That rat probably knew where to find Superman.

Clark had gone on. "He could be anywhere - Mars, the North Pole..."

Lois had promptly wasted the morning calling the radar facility at NORAD and getting no answer.

Around lunchtime, she'd overheard Clark talking on the phone. "What? He's there now? Really? Don't let him leave." From the excitement in his voice, she'd known that Clark had to have a Superman lead.

She'd followed him. And humiliatingly, the whole conversation had been about Clark renting an apartment. "He" wasn't Superman, "he" was Clark's landlord. And even more humiliatingly, she'd been caught following Clark.

And then, to add insult to injury, she'd gotten word that Superman was saving suicide jumpers. She'd rushed to different ends of Metropolis, only to find that her cabbie had gotten there too late. She'd missed the story. She tried to make up for it by interviewing witnesses and bystanders, getting a fairly complete picture of what had happened. Unfortunately, she hadn't been there - and Clark had. The hack from Nowheresville had scooped her!

And Clark, of course, had to rub it in.

"Lois, it was incredible! Superman caught that woman in midair. She's okay. She left in an ambulance a minute ago." He gave Lois a smirk. "You should have been here."

Okay. That was it. She had a headache. She'd missed this lead. Clark was taunting her. The taunting was the last straw.

She plastered a fake smile on her face. "Clark! That's really great!"

"I better phone it in." His instincts were sound, no doubt about that.

Lois swooped in for the kill. "Don't. They'll just rewrite you." She put on a persuasive tone. "My advice is, get back to the office and start typing. Look, you can have my cab. Go on."

Clark got into the cab. He smiled at her, trustingly, innocently. "Lois, I appreciate this. I owe you one."

As the cab sped away, Lois muttered, "No, I owe you one." An annoying little voice in her head was saying, [[Hey, wait a minute]], but she ignored it. She ran to the pay phone to phone in the story. "Doris? Get me rewrite."

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Lois wasted more time that afternoon, calling everyone she could think of who might have a clue on how to track Superman. No one knew anything.

When Clark stomped toward her, carrying a mock-up of the evening edition, Lois pulled on her armor, ready to defend herself.

"'Superman Averts Double Suicide', by *Lois Lane*," he said bitterly. "First of all..."

"Clark, don't even start. You got what you deserved."

"What?!"

"I know it's tough, but some day you'll thank me."

"Thank you!?"

"You're welcome. Never, never let go of a story. Trust no one. Period."

"I see," Clark said grimly.

"Consider it a life lesson. No charge."

Clark's mouth opened but no words came out. After a minute, he gave up and left her desk. Lois sighed in relief. That could have been much worse. She ignored the tiny tremor in her conscience. Any Superman story belonged to her. She deserved it. She got back to work. Maybe no one she'd called so far knew anything, but she wasn't going to give up. She'd find out more about Superman. She'd win that Pulitzer. [[Except...will you do it honestly? Will you enjoy it once you get it? Will you really earn it, or will you steal it?]] That mocking voice asked her.

She shrugged off the voice. No sense in brooding. As she'd told Clark, trust no one. Never let go of a story. Engrossed in defending her conduct to herself, she missed Lucy's return.

A cough at her side brought Lois back to herself. Lucy stood there, smiling triumphantly.

"How did it go?" Lois asked. She already knew the answer.

"You're looking at the newest production assistant for LNN NewsTime. I start tomorrow morning."

Jimmy had drifted over by now. "Hey, that's great!" He beat Lois to it. "So you're a PA. Congratulations, Lucy!"

"Thanks, Jimmy." When had Lucy and Jimmy become so friendly? Lois wondered. Lucy had only been in the newsroom for half an hour this morning! And Lucy didn't seem to be calling him "James" anymore, either.

"So, what do you have to do as a production assistant?" Lois asked, deliberately breaking up the heated glances between Jimmy and Lucy.

"Well, right now, I'm kind of the lowest of the low - just a gofer and a helper behind the camera. But Mr. Botsford says that any of the PA's have a chance to move in front of the lights. It's all up to the person. You've got to be go-getting, and come up with story ideas, and do some legwork on them."

Cat and Clark joined them. What was it with Lucy, Lois thought. How does she attract people like this?

"So I guess you'll be asking me for advice, then?" Lois asked.

Lucy shuffled her feet. "Well, maybe about how to chase down a story...." She looked at the small crowd around her. "You all got any ideas?"

Cat laughed. "Well, Lucy, you seem like a nice kid." She critically appraised the gray suit Lucy wore. "Although I can't say much for your outfit."

"Hey!" Lois snapped. "That's *my* suit that Lucy borrowed!"

Cat sneered. "Exactly."

"You know, Cat, you're not one to talk," Lois said evenly. "You look like someone poured you into your outfit and you forgot to say 'when'. At least I wore more than a gownless evening strap to the last Planet event."

"A strap that was better than the nun's habit that you wore." Being satisfied that she'd dued Lois into momentary silence (or at least a fuming rage that kept Lois speechless), Cat turned to Lucy and totally changed her tone. "Lucy, when I was a rookie, another reporter gave me a tip."

"Yeah, back in the Pleistocene," Lois muttered, restraining herself from clawing Cat's eyes out. Was Clark actually hiding a smile?

"That tip got me started. And, all through my career, I've tried to pay that forward. Lois's eyes widened in surprise, despite her best efforts to keep a poker face. She'd never known that about Cat. Of course, they hardly worked the same schedule. Cat was always slithering into the newsroom at one or two o'clock in the afternoon, after her late nights on the society beat. So why should she have known that about Cat? Lois asked herself. [[Maybe because you've worked in the same newsroom with her for eight years?]] her annoying inner voice replied. [[She was here when you were an intern just out of high school, and she's been here since - have you ever really tried to get to know her?]]

"We women in the news business have to stick together. And so," Cat continued loudly, "*even though* Lois is your sister, I'm not going to hold that against you. Come over to my desk - " she cast a jaundiced eye at the crowd, lingering most on Lois. " - when you're done and I'll give you a tip. What you do with it is up to you."

"Is it about Superman?" Lucy asked wistfully.

"You know, I had an idea for a way to track down Superman," Jimmy interrupted.

Lucy turned to him, excitement in her gaze. "Really?"

Jimmy fumbled with the strap of his camera. "Really. I just thought, if Superman is an alien, and came here from another planet, he'd have some kind of spaceship. Track down the spaceship and find Superman."

"Wow, that's a really good idea, Jimmy!" Lucy leaned closer to Jimmy. "How would you go about tracking the spaceship?"

"I don't know....you got any ideas?"

"I bet Superman hid his spaceship so no one could find it," Clark said dismissively. "If he even had a spaceship. How do you know he didn't get here via intergalactic teleportation or a black hole or something?"

Lois's scathing reply was interrupted by Perry storming over. "This is a newsroom, not a social club! I don't want to see you standing around, I want stories! You got that, folks? Stories! Our publisher called me last night, wondering why we don't have the full scoop on Superman! And we should,

considering he flew you in here yesterday, Lois!"

Lois thought about reminding Perry she'd just called in a Superman story, but with Clark looming over her, she didn't quite have the guts. She took refuge in distraction. "Perry, this is my sister Lucy. She just aced her interview and she'll be starting with LNN NewsTime tomorrow."

Perry calmed down so suddenly it was like he'd undergone a personality transplant. "Well, congratulations, Miss Lane. Any sister of Lois's is welcome here. And welcome to the news business. Of course, I'd prefer if you were in print journalism, but even so..."

"Thank you, Mr. White," Lucy said, blushing.

"Now you be sure to take Lois's advice and learn what she'll teach you. She isn't the best investigative reporter at the Planet for nothing." Perry nodded firmly and headed to the coffee station.

Lois made a show of looking at her watch. "Well, Lucy, I'll be working later tonight, so do you want to go out for dinner now to celebrate your new job?"

"Sure!" Lucy stared uncertainly. "If I can just talk with Cat first..."

"Come over here, I'll get you started," Cat replied. She surprised Lois. Had the other woman ever been this friendly to her? [[Of course, have you ever been friendly to her? If you really think about it, you've always shrugged off all her overtures. She never gave you a tip, but did she try, and did you listen?]] That annoying inner voice kept on making the most uncomfortable comments. Well, no matter now. She was Lois Lane, top reporter at the Planet. She'd gotten there and she was going to stay there by getting the big stories. Like Superman. In fact, Jimmy had a good idea there....

Clark and Jimmy both wished Lucy "Congratulations" and drifted away after an awkward moment of silence between them and Lois. Lois looked over at Lucy - she was seated next to Cat's desk, laughing at something Cat had said. It looked like she might take awhile. Lois smiled inwardly in satisfaction. She'd have some time.

She punched some numbers on her phone. "Information, get me the number for the EPRAD satellite tracking station in Fairbanks, Alaska...."

She sensed rather than saw Clark frowning out of the corner of her eye. He muttered something under his breath that she didn't quite catch - something about "now Jimmy's idea...." Then Perry materialized from the coffee station.

"Kent! Third and Walnut. Drive-by shooting. Get there now!"

Clark sighed and left.

Lucy came back to Lois's desk. When Lois got the phone number she wanted, she hung up. "Ready to go out?"

"All set."

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"And you have to defend your position," Lois said. "That's important."

"Lois, you said that already." Lucy impatiently took another bite of tiramisu. Lois had splurged, taking them to Angelina's. They had the best pasta in Metropolis, and the desserts were to die for.

"Well, it's true," Lois defended herself. "You're a woman. It's still a man's world. Maybe it's better in TV work, but being an investigative reporter...you have to be twice as good to get half the awards."

"I guess I'll just have to see," Lucy said wearily. Lois had been throwing advice at her all night. Was her sister really this driven, cheerless, semi-paranoid androphobe?

"Maybe I do have a chip on my shoulder," Lois said defensively, "but this is the only way I know how to do it.

To get the job done. To get the respect that I want. That I deserve."

"Lois, you're the best reporter I know," Lucy said. "I only hope that I can be just like you."

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Lucy noticed that Lois remained silent as she paid the check and they left the restaurant.

"Do you want to go home from here?" Lois asked. "There's a Metro stop a block away. You take the Brown Line, get off at Maple, and go two blocks north to the apartment. I've got to go back to the Planet."

"I left my paperwork on your desk," Lucy said sheepishly. "I need it for tomorrow."

"Okay, it's back to the Planet for both of us."

They walked quietly through the autumn night, Lucy considering Lois's tips. She wanted to succeed - she wanted to be like her big sister. And she needed to succeed - sure, she'd gotten the job at LNN NewsTime, but Lucy knew the stats - production assistants were a dime a dozen, here today and gone tomorrow. The only way to get ahead was to get stories. Lois was right about that. You couldn't depend on someone giving you tips (although Lois had carefully cultivated a network of sources over the years) - you had to go out and find stuff yourself. And take that stuff and build it into a story. Lois could write it up; Lucy would have to edit it into a two-minute video clip. But the first need was still the story. Get the story. Always get the story.

Lucy wrapped her jacket a little more tightly, warding off the chill. She'd always looked up to Lois, the sister who, although only three years older, had already won three Kerth Awards. She admired her older sister, who'd basically raised her when their father had walked out and their mother had spent her afternoons in an alcoholic stupor. Lois was an award-winning investigative reporter. Everyone knew she was the best in Metropolis. Heck, even Superman had talked to Lois first!

Lucy often felt like a failure when she compared herself with Lois. She knew she shouldn't make comparisons, but it was hard not to. Lucy - well, she was a twenty-four year old woman who'd bounced from job to job, who'd had a series of loser boyfriends. She was no competition for Lois in any respect.

What was she thinking, Lucy asked herself, trying to compete with Lois? But, she reminded herself the umpteenth time, she wasn't trying to compete. No. They were in different branches. Lois was in print. She was in broadcast. There would be no competition.

And, on the other hand, Lucy could make the most of things. She had an opportunity many of her co-workers would kill for - she had full access to Lois Lane. And Lois would talk to her. And Lois would give her advice. Lois had already given Lucy tips on snooping out a story, or building a piece that would stand up in print (or in broadcast) - tips that Lucy recognized as having been hard-earned.

There was no getting around it. Lucy wanted to impress her big sister. Heck, Lois had had a meteoric rise in her Planet career. Lucy wanted to rise just as quickly at LNN NewsTime. She found herself mulling over Lois's advice. She would keep her eyes open, always on the lookout for the lead that might land a big story. She wanted to be ready when that tip dropped into her lap. She wanted to be prepared to create the story, to build it up, to run with it. She was going to make her name at LNN NewsTime, and the "Lane" name in Metropolis wouldn't just be "Lois Lane" anymore.

She needed a big story. Something to make her name,

right from the start. The obvious story to concentrate on was....

"Superman," Lucy mumbled.

"Where?" Lois spun around.

"Oh. Not here. I was just thinking that Superman would be a great story."

A peculiar expression crossed Lois's face. "He's *my* story."

"Yeah, for print! This is TV! Besides, Lois, he's big! You can't keep him all to yourself!"

"Watch me try." The determination in her sister's voice almost scared Lucy.

Lucy only shrugged. If she got a Superman tip, she was going to chase it. Superman wasn't only for Lois.

When they reached the Planet, Lois stopped at the ladies room while Lucy went into the bullpen to pick up her paperwork from Lois's desk. Lucy picked up her file folder. Lois was taking a long time. Lucy looked idly at Lois's desk - gee, why did Lois keep a dead plant? And that coffee cup - eww! Did she ever wash it out?

She idly scanned the papers - memos from Human Resources about sick days and the change in insurance coverage, the latest issue of Journalism Review, lots of "While You Were Out" message forms (most impaled on a wickedly sharp spike), and...wow, Lois was sure taking a long time. Lucy sat at the desk and started seriously rummaging through the paper that blanketed Lois's desk.

A file of clippings regarding Atlas Industries. A dry-cleaning receipt - Lois should have picked up her "skirt suit, 2-pc" last Tuesday. A scrawled sheet which seemed to be an attempt to document Jimmy Olsen's time spent on research of Lois Lane's stories. Envelopes - all had been opened. [[So it's OK if I look]], Lucy thought. Lois certainly did. She'd heard the stories about it at dinner. Open envelopes were fair game, according to Lois. Actually, Lucy wasn't even steaming the envelopes open like Lois did, according to her tales of "what you have to do to be a reporter".

The first envelope -- Lucy, curious, pulled out the paper inside and grimaced when she found it was a late notice for the yearly dues of the Women In Journalism Association. Another envelope revealed a credit card bill in the name of "Wanda Detroit" - was this some sort of alias that Lois used? A step up from "Jane Doe", at least. A third envelope marked "Expense Account" and full of receipts - from cabs, restaurants, a hotel. Another non-sealed envelope addressed with only Lois's name, no mention of the Planet - hmm, what was this?

Lucy pulled out a single sheet of paper. One side had only the words "Lois Lane" written clearly. Someone wanted to make sure Lois would get this paper even if it were removed from the envelope. On the other side, a hand-drawn map. Streets and turnings were clearly marked and the "X" was...

"Superman's spaceship?" Lucy muttered. "*Superman's spaceship?*"

The envelope fell, unheeded, into the wastebasket.

This was big. This was really big. Of course Lois had gotten this information - she'd made it clear. She was the Superman conduit. At dinner, she'd told Lucy how she'd spent the day calling all her contacts, and asking them to send any information to the Planet if they couldn't call her directly. That explained Lois's intensity. Lucy was only surprised that Lois had taken her out to dinner instead of chasing this lead. For a minute, Lucy wondered if Lois actually had seen the map.

The levers clicked and the gears meshed. This would be her story. She'd take this map. She'd go to the spot marked "X", find Superman's spaceship and report on it for LNN NewsTime. Lucy shoved down her misgivings. *Of course* Lois already had the tip - heck, it was on her desk, she must know about it - she was probably waiting for tomorrow so that she had daylight for the search - that was it! And Lois would write about it for the Planet. Lucy would make sure that Lois's story came out first, ahead of the NewsTime piece...well, maybe the stories could come out simultaneously.

But she wasn't going to discuss it with Lois, not till she got to the spaceship and got her video. Lois was creepily intense about Superman, really weird. Yep, it would be better to get the story safely in the can, then coordinate with Lois. How hard could it be, anyway? She had a map. All she had to do was go there with her video camera. She'd better not tell anyone at NewsTime, though. Lois's numerous anecdotes of stories being stolen had definitely resonated with Lucy. No, she had to do this on her own. She'd make a great story. Her older sister would be proud of her.

[[Tomorrow morning. That's the plan]], thought Lucy. [[I'll find Superman's spaceship and make a great story out of it. Tomorrow I'll start my award-winning career.]]

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When Lois came in, she saw Lucy standing next to her desk, and reading something intently. Lucy hastily stuffed the paper back into her leather file case.

"Just a lot of paperwork to go through, when you start at a new place, you know?" Lucy said.

"Sure." Lois didn't feel like talking much; she definitely needed to go to bed. She had planned on staying at the Planet to chase down more Superman leads, but given her lack of success at that, and her general weariness, she decided instead to call it a day. And after she and Lucy silently went back to her apartment, she didn't even bother to watch any of the "Ivory Tower" before she tucked herself in and fell asleep.

Lois spent the next day in the newsroom, following up on various investigative pieces and continuing to query her sources for any leads on Superman. The Man of Steel had been frustratingly absent from the streets of Metropolis.

Clark walked in the newsroom, and Lois found herself aghast at his expression. She'd never seen the normally-cheerful Kansan so morose.

"What's up, Clark?"

"A fifteen-year old boy is in critical condition, his mother is in shock, and his little sister can't stop crying. There were witnesses, but they're not talking. The officer I talked to said they've had half a dozen like this in the last week alone."

"Sounds like a job for Superman," Lois said sadly.

"Yeah. That would have made it a truly great story, wouldn't it?" Clark said bitterly.

"Forget the story, Clark. Metropolis needs Superman."

"You think he would have been able to stop this?" Clark slapped his notebook on the table. "Or that?" he pointed to TV footage of a car crash.

"No. Even Superman can't be everywhere at once."

"Then what good is he?" Clark demanded.

"What he can't do...it doesn't matter. It's the *idea* of Superman. Someone to believe in. Someone to build a few hopes around. Whatever he can do, it's enough. If I could only tell him that..."

She had to go. She had a tip to chase down. She'd find

Superman and she would tell him that. She didn't bother looking back at Clark.

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That afternoon, Lois returned. She was sweaty, hot, frustrated, and tired. She'd chased around the whole city, trying to keep up with Superman, who was back from wherever he'd been. He'd been making rescues all day. And she'd never gotten close.

She slammed herself down in her chair and debated getting a cola. She definitely didn't want to join the group - Perry, Cat, Clark, and Jimmy - who stood around the vending machine. She'd caught sight of the evening edition's headline - "Superman's Back!". She knew Clark had the byline. God, how did he do it? He must have some inside track with Superman. He was deliberately freezing her out. The rat.

She wrinkled her nose. The breeze wafting through the newsroom smelled terrible. Was there a blockage in the drains?

The stairwell doors banged open and Lois stared in shock. Her sister limped in, one heel broken off, her blue suit - *Lois's* good blue suit - covered in filth. She carried a large black plastic trash bag in one hand. The gossiping reporters broke off their talk and stood back as Lucy stalked toward Lois's desk.

She slammed a piece of paper down. Lois picked it up. On one side, it was clearly labeled - addressed to Lois Lane. On the other - Lois gasped as she saw a map with streets and arrows and directions. In the center, a large "X" was labeled "Superman's Spaceship".

"Lucy, what happened?" Jimmy and Lois asked simultaneously.

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all." Lucy glared at Lois. "Lois, if this is what you have to do to be a reporter - you're crazy!"

"What?"

"Did you know that it's possible to get completely lost at the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility? And did you know there are billions of mosquitoes there? I do! I met them!"

Clark seemed distressed, acting as if he wanted to pat Lucy on the back. The waves of raw sewage odor wafting from her dissuaded him.

"Lucy, why did you go there?" Lois was beginning to get an ugly suspicion. "Where did you get this map?"

"You should know! It was on your desk! You had it first! I was only borrowing it! I wanted to get the story! You told me I had to get the story!" Lucy was almost as angry as Lois could be. "There was no story there. But I did get this!" She opened the trash bag and pulled out a plastic Godzilla with a large yellow "S" painted on its chest.

Clark moved his eyes shiftily between Lois and Lucy.

With a blinding flash, the pieces came together for Lois. "You!" She said, leaping to her feet and pointing a finger at Clark. "You sent me this map so I'd go on a wild-goose chase for Superman's spaceship!" She whirled toward Lucy. "And you stole the map off my desk! That's what you were shoving in your file case last night!" She inhaled, faced Lucy accusingly. "You were going to steal my story!"

"You were the one who told me to do anything to get the story!" Lucy retorted.

"I didn't mean *steal* it from me..." Lois trailed off when she saw Clark smirking.

"Consider this a life lesson, Lois. No charge," he said cheerily. "You know, karmic payback doesn't usually happen this fast." He turned to Lucy. "Sorry you got caught

in the middle of this, Lucy."

"Yeah, well it would have been nice to know this was a practical joke *before* I got bitten by ten million mosquitoes!"

Jimmy moved closer, despite the odor. "It's not that bad...you just put calamine lotion on them." He gave Lucy an encouraging smile.

Lucy let go of her anger. Deflated, she said, "I guess I deserved it, listening to Lois." She turned away and limped quietly to the door, leaving an unmistakable eau de sewer odor behind.

Lois stared at her retreating sister. Her sister's last words, That's what I get for listening to Lois, made Lois feel...what? Angry? Deflated? Small. That was it. Lois felt very small right now. "She ruined my suit..." was all Lois could say.

Cat got the last word. "Don't worry, Lois. You can't ruin what's already ruined."

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Lois wandered up to the Planet rooftop that evening. She'd taken herself out of the newsroom for the rest of the day and had made excuses to check up on outside sources, avoiding the scene of her humiliation. She didn't want to think about things. Lucy's parting words had been the worst. Was she really that bad a person? So bad that listening to her advice had made her sister go astray? Apparently, yes. She stood at the railing, looking over the rooftops of Metropolis, fiddling with her bracelet.

"Damn!" She'd loosened the catch and the bracelet had fallen on the ledge, over the railing, rolling out of her reach. She carefully stepped over the railing and bent down to pick it up. Then she stood and stared again at the ever-fascinating vista of nighttime Metropolis. There was a curious excitement in knowing that she wasn't protected, that with one step she'd fall thirty stories.

A "whoosh" ruffled her hair. Superman floated nearby. "Lois? Are you all right?"

"I'm fine."

"But what are you doing, outside the rail..." he trailed off. "You're not..."

Understanding bloomed. "No, I'm not suicidal," Lois said tartly. She'd normally never talk to Superman like that. This whole day had gotten to her. "I just dropped my bracelet and I had to step over the railing to get it. I'll go back now."

"Allow me," Superman said. He floated closer and offered her his arm. Lois tried - and failed - to slow her rapid breathing as she took it. He levitated them up and over the railing. He set her down and she reluctantly released his arm.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome." They stood in awkward silence for a minute, and Lois realized that Superman was about to fly away.

"Superman?"

"Yes?" He turned back, aborting the little motion Lois already recognized as a precursor to flight.

"Do you have a spaceship?"

An unreadable expression flitted across his face. "I'm sorry, Ms Lane, that's one question I don't care to comment on." She shifted nervously as he added, "Why do you ask?"

"I did a bad thing today," she confessed.

He was silent for a moment. Did he realize that she wanted to confess, that instead of interviewing him and asking him the questions, she wanted him to ask her? He must have, for he asked gently, "Would you care to talk

about it?"

She looked downward, not wanting to meet his eyes. "I stole Clark's story." She got it out in one burst of breath. "I stole it. I've never stolen a story in my life and I stole his. How could I do that?"

Superman remained impassive, hearing her out.

"Perry said the rules were off," she said, hating herself for trying to justify it. "But that's no excuse. I'm ashamed of myself."

"Um?" Superman said encouragingly.

"And what Clark did - he really made me realize how small I am."

"What did Clark do?"

"He set me up! He made a fake map, and he was going to send me on a wild-goose chase to the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility to find your spaceship!"

"Was going to?"

"Lucy stole the map."

She saw Superman's big body tremble, and then he broke out laughing. "So, you stole a story from Clark, and then Lucy stole a story from you?"

"It was a *fake* story," Lois said angrily. Then she said quietly, "But I told her to be like that. She was only following my advice." She raised her eyes from the ground and met Superman's gaze. "I guess I deserved it."

"So...." Superman was very good about inviting confidences, Lois thought.

She turned away and started walking back and forth. "So, I'm going to go in the newsroom tomorrow and talk to Clark," Lois said, a new resolve filling her. "I'm going to tell him that he won. He got the story and took me down a peg - or he would have taken me down if Lucy hadn't gotten there first. He's worked hard. He's earned his success."

"I'm sure that will mean a lot to him," Superman said, trying unsuccessfully to hide a smile.

Lois stopped short. "Yeah, well, he'd better cherish the moment, because he'll never experience it again."

Superman laughed out loud. "But you are sorry about stealing his story?"

"I'm sorry."

"And you're ashamed of yourself?" Somehow he'd advanced until he stood right behind her, his big body shielding her from the cool evening breeze.

"I'm ashamed of myself."

"And you'll never do it again?" His deep voice rumbled, vibrating his entire chest. He'd wrapped his arms around her, just slightly. She'd never felt as safe as she did right now.

"I'll never do it again."

"And you'll apologize to Clark Kent?"

She pulled herself from Superman's arms. There were *some* limits. Lois Lane didn't do certain things. "Not in this millennium."

THE END

Author's Note: The line about "being poured into your outfit and forgetting to say 'when'" is actually by P.G. Wodehouse.

Ficathon Request:

Screen Name: Lois Lane Fan

Three things I want in my fic:

1. Plot Un-Twist/Alternate ending for the episode Neverending Battle where Lucy Lane ends up getting the map to 'Superman's Spaceship' before Lois gets home and goes looking for it without her sister.

2. Poor Clark having to face the wrath of both sisters -

Lois because she found out she was the intended victim and Lucy because she's mad he turned her into "mosquito food."

3. Funny reactions to Lucy's appearance from Jimmy and Cat.

Preferred season(s)/holiday [if applicable]: Season 1/not holiday related.

Three things I do not want in my fic:

1. Scardino

2. No deaths please

3. Nothing too serious. I'm looking for humor.