

Identity

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Summary: The LnC writer Mary Potts created a wonderful funny short, titled “Phero-Moan My Lovely,” that considered what might have happened if Lois had not recovered from the pheromone that she was exposed to in the episode “Pheromone, My Lovely.” This story explores the same concept and considers what might have happened in the time immediately following that episode if the effect of the pheromone on Lois had persisted.

Disclaimer: This is a fanfic based on the television show, Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman. I have no claim on the pre-existing characters whatsoever, nor am I profiting by their use. The new story elements are mine. No infringement is intended by this work.

This is an adaptation of the Season 1 episode “Pheromone My Lovely” written by Deborah Joy Levine. This story was inspired by the humorous short “Phero-moan My Lovely” which was written by Mary Potts (Queen of the Capes) based on the same episode.

Chapter 1 — Morning

Revenge + 40 hours

Clark opened his eyes to a darkened room. A quick glance at the clock told him that it was just past 2:00 am. He didn't have to see anything to tell him that he wasn't alone. He knew that even before he'd opened his eyes. The warm body pressed up against his made that fact impossible to miss.

He'd always been careful to avoid particularly deep... entanglements... with the fairer sex. Clark had never wanted to commit too deeply a personal relationship with a woman with whom he wasn't willing to share the secret of his abilities. As a consequence, he hadn't dated seriously in high school or college, and had never allowed a situation with a woman get to the point where there would be any confusion about his being interested in taking a relationship 'to the next level.'

However, from the moment he'd met Lois Lane, Clark had known that his previous rules for female relationships were about to be thrown out. Being around her was like nothing else he'd ever experienced. With the slightest gesture or word, she had the ability to evoke reactions from him, both good and bad, that no other woman had ever done. From the moment they'd met, he'd been trying to figure out how to interact with the enigma of a woman. The one perfect certainty in his mind was that she was 'The One.' This was the woman who he desperately wanted to find a way to let all the way in. In the months he'd known her, they had progressed to being friends. He wanted more — far, far, more — but his lack of experience in these matters left him unsure of how to move their relationship forward. Now, with Lois asleep beside him, the puzzle that was their relationship had taken on a whole new level of complexity.

On Tuesday, there had been a photography shoot in the Planet offices for a perfume company. There had been models all over and some very strange scents. It was later that day that Lois had started acting strangely, but at the time Clark hadn't realized how out-of-character she was.

Wednesday morning everyone was acting crazy with feelings of love. And Lois had decided that she was in love with him.

He'd managed to avoid her all day, but in the early evening she'd shown up in his apartment and tried to seduce him with the dance of the seven veils. It was easy to see that she wasn't herself, and he'd managed to fend off her almost comical attempts at seduction.

But she wouldn't leave. Even worse, she had put so much energy into her seduction attempts that it was clear to Clark that she was on the verge of collapse. There was no way he would kick her out of his apartment in her condition. Not surprisingly, she'd been very cooperative when he suggested that she sleep in his bed. However, once she learned that he was planning to sleep on the couch, she came out and curled up next to him.

His couch was comfortable, but it just didn't work with both of them on it together. Finally, Clark had given in and they had moved to his bed. He'd only gone along with this because he'd been successful in getting Lois to change clothes into a set of sweats. The only clothes she'd brought were a trench coat and her seven-veil costume. They'd settled into bed with him under the sheets in sleep-shorts and a t-shirt. She'd been on top of the covers in the sweats.

Now Clark was paying the price for being a sound sleeper. Lois wasn't where he'd left her. She was under the covers and pressed up against him. And worse, at least from the perspective of his resisting the advances of his extremely attractive partner, she'd managed to discard the sweats he'd provided. She'd also found a way to remove his t-shirt without him waking up. This meant that they were in bed with the two of them pressed together bare skin to bare skin.

The feeling was unbelievable... and terrifying. He needed to end this now.

He started to try to separate himself from her. At his movements, she started to stir but ended up simply tightening her embrace. Clark decided to try another approach. “Lois, wake up,” he said, shaking her a little.

This time she woke up. It took her a second to realize where she was but after a second, she looked up at him and smiled. “Make love to me, Clark.”

That was too much. Clark practically jumped out of bed and retreated to the far side of the room. “Lois, I can't. You don't know what you're saying.”

She sat up on the side of the bed. She wasn't smiling any more. “I know what you're saying,” she said in the saddest voice Clark had ever heard from her. “I've been here before. I thought you were the one man that liked me.”

Then her shoulders visibly slumped. “Everyone hates me. Stay away from Mad Dog Lane,” she parroted. “She's a real bitch.” Lois had started crying even before she'd finished her last sentence. Not only that, she had started shivering in the cool night air.

That was too much for Clark and he went back to the bed. Clark sat next to her, picked up the blanket from the bed and pulled it around her shoulders. “You're the most beautiful and desirable woman I've ever met.”

“You're just saying that,” she said dejectedly, looking at the floor.

“Lois, please look at me.”

She looked up at him. “Lois, if I believed that you were really interested in me, I'm not sure I'd ever be able to let you go.”

Her smile suddenly reappeared and she threw her arms around him. “I do want you,” she declared.

“But you aren't yourself,” he countered. Clark was aware of every inch of her skin pressed against his. He could also feel each of her tears as they moistened his shoulder. “Something happened to you yesterday. You don't love me.”

“Yes I do,” she pleaded. Then Clark felt the gentlest kiss on his neck.

“Lois, this isn't you. Just a few days ago I'm sure you didn't

love me.”

“I wasn’t thinking straight,” she countered.

“But these feelings aren’t yours. I think one of the perfumes affected you.”

“Probably. But whatever happened didn’t change anything. It just made me realize how much I wanted to tell you about how I feel.”

“What are you saying?” Clark asked, suddenly even more confused.

Lois was continuing to kiss his neck and shoulder. “I’ve been pretending you didn’t matter for a long time. I don’t want to pretend anymore. I want to love you.”

“That’s the perfume talking,” Clark countered. “Think about it. Before yesterday you weren’t even attracted to me.”

“That’s not true,” Lois said softly. “I started liking you right from the beginning. Then I started respecting you when tricked me after I stole your story. Then when we were working on the cyborg boxers story, I learned that I could trust you. It was in Smallville, when we had so much fun, and you almost died, that I realized how important you are to me. And when you almost left Metropolis during the heat wave, I realized that I loved you.”

“What?” Clark exclaimed softly, genuinely surprised. “You didn’t say anything. You haven’t treated me any differently.”

“I was scared,” she said, barely above a whisper. “Everybody hates me. You’re such a great guy. All the men like you and most of the other women want you. I... I didn’t think I could tell you. Then yesterday I realized that you had to know how I feel. You’re so wonderful that I just have to be with you.”

“But Lois, this isn’t you. When you’re yourself you don’t want to be with me.”

“You mean that you don’t want to be with me,” Lois wept, as she started to cry again. “You hate me too.”

Her sobs were killing him. Clark could feel the tears running down his back. He couldn’t do this anymore. “Lois, I don’t hate you. I’ve been in love with you almost from the first.”

“You’re just saying that,” she countered.

“No. My heart has belonged to you ever since I saw you at Luthor’s ball.”

Lois pulled back so that they were face to face. Her arms were still around his neck, but now he was looking at her tear-streaked face. She seemed to be waiting for him to say more. She was so beautiful, but in this moment, Clark could see a fragility that Lois would normally never show. She was hopeful, that was clear. But she was also afraid. A moment ago she’d put her heart on the line by admitting her developing feelings. Could he do any less?

“Remember the night at the Daily Planet right after we met,” he said after several long seconds. “The time that I brought you Chinese food for dinner?”

She smiled weakly. “A good horse is like a member of the family,” she quoted.

Clark smiled at her recollection of that moment. “Do you remember telling me not to fall for you because you didn’t have time for me?”

“But Clark...” she started, but Clark silenced her with a finger pressed gently to her lips.

“It was already too late,” he continued. “I’ve dreamed of a time when I could tell you how I feel. I’m just afraid that you’ll hate me when whatever happened wears off.”

Her smile had been growing the whole time. God she was beautiful when she smiled. “You mean...?” she asked.

“Lois, I really do love you. I’ve been in love with you for a long time.”

Lois’s mouth was against his in an instant.

Clark had kissed Lois when he’d almost left Metropolis during the heat wave. That time she’d been too in shock and hadn’t really returned the kiss. This... This was magical. Kissing

Lois — really kissing her, with her whole-heartedly kissing him back, was everything he’d always dreamed.

After the most wonderful few minutes imaginable, Lois pulled back again. This time her face was aglow with happiness. “I love you, Clark.”

The absolute truth made his response too easy. “I love you, Lois.”

Her responding smile was truly dazzling. Then she pulled herself up against him in a hug that conveyed her emotion. Clark suddenly became aware of Lois’s bare breasts pressed against his chest.

Earlier Lois had been kissing his neck, but now she had worked her way up to his ear. “Make love to me,” she whispered. Deep in the back of his mind, a quiet voice told him that when Lois’s normal personality returned, he would lose his love forever. But in that moment, with so much of Lois’s bare skin pressed against his, Clark ignored that voice and cooperated with the inevitable.

Chapter 2 — After

Revenge + 46 hours

Lois woke up and realized immediately that she wasn’t at home. Before she could spend any real time reviewing her memory, she had a second realization... she wasn’t alone in bed. Then it came back to her. She’d gone to Clark’s. She was in his bed. And she was naked. One quick glance in his direction told her that so was he. She’d never felt so good waking up in the morning in her entire life.

She rolled over and slid up next to the well-muscled body next to her. He was sleeping on his back with the covers pulled down so that his upper torso was exposed. Seeing him now took her back to that day right after they’d met when he’d answered the door wearing only a towel. Clark was an incredibly attractive man. She reached out and ran her hand gently across that chest. Not only did he look good, but he felt good as well.

As she caressed his skin, memories of their lovemaking last night came rushing back. Being with Clark had been far beyond anything in Lois’s experience. Now she had a reference point for differentiating having sex and making love. After last night, she never wanted to settle for ‘just sex’ again. Of course, she never intended to do either with anyone but Clark ever again.

As she gazed at her lover, she’d continued the more or less random motions of her hand on his body. He felt so very good, but simply caressing his sleeping body was not going to be enough. The motions of her hand weren’t causing him to wake, so it was time for stronger measures. She shifted her attention to his face, ran her hand through his hair, then kissed him as gently as possible on his lips. “Wake up, sleepyhead.”

His eyes fluttered open and there was an instant of confusion, but as soon as he saw her face Lois could see the memories of the night come flooding back. It was fun to watch him go through the same recollection process that she had only a moment before. It was extra pleasant to see those memories trigger a smile. As he started to smile, she leaned in and kissed him again, much harder this time. “You’re pretty when you sleep,” she said.

That triggered an even brighter smile from Clark. She’d watched that smile disarm almost every woman that she’d seen interact with Clark over the past few months. How had she let so much time go without making this man hers?

“Pretty? I thought men were supposed to be handsome,” he said with a note of mirth.

“No. You look way too good for handsome. But how about sexy?”

He thought about that for a second. “I think I can accept that. And, if you think I’m pretty, then I can accept that too... from you.”

Then he pulled her closer. A few seconds later she was lying

on top of him. His chest felt good when she'd caressed it with her hand, but that had been nothing compared to the electricity being generated by his bare chest against hers.

"You feel... fantastic," he said.

The desire in his voice was unmistakable. "That's exactly what I was thinking about you," she confirmed.

She felt his hands slide down her back and buttocks. The feeling of his hands caressing her skin was so powerful that she was almost shivering from excitement. As she was basking in the exhilaration his touch was triggering, she could see in his expression that he was experiencing the same passion that his touch was eliciting in her. "This... Us being like this... is every dream I've had for the past few months come true," he said after a moment.

No more words were necessary. She lowered her face to his and they had their first real kiss of the morning.

When, a long time later, they separated, Clark looked at her for a long time. "I love you, and nothing is going to change that, but I think you're still being affected by whatever caused you to... lose your inhibitions."

He was right. Something had changed. None of these feelings were new, but they were so overwhelmingly powerful. She knew that one of her strengths as a reporter was that she never let herself be driven by emotion. Others called her reckless, but she thought that others let their fear get in the way. Fear, and all the other emotions, had always been something that she'd ignored. But now, the feelings were so... wow! If other people felt things like this all the time, no wonder they did things differently than she did. For the first time in her adult life she had no second thoughts about acting on the tidal wave of emotion. "I think you're right," she conceded. "But I don't care. I feel great, and I have you, so everything is fine."

"Can you tell how you feel different?" Clark asked.

She concentrated for a few seconds. "My emotions are stronger... or maybe brighter. It's like I've been wearing dark glasses and suddenly I can see the world... feel the world... in bright colors. Also, I feel very comfortable opening up to you. Loving you... and having you know it feels great. Knowing that you love me makes it even better."

"I still worry that you're going to hate me later," Clark said somberly.

How could he have any doubts about what they were sharing? "How could I hate you? I love you. And you love me."

"Do you feel different any other way? I mean besides how you feel about us," he asked.

"I feel less... I don't know. Angry? On edge? I feel sort of like I did when I was young. Maybe like when I was back in high school. I feel an optimism that I haven't felt for a decade or more."

"Are all your memories intact?"

She thought for a moment. Everything seemed to be there, but the memories felt different. "I think so. I remember things that bothered me in the past. It's just that now they feel different. I guess I realize that for the most part the world wasn't really out to get me. I can see now that I've spent too much time fighting and worrying about things when I should have simply relaxed and enjoyed the world. I feel really good about life this morning."

"It sounds like whatever else has happened, you've been given a precious gift."

She thought for a moment and realized that she agreed with Clark. "I think you're right. But feeling better is only a part. The best part of what's happened to me is that I have you now."

She shifted against him and he must have read the amorous intent from her body language because he pulled back ever so slightly. "There's something you need to know. Something about myself that I've been keeping secret. Given the state of our relationship, I need to tell you before things go any further."

A sudden fear washed over her. Was this something that was going to keep them apart? "If it's bad, I don't want to know," she pleaded, suddenly the tiniest bit fearful.

"It's not bad, at least I hope you don't think it's bad."

"Then tell me," she said as the fear disappeared. "I'm going to spend the rest of my life with you. I want to know everything."

He sighed deeply. "There isn't any good way to say this.

Umm, I suppose you've noticed how much Superman likes you?"

"Yes," she answered. "But that doesn't matter anymore. I only want to be with you."

"Well, it does matter. You see, the reason that Superman finds you so attractive is the same one that I do. I'm Superman."

She loved his sense of humor, but this wasn't the time for a joke. "Very funny, Clark. And I suppose your dad uses super powers to work on his farm," she countered.

"Don't you remember my telling you that I'm adopted? Well, I am. It's just that my birth parents were a little farther removed than for most orphans."

"You're serious?"

"Look around," he said in a mischievous tone.

Laying on Clark it had been easy to focus on only him. He was really pleasant to look at, and he felt even better. Now she looked around and realized that the room didn't look quite right. Then she looked past Clark's face. There was the bed — four feet below. "We're floating!" she exclaimed.

"I told you," he said with a crooked smile.

She was trying to process all this. Clark was Superman. That did explain a few things, such as Clark's utterly fantastic body, but it really didn't matter very much. "Was that the only secret that you needed to tell me?" she asked.

He looked surprised at her casual tone. "Yes. I thought it would be a big deal."

"It might have been, before whatever changed my outlook. But for now, I'm just glad that you're Clark and that your secret isn't anything that will keep us apart."

"Now that you know, you do understand that we have to be extra careful," he cautioned. "If anyone realizes that you are the one special person in Superman's life, you would become a target for people trying to get back at him."

The way Clark said "the one special person" sent a warm feeling through her. "I get it," she answered pleasantly. "But the only thing that the world will see is that I'm the one special person in Clark Kent's life. If you can behave yourself in public when you're dressed as Superman, then so can I," she said calmly.

"Now that we're together, it will probably be easier," Clark said thoughtfully. "In fact, if we're careful, you should be even safer. If Clark Kent and Lois Lane are a couple, it's less likely that anyone will think to use you against Superman."

"Clark Kent and Lois Lane a couple," she mused out loud. "I like the sound of that. But you know what I think sounds even better?"

"What?"

"Clark and Lois Kent"

His eyes went wide, but to her relief she could tell that his reaction was surprise, not terror. "I..." he stuttered.

She could see that he still didn't get it. "You said that you were dreaming of a relationship with me. But we both know if you just wanted to sleep with me, you could have done that as Superman months ago. So, am I wrong in thinking that's what we both want?"

Clark was silent for long enough that she started to have doubts. "No, you aren't wrong," he confirmed finally. "I've known for some time that you were the only woman I wanted in my life. Lois, I've never felt anything like what I feel for you. I do want to spend my life with you."

His confirmation triggered another rush of joy. "Good! Then

let's get married. Your being Superman will come in handy. We can get married in Las Vegas as soon as you can fly us there."

"No," he said flatly.

He could be so exasperating. "Why not?"

"Because that's the one line I can't cross until we know that when your — good feelings — wear off, you really do want to be with me."

"I'm sure of how I feel," she offered.

"But I'm sure that you aren't yourself. I love you, and that's why I can't take you across that line."

Every time he said, 'I love you' was like a warm wave washing over her. She took a second then considered the rest of what he'd said. "Do you promise that as soon as I'm back to normal, we'll get married?"

"If you still want me," he replied, a nervous tone in his voice.

"I will," she said brightly.

"I hope you will. If this... relationship was to be wrong, and you were to hate me for starting it, I'd never forgive myself."

"You're such a worry-wart."

"Lois, I..."

She put her hand to his lips. "I understand. You're going to worry. That's part of what makes you the man that I realized I loved." She removed her hand and they shared another deep and passionate kiss. "Enough talking," she said sharply. "I want to have a good reason to be late for work."

Chapter 3 — Public

Revenge + 51 hours

It was nearly noon when the elevator door opened to admit Clark and Lois to the Daily Planet bullpen. Clark took only half a step before he paused and looked around nervously. This morning was going to be the "coming out" for his and Lois's new relationship. With Lois still obviously under the influence of that perfume, he was sure to be the subject of negative opinions. Clark just hoped that whatever came their way, anything bad would be directed at him and not Lois.

Despite the assurances that Lois continued to offer, he couldn't completely quell doubts about the decisions that the two of them had made with respect to their relationship. Even though their friends and coworkers were going to learn this morning of their new relationship, Clark's parents were not. He wanted to give this thing a chance to mature — and to give Lois a chance to snap out of whatever had affected her, before stepping into that challenge. If he and Lois were still engaged when the weekend arrived, he'd fly them both to Smallville to share the news.

He felt Lois's hand slide into his. She was probably wondering why he'd stopped. "This is a good sign," he said aloud.

"What?" Lois asked.

"All those decorations are down. Don't you remember? Yesterday morning the whole place looked like someone set off a Valentine's Day bomb."

"I remember," she said wistfully. "I liked the decorations."

Clark was tempted to comment on that observation, but thought better of it. In Clark's mind, her attitude was just one more indicator that Lois was still not herself. "We'd better report in to Perry," he said, looking in the direction of the editor's office. "He seems to be free now. Based on what I saw yesterday, Miranda exposed most of the people in the office to that stuff. We need to know if anyone else is having the lingering effect that you are. And Perry deserves to know about our changed status."

"You mean this?" Lois asked with a smile, holding up her hand and showing off her engagement ring they'd just purchased.

"Yes. I have a feeling that as soon as he hears what happened, both of us are going to hear an Elvis story."

"You think he's going to be mad?" she asked, a slight tone of concern in her voice.

"Not at you," Clark answered reassuringly. "I think he'll tell you some story about a time that Elvis rushed into a situation before he got advice from the Colonel. As for me... yes, Perry's going to be mad."

They started across the bullpen towards Perry's office. About half-way there, Clark noticed Jimmy leaning against a desk rubbing his forehead. "Hey, Jimmy," Clark called as they approached.

His young friend jerked as if the sound had caused him pain. Then he held up his hand defensively. "Please CK, not so loud," he said, his voice barely above a whisper.

When they reached him, Lois reached out and put her hand on Jimmy's shoulder in a consoling gesture. "What's wrong?" she asked, keeping her voice low.

"The headache. Just like everyone else here." Jimmy was clearly in pain.

Clark and Lois looked at each other. "What headache are you talking about?" Clark asked, also keeping his voice barely above a whisper.

He looked at them as if this headache was common knowledge. "You mean you two don't have it?"

They both shook their heads.

"That crazy love stuff wore off sometime late last night.

When I woke up this morning, I had one of the worst headaches of my life." He looked back and forth at them for some sign of understanding. "Everyone who was exposed says the same thing and has the headache today. If you don't have the headache, then I guess you two didn't get exposed."

"I did," Lois said without hesitation. "But I don't have a headache this morning. I feel great."

"I think somehow I managed to miss it," Clark added quickly. "You said it wore off last night?"

"Yeah," he answered, rubbing his forehead again.

"Do you have any idea when?" Clark asked.

"No. I fell asleep around 10:00 p.m. My memory is fuzzy, but I think it wore off some time after that. From what I've heard from everyone else in the office, that was about as long as it lasted for anyone."

"So you don't know of anyone that it hasn't worn off yet?" Lois cut in.

"No. For everyone I talked to, when they woke up this morning, the craziness was gone."

"Jimmy, after it wore off, did you feel any lingering effects? I mean, were you sure that it wore off completely?" Clark pressed.

"Sure, CK. Aside from this headache, once it's gone, it's gone. I can't believe the things I was feeling while I was under the influence of that stuff. Why?"

Lois started to say something but Clark cut her off. "Thanks, Jimmy. Lois and I need to talk with Perry while he's free." As they moved away from Jimmy, Clark pulled in close to Lois. "I'm sorry about cutting you off, but I want to see what Perry knows, and tell him about you... us... before the rest of the office finds out."

"That's okay," she replied brightly. Then she took advantage of his proximity, leaned in, and gave him a quick kiss.

"Lo-is," he mock pleaded.

His protest just made her smile even brighter. "I can't help it. We haven't kissed for at least fifteen minutes and if you're going to get this close, what do you expect me to do?"

He just had to smile at her attitude. She had a cheerfulness that was infectious. "I love you," he said quietly. The words were out before he even realized he'd spoken aloud.

Lois threw her arms around him and this kiss lasted far more than the second or so of the previous one. Her attack caught him off-guard, but Clark quickly decided to simply enjoy the moment. He put his arms around her and made sure that this was a kiss worthy of office gossip.

When they separated, Clark was unsurprised to find that the whole room had gone quiet with all eyes pointed in their direction. “We need to see Perry now,” he whispered to Lois.

As they turned toward the editor’s office, he discovered that Perry was watching them with the same intensity as everyone else. When they reached his office, their editor motioned them to come on in. Lois went first and Clark closed the door behind them. He was certain that there wouldn’t be any yelling — yet — but this still needed to be private. As soon as the door closed, Perry opened up with, “What in...” But that was as far as he got.

“We’re engaged!” Lois exclaimed, sticking her hand under Perry’s face to show him her ring. “Perry, when Clark and I get married, will you give me away?”

The older man looked back and forth between them for a second. “Clark?”

Clark sat down in the chair near the door. “Whatever happened here in the office the other day affected Lois.”

“Son, it affected nearly all of us.”

“You don’t want to give me away?” Lois asked in a disappointed tone.

“Darlin’, if that’s what you want when you get married, I’ll be happy to do the honors. But...”

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” she exclaimed as she ran around his desk and hugged her boss.

“As I was about to say,” Clark continued even before Lois released her editor, “Lois is still under the influence of whatever it was.”

Lois finally finished her hug and returned to the far side of the desk where she sat next to Clark. “Obviously,” Perry said, after he regained his composure.

“Do you know if anyone else in the office is still under the influence this morning?” Clark asked.

“No,” Perry replied. “This stuff has caused a real mess, but I’ve been asking around, and for everyone else it wore off last night. Lois, honey, how do you feel?”

“I feel great. I’m in love with the greatest guy in the world,” Lois said brightly. “But for right now I’m also ready to get to work. Clark and I talked about this on the way in this morning. He used Jimmy’s photographs to identify the woman that was spraying the stuff that smelled like old socks. She’s a perfume maker named Miranda. If you give us the go ahead, we’re going to start the investigation right away.”

Her sudden change to such a businesslike tone caught Perry off guard. “Sure, you go ahead but I’d like to talk to Clark for a minute.”

Lois stood so that her back was to Perry. Then she smiled at Clark and mouthed the words, “You’re in trou-ble,” without making a sound. Then with an even brighter smile and one more quick squeeze of Clark’s hand, she opened Perry’s door and left the two men alone.

As soon as the door was closed, Perry’s face clouded over, “Clark?”

“Perry, you have to believe me when I say that I only want the best for Lois.”

“Since when does ‘the best’ mean taking advantage of her when she’s under the influence of that drug?” Perry asked in a voice that clearly conveyed his displeasure.

“You must be able to tell that she’s not crazy like everyone was at first,” Clark countered. “You see, the first 36 hours or so it was easy — well, not exactly easy — but I was able to keep my distance. Something seemed to change in her after that time and it got a lot more complicated.”

“About 36 hours you say?”

“More or less,” Clark answered.

“That’s about when the effect started wearing off for most people. A few seemed to have it go on a little longer but no one — that is, no one but Lois — was still under the influence when

they woke up this morning.”

“Was everyone in the office affected?”

“Everyone I’ve talked to. If you and Lois both got it, I’m surprised you remember things that clearly. Many of us have only vague memories of while we were under the influence.”

“You got it too, Chief?”

“Yeah, and I’m in some trouble for it, but for now let’s stay focused on you and Lois.”

“Okay. Well, somehow it missed me. But Lois got it and I was her target. That first day and a half, she was like some crazy caricature of a person in love. She was so over-the-top that I could never take her advances seriously.”

“That fits the pattern,” Perry commented.

“But after that she was different. She was much more rational. Instead of just throwing herself at me, she became serious. The first day or so, when I told her no, she just ignored me and tried harder. But late last night, she accepted my rejection and... she started crying. We ended up talking and she told me... well, that part’s private. But she convinced me that there was something real under the craziness caused by the stuff. The reason that I let anything happen with her is that I’m convinced — she convinced me — that even before the drug, she’d been interested in something between us.”

“Okay, I’ve seen the way you two interact so I guess I can accept that, but engaged?”

Clark sat up straighter in the chair. “I know how it probably looks. But I have to ask you to accept that this is between me and Lois. I will say that I want nothing but the best for her. I also intend to do everything I can to help her get back to normal. And, when she does return to her old self, I won’t try to duck the consequences of my part in this.”

Perry sat quietly for a few moments just staring at Clark. “If you were any other man, I’d ride you out of here on a rail. But you... Well, I still might if you don’t do your best to do the right thing by Lois.”

“Her well-being is more important than my own,” Clark said earnestly.

“It better be. So get out there and send her in.”

Clark left the office and headed for Lois’s desk. He was surprised to see Cat sitting across from her with the two of them apparently engaged in a friendly conversation. He reached the desk just as Lois chuckled at something Cat must have said.

“Good morning, Cat,” he said as a way to signal his presence.

Both women looked up at him and went silent. After a second, Lois started giggling and Cat followed immediately. “Lo-Lo tells me you two are engaged.”

“Lo-Lo?” Clark asked, looking at Lois.

“Yeah,” Lois replied. “Remember when we were in bed this morning I told you that I felt an optimism that I haven’t felt since high school?”

Clark blushed at her mention of the way they had started the day, but based on what he’d seen when he approached the two women, Cat already knew. “Yes,” he said.

“Well, my nickname in high school was Lo-Lo. At the time I was happy with that name and I think it fits me better the way I feel today.”

“So I should call you Lo-Lo?”

“I think I’m going to go by that in the office,” she answered. Then she reached out and took his hand in hers. “But you, my love, can call me by any name you want.”

“Lo-Lo,” Clark said deliberately, “Perry wants to see you.”

“I figured,” she said. Then she turned to Cat. “This was great. We’ll definitely talk more later.”

“Good luck with Perry. Remember that he means well,” Cat offered cheerily.

He watched Lois head into Perry’s office then turned to Cat. “What’s the catch?”

“What do you mean?”

“You can’t stand Lois. If you’re planning something...”

“Down boy. I promise that I mean her no harm.”

“Then I don’t understand,” Clark admitted.

“You were right. I can’t stand Lois. But that’s only because she’s selfish and arrogant so much of the time. Lo-Lo, on the other hand, seems to be a very different woman. I think everyone is going to like working with her.”

Clark considered this. “You’re probably right, but Lo-Lo is only here temporarily. She could recover at any time.”

Cat frowned. “I almost hope she doesn’t. I like my new friend.” Then she looked at Clark. “And Lois barely gave you the time of day. I don’t think Lois will be happy when she finds out what you and Lo-Lo have been doing.”

Clark turned to look at Lois... Lo-Lo, sitting across from Perry in his office. Lois had never looked that cheerful when she was being subjected to one of Perry’s Elvis stories. “I’m afraid you might be right, but as much as I like Lo-Lo, I owe it to her to try to bring Lois back.”

She looked at him seriously. “Lois doesn’t deserve you. Lo-Lo does, but not Lois.” With that Cat stood and headed for her desk.

Clark headed for his own desk and had settled down to plan the investigation into what happened at the Planet. He’d barely started when he heard, “CK” and looked up to find Jimmy standing next to his desk.

Clark remembered to keep his voice down. “Hi, Jimmy. What do you need?” he asked softly.

“Umm...” he stuttered.

“You’re curious about me and Lois?”

“Well, yeah. I didn’t mean to stare, but you two can’t kiss like that in the middle of the office and not expect to raise questions.”

“I understand. Well, for now here are the highlights. We’re engaged and she’s still partially under the influence of that love-stuff that hit the office. Good enough?” Clark asked in a non-sense tone.

“Yes,” Jimmy answered defensively. It seemed that he could tell when he was being told to not ask too many questions.

“Good,” Clark continued, “That picture you gave me yesterday was just what we needed. The woman that was spraying the stuff that probably started all this...”

“You mean the stuff that smelled like old socks that some kind of animal had been nesting in?” asked Jimmy.

“Yeah, that woman,” answered Clark. “Her name is Miranda and she has a perfume shop here in Metropolis. I need you to dig up all the information on her that you can find.”

“Sure thing CK. I’ll have some information within the hour.”

As Jimmy started away, he almost bumped into Lois returning from Perry’s office. “Oops, sorry Lois,” he said. “CK told me that you two are engaged. Congratulations.”

“Thanks, she replied. She showed Jimmy her ring. “Isn’t it great?”

“Sure. You and CK make a great couple.”

“I agree. And you can call me Lo-Lo.”

“Lo-Lo?”

“Yep. From here on out it’s going to be Lo-Lo and CK forever.”

Chapter 4 — Threat

Revenge + 3 days

Clark was pleased that the wrap on the pheromone story came so quickly. To his great pleasure — and relief — Lois proved almost as adept as ever when it came to conducting an investigation. Unfortunately, he came away from this effort worried about her lack of aggressiveness. She didn’t seem to have the energy and drive that normally came to his mind when he thought of his partner. Fortunately, her intelligence and intuition

were there in full force. Still, it was unsettling to see today’s version of Lois react with joy and understanding to situations where he knew that regular Lois would be angry and sarcastic.

He was in the process of working on edits to their pheromone stories. All together, they had three different joint articles on Miranda and her love potion. Lois had taken the lead to develop the bulk of the article on Miranda. The focus of that story was how she’d tried to poison the entire city. Clark had taken the more technical article which outlined the science behind Miranda’s concoction. It was up to Clark to put the finishing touches on both of them. After Lois had turned in her first story yesterday, Perry had asked Clark to work with her until she ironed out her style. For the time being, Clark was doing a final edit pass on all her work. She’d accepted this gracefully, and that worried him too. Under normal conditions, Lois would never have so calmly accepted his reworking her words.

They’d done a third story that described Miranda’s attack on the Daily Planet. Lois had worked with Jimmy and discovered that the Daily Planet was only one of three “test sites” where Miranda had spread the stuff. While the Planet was her high-profile target, she also released it in a nearby museum and the restaurant next door. Based on Lois’s research, there had been several hundred people exposed.

Two facts turned up about Revenge that had Clark especially worried. First, there was a way for the pheromone solution to affect someone permanently. That was what Miranda had intended at the end. Second, of all the victims that Lois had found, everyone had recovered completely in less than 48 hours. It was early in the process, but it sure seemed like Lois might have been unusually sensitive. It appeared reasonable to believe that her reaction was the same as what the one hundred percent solution would have done. If that was true, Clark needed to get used to the idea that Lo-Lo might be here to stay.

Of course, if that were to prove to be the case, Clark was extra glad he’d finally given in to her advances. He hated to think what might have happened to Lois if she’d fixated on Luthor instead of him. The idea of Lois as Lo-Lo being in love with Luthor, and acting toward Lex the way she was now treating him, made his skin crawl. Whatever happened, he was committed to do what was best for her. He’d try his hardest to bring her old self back, and if she never returned, he’d be the best companion and husband for Lo-Lo that he possibly could.

“Clark, where’s that last story?” Perry’s bellow broke his muse and he went back to typing.

“And where’s Lo? I want to do a more in-depth follow-up on the other Miranda attacks.” Perry had tried to call her Lo-Lo just once. It just didn’t sound right when he’d said it. After that, he started calling her “Lo” and that seemed to work a lot better. The name thing reminded Clark of his interaction with Jimmy. He was “CK” for Jimmy and “Clark” for everyone else. Now “Lo” was Perry’s name and everyone else seemed to be happy using “Lo-Lo.”

“She said she had some business out of the office and left about an hour ago,” Clark answered his editor. “I expect her back any minute now.”

Perry grumbled for a second. “Tell her to see me as soon as she gets back.”

“I will, Chief.”

A few minutes later, Clark had just finished sending his story to Perry when he heard a most unpleasant voice from across the room. “Is Miss Lane in the office?” It was Luthor. He’d just exited the elevator and had gone over to Cat’s desk.

“No,” Cat answered. “Lo-Lo had something that she needed to take care of. Clark might know when she’ll be back.”

“Lo-Lo?” Luthor asked with disdain.

“That’s what she likes to be called,” was all Cat answered.

Luthor looked his way and caught Clark watching his

exchange with Cat. His expression twisted into a sneer for only an instant. Then he seemed to calm himself and started toward Clark's desk.

"Do you know when Miss Lane plans to return?"

Clark glanced at a nearby clock. "Any minute now. You're welcome to wait at her desk."

Luthor started to turn away, but checked himself and turned back to Clark. "I must admit that you managed to surprise me," he said casually.

"I'm afraid I don't follow you."

"I pride myself on being able to predict how people will act when presented with unexpected situations. Because of my relationship with Miss Lane, and your position as one of her coworkers, I'd formed a mental image of you."

"I'm flattered that you find me to be worth your time."

"You aren't," he snorted in an insulting tone. "It's Lois that is worth my time. In any case, I didn't have you categorized as the type of... person that would take advantage of a woman the way that you are abusing Lois."

Fortunately, Clark had anticipated a comment like this as soon as Luthor started speaking to him. Still, the intensity of the surge of anger that Luthor's accusation triggered, caught him by surprise. Clark almost delivered a sharp response, but managed to remember that he needed to address Luthor as Clark Kent would, and not the way he'd speak to him as Superman. "Why do you say I'm abusing Lois?" he asked in a cold, but controlled voice.

"You may remember that I was here the day after Miranda's attack on this office. I know that Lois was affected and that by pure chance seemed to fix her attentions on you."

"So?"

"So I learned at the airport today that you have used her compromised condition to convince her that you two were involved in an intimate personal relationship."

"Our relationship is none of your concern," Clark said, his anger starting to get the better of him.

"You seem to have forgotten that before this incident, Lois and I were dating," Luthor said confidently.

"Based on her actions over the last few days, you don't seem to have made much of an impression." Clark knew he shouldn't get into this sort of argument with Luthor, but after his interactions as Superman, he had very little tolerance for this evil little man.

"Be careful Mr. Kent. You aren't in Smallville, Kansas anymore."

Before Clark could reply, there was a voice from across the room. "Why does Clark need to be careful?" Lois was approaching from the direction of the elevator.

Luthor turned to her and changed his tune without skipping a beat. "My dear, Lois. I was just pointing out to you co-worker that the consequences of ill-considered actions or words in a city such as Metropolis can carry more weight than might be the case for a small town."

She never lost her smile. "That's true," she said closing the distance to Clark. "And it's something I'm sure I'll remind him of many times after we're married." As she reached Clark, she slipped her arm through his and casually kissed his cheek. "I missed you," she said earnestly, gazing up into his eyes.

She was the perfect antidote for Luthor's hate. "Me you too," Clark replied softly.

After another second, she turned to Luthor. "Did you come to congratulate us," she asked, brightly.

The genuineness of her tone seemed to set the billionaire back for an instant. "Lois, I came by because I wanted to speak with you."

"Go ahead," she said simply. "And call me Lo-Lo."

Her suggestion to use that name seemed to hit Luthor like another blow. "May we speak in private?"

"Sure, we can use an interview room." She gave Clark's hand a squeeze as they separated and she led Lex to the small room. After he entered, she closed the door and sat. "What did you want to talk about?"

"You need to reconsider your relationship with... Kent. He's taking advantage of you."

She simply smiled. "No he's not. Clark is perfect for me. I'm lucky to be with him."

"Lois, you don't know what you're saying. I'm sorry to say this, but I believe you're still under the influence of Miranda's compound."

"Of course I am," she agreed quickly. "Everyone in the office knows it. But that doesn't matter. I'm happy with who I am and I know what I'm doing. Clark is so perfect and being in love like this is the best thing ever," she gushed.

"Can you hear yourself? That's Miranda's drug talking. You don't sound like Lois at all."

His unwillingness to listen managed to irritate her just a tiny bit. "Lois is gone," she said sharply. "I told you, I'm Lo-Lo. Lois was a stick in the mud. I'm making new friends and having a lot more fun than she ever did."

Lex's eyes went wide. "You can't be serious. Lois... you and I... I thought we might have something special."

"Maybe," she said, a bit more thoughtful this time. "Lois seemed to enjoy it when you two were together. But you're way too stiff for me. I want to have fun. I like pizza and beer and laughing at bad movies. You might have been right for old Lois, but Clark is my dream come true."

Now Lex seemed to be getting angry. "Lois, I swear..."

"She's not here," she insisted, feeling suddenly defensive and fragile, "I told you. I'm Lo-Lo."

His look turned even harder as he reached out and grabbed her arm. "LOIS," he shouted, "I swear I'll find a way to reverse the effects of this poison and we'll be back together."

"You're hurting me," she whimpered in pain.

The door opened suddenly and there was Clark. "Lo-Lo, are you okay?"

She pulled free from Lex's grasp, rushed over to Clark and threw her arms around him. She had started to cry and Clark could feel the wetness of her tears through his shirt.

"You need to leave," Clark said sternly to Luthor.

"This isn't over," he said as he brushed past them. Just outside the door, he stopped and turned back to face them. "I will bring Lois back." Then he turned and headed away.

Clark held her for several minutes until it seemed that her crying had ended. "Lo-Lo, are you all right?"

"No," she said softly as she squeezed him tighter. "He hates me."

"He hates anyone and anything that doesn't go his way."

"He hurt me," she said in disbelief. "I don't remember him being like that."

Clark moved his head so that he could whisper in Lo-Lo's ear. "We need to talk about Luthor. I've seen things as Superman that he never let anyone else see."

She went still. "Talk to me," she said in a surprisingly somber tone. Even so, she didn't loosen her hug by even the slightest margin.

"There have been a few things," Clark said softly into her ear. "Back during our first assignment together, you know, the space transport, I heard enough that convinced me that he was deeply involved in the sabotage and may have been involved in the death of Dr. Baines. Then, right after I appeared, do you remember that series of tests that Superman was subjected to?"

She nodded her head without looking up.

"That was Luthor. Those are the only two things I know about for sure. But based on those things, I started noticing when he was nearby. You'll remember that he was conveniently right

there to shoot Max Menken. It's interesting that Menken was the only person that could have said where the money for the cyborg experiments came from. Then you were investigating the Metro gang, and again Luthor appears right in the middle of things. After that there was the smart kids brain boost drug, and he was right there again. And again the key person that might be able to provide a link to the money source ended up dead. And finally, the heat wave that almost drove me away from Metropolis..." she hugged him even tighter, "...it turned out to be his nuclear plant."

Clark paused to see if she was going to say anything. After a long moment, her head still pressed up against his chest, she finally asked, "Why didn't you tell me what you knew?"

"Luthor is very smart and incredibly careful to never leave any evidence. The only stuff that I'm really sure of are those things that only Superman saw." He hesitated but wanted to get the rest out. "We hadn't really known each other that long and, to be honest, I hadn't earned that level of your trust. I was sure that if I — Clark — came to you with this, you wouldn't have believed me."

"You're probably right," she said after a minute of silence. "Lois was very nervous about trusting you. First, you were so green. Then you turned out to be so good at what you do. But the scariest part of all for her was that you were so nice and so handsome. You left her off-balance and confused. You were making progress but she wasn't ready to listen. Not yet."

"We need to talk about Lois," Clark said directly.

"Yes?" she asked defensively as Clark felt her hug tighten ever so slightly.

"You're sounding more and more as if you think Lois is a completely different person," Clark said nervously. "I'm..."

"I'm scaring you, aren't I?" she suggested softly.

"A little," he admitted.

She released her hug and looked up at him. "I'm sorry, Clark. I know who I am. I really do. I haven't forgotten that I'm really Lois. But I also know that before this... change, there were a lot of fears and emotions that were driving me in a very different way. It's easier to talk about the old me as if she was a different person, but it doesn't mean that I've lost track of who I am. It's just that for right now, I feel so good about what this change has allowed me to experience."

"I heard some of what Luthor said. I heard the way he insisted on calling you Lois."

"I didn't like the way he used her name," she said, just the slightest note of anger in her voice.

"I'd been thinking that I'd rather call you Lois. I want you to know that I loved you before. But after what I just heard, I think I'm in the Lo-Lo camp for a while."

"Thank you," she said sincerely. "It will be a lot easier for me — especially for now — if you'd call me Lo-Lo. But I also know that when you speak to me as Lois, it means something very different than what Lex meant. I meant what I said earlier. I really am okay with you calling me Lois. And I understand that the way I sound might be a little scary. I'll try to do better." She took a deep breath. "But please don't use my Lois name for the rest of the day."

As Clark walked up to his apartment, he looked down at Lois's hand holding his own and couldn't help but wonder at the way the changes in his relationship with her felt so natural. As such, he wasn't particularly surprised when she insisted on coming with him to his place instead of heading to her apartment.

"Go on in," he said, holding the door open for her.

She went in first with him right behind. Clark closed the door and turned to her. "Now..."

He never finished his sentence. She literally jumped toward him and attacked him with a powerful and sensual kiss. After only an instant of initial surprise Clark was more than happy to

return the kiss with all the desire that had built up over the months since he'd met this incredible woman. The first kiss blended into a second, and then a third.

Some number of minutes later she pulled her face back just an inch or two. "I've been dying to do that all afternoon," she said with a very satisfied smile.

"If that's what happens when you walk me to my apartment, we're going to have to make a habit of this."

"Clark, I did something today that I'm nervous about. I hope you aren't mad."

"You excel at doing things that make me worry, but I doubt I'll be mad. What did you do?"

"Look around."

Confused, Clark looked out into the center of his apartment. There were several suitcases near the bedroom. "Suitcases? Where did those come from," he asked.

"They're mine," she said, a nervousness still in her voice. "It's okay with you, I want to move in with you."

"Lo-Lo, being with you is... incredible, but this seems awfully quick for such a big step. Are you sure that this is what you want?"

"Yes it's quick. And I know this is forward on my part, but it's how I feel. I... I just don't want to be alone right now. The truth is that I can't imagine ever wanting to spend another night away from you, but for now I'd be happy if you'll let me stay with you for the rest of the week."

She was looking at him hopefully. This was probably a bad idea, but she felt so fragile. Before he could reply, she tried again. "Please, Clark. At least let me stay for a few days."

Clark could see in her face just how much she wanted this. And he had to admit, at one level, he wanted it too. That voice from the first night was back and reminding him that this was probably a very, very bad idea, but he'd done fine so far ignoring it so he simply said, "Welcome home, roommate."

Chapter 5 — Results

Revenge + 20 days

Lo-Lo opened her eyes to find that she had anticipated the alarm clock again. On workdays, the alarm was always set for 6:15 a.m. She woke up this morning to find that the clock read 6:11. This wasn't unusual, since her system was adapted to getting up at this time. Part of her wished that she'd gotten those extra four minutes of sleep. Still, she did appreciate that she didn't have to deal with being startled awake by the alarm. She reached over to the clock and turned off the alarm, then turned to face the other side of the bed. The sight of Clark asleep next to her brought a smile to her lips every morning.

She was happy that she and Clark had meshed so well. She'd worried that Clark was going to find living together to be awkward. But from that first day, it had been the most natural thing in the world. Even so, he'd still tried to get her to go home after the first few days were past, but she could tell that he was doing it out of concern for her, and not because he really wanted her to leave. They'd had a slow and carefully reasoned conversation and he'd been easy to convince that it was okay for her to stay. In the end, while she knew he was worried about her long term welfare, she also knew that he loved her being here with him.

She slid over and worked her arms around his sleeping form. As usual, he pulled her into an embrace and kissed her without seeming to wake up. Sometimes she thought these were her favorite kisses of all. They weren't the deepest or most passionate kisses, but she always thought that these felt like pure statements of the love Clark felt for her. As she snuggled closer to her sleeping fiancé, she realized just how much she loved her new life.

As she lay pressed up against Clark, her body quickly

reminded her of her seemingly omnipresent arousal. She still wondered how much of that was Revenge, and how much of that was sleeping every night with someone that could easily be a male model. Whatever the reason, her desire was nearly unquenchable. Fortunately, Clark seemed to draw as much pleasure from helping her deal with this aspect of Revenge as she did. In any case, right now she just wanted to cuddle.

She spent a few minutes in Clark's arms before she decided that it was time to get the day rolling. "Clark," she said softly. "We need to get up." Then she gave him a few seconds to stir. After another moment, she decided stronger measures were called for. This time she nudged him a bit and said, slightly louder this time, "Clark."

He finally stirred and opened his eyes. When he realized that her face was within an inch of his own, he gave her a quick — but not too quick — kiss. "Good morning," he said.

She could tell from his voice that he wasn't a hundred percent this morning. "You're tired," she observed aloud. "I woke up at 3:00 a.m. and you were gone. Was it a busy night?"

"I'm sorry," Clark said sincerely. "I hate not being here when you wake up. I must have been dozing lightly at around 2:00 a.m. because I heard the police report about an apartment building fire at the edge of Suicide Slum. You were sound asleep and I thought I'd be back before you noticed I was gone."

"I understand," she said reassuringly. "We've talked about this before. I have to adjust to life with the ultimate emergency worker. I know that if you aren't here, it's because someone else needs you. But Clark, I'm still worried about how tired you've been since Nightfall. I don't think you've completely recovered from that first impact that left you with amnesia."

"You're probably right," Clark said tiredly.

"Probably?" she replied with a smile and note of challenge.

That triggered the first bright Clark Kent smile of the day. "Okay, you're certainly right. But I'm getting stronger every day."

"I still think that Superman should have taken a few weeks off after the Nightfall crisis," she said with a hint of worry. "You know that you mom told me to make sure you took it easy so you'd recover after Nightfall. As strong as you are, that was nearly too much even for you."

"Lo, you worry too much," he defended. Clark had started using Perry's variant of her name the day after the big fight with Lex. She knew that Clark preferred to use 'Lois' all the time, but he also knew that her preference was the different name that reflected her new life. Reconciling her new life with the old one continued to be a challenge for both of them.

She put her hand to his cheek. "Who else is going to worry about my super man?"

He pressed his cheek into her hand. "No one. At least, not the way you do. Not the way Superman... I need. And we're both lucky to have you," Clark said with sincere affection. "I don't know what would have happened if I'd gotten amnesia and you hadn't been here to tell me who I was."

"It's like I keep telling you," she said trying to lighten the mood. "Our being together is destiny,"

Clark kissed her again and glanced at the clock. "We need to get started," he said, a slight note of urgency suddenly present in his voice. "Remember that we have an early appointment at Lex Labs to go over your test results."

"Is that today?" she asked brightly. "Do you remember your promise?"

"Of course. And if the tests come back the way we want, I'll be delighted to keep that promise."

"You'd better. And I'm still going to hold you to flying us to Las Vegas so we can get married immediately."

"It'll be my very great pleasure," he said as he kissed her again.

Lo-Lo couldn't help tapping her foot impatiently. "Why is it that any time you have to meet someone whose title is doctor, you always have to wait for them?" She and Clark were waiting at a table in a sterile-feeling room at Lex Labs. When they'd arrived, they'd been shuffled into this room and told to wait for a Dr. Jensen. That was more than ten minutes ago. The old Lois would have probably already walked out. However else she'd changed, a lack of patience was one thing that she continued to share with her earlier self.

A minute later, the door opened and a middle-aged black woman came in. "Good morning. I'm Doctor Althea Jensen, the team lead on the Revenge project. I'm sorry to keep you waiting. I wanted to be sure I had copies of all your test results so you can take them with you." She closed the door and placed her material on the table. "You must be Lois Lane," she said offering her hand.

Lo-Lo shook her hand. "It's nice to meet you, Dr. Jensen. This is my fiancé Clark Kent."

Dr. Jensen shook Clark's hand. "Mr. Kent."

The doctor sat down in the chair across from Lois. She put her papers on the table between them and looked a Lo-Lo. "We'll get right to it," she started in an all-business tone. "Ms. Lane, you are still under the influence of Revenge."

Lo-Lo felt the disappointment wash over her. She wouldn't be getting married today. "Are you sure?" she tried. "I feel fine."

"I'm sure you do," Dr. Jensen replied, still all business. Then the doctor smiled just a tiny bit. "Feeling well doesn't mean you're under the influence of Revenge, but if you are affected by Revenge, you will certainly be feeling well."

Now she was talking in riddles. "What? Doctor, please," Lo-Lo said. "I have no idea what you just said."

Doctor Jensen's smile faded. "Sorry," she said. "I've been talking about this with the other researchers too much. Let me clarify by going over how Revenge works. That will also go a long way toward your understanding the nature of how you're still under the influence of this drug."

"Go ahead," Lo-Lo said.

"Let me warn you both that this is a little technical. I know that neither of you are scientists, but I think you'll be able to follow. Okay?"

"Doctor Jensen," Clark replied, "We're both reporters. Less than six months ago, we were involved in an investigation into the EPRAD space transport. As long as you don't get too deep, I'm sure we'll be able to keep up."

The doctor looked at her for confirmation. Once she nodded in agreement, the explanation began. "Revenge is all about brain chemistry and how that affects your actions and emotions," she began. "There are two key areas that govern most emotional triggers and how we process those emotions. The first is a structure called the amygdala. It does many things, but the one that we are concerned with is the function of associating thoughts with emotions. This includes those emotions that govern attraction, aggression and sexual responses. For example, when you see or remember a bad experience, it's the amygdala that ties that thought to an emotional reaction of anger or sadness. It has a similar functionality for feelings of affection and sexual excitement.

The doctor paused and looked at her. "Ms. Lane, you introduced Mr. Kent as your fiancé?"

"Yes," Lo-Lo confirmed.

"Do me a favor and look at him. Do you find him physically attractive?"

The doctor paused as Lo-Lo looked at Clark and felt her face flush as a wave of arousal washed over her. Lo-Lo looked back at the doctor to find that she was watching her intently.

"Um, Yes," Lo-Lo answered.

Dr. Jensen's knowing smile told Lo-Lo that her physical reaction had not gone unnoticed by the older woman. "That, Ms. Lane, is also the amygdala. The other element we need to worry about is a structure called the anterior cingulate cortex, which we usually just call the ACC. If the amygdala is the engine for our emotions, then the ACC is the brake. The ACC acts to mitigate the effects of those emotions triggered by the amygdala. Mostly it keeps us from overreacting when we feel an emotional surge."

She paused but neither Lo-Lo nor Clark seemed to have a question. "Okay, so let's talk about Revenge. It acts on both those regions. First, it essentially shuts down the emotion-governing function of the ACC. While it's in full effect, as it is during the first 36 hours after exposure, a person has no mechanism to prevent them from acting on every emotion that they feel."

"Couldn't that be dangerous?" Clark asked. "What if someone got mad?"

She smiled at Clark as if he were a quick student in a classroom. "Very good, Mr. Kent. Revenge also affects the amygdala so that it is incapable of producing the hormones and chemical signals that trigger anger and aggression. Thoughts that would normally trigger anger simply don't produce a reaction. At the same time, Revenge amplifies those elements that trigger feelings of well being and sexual attraction. The combination of the effects on the amygdala and the ACC give you the behaviors that were documented during the 36 hour period of primary activity."

"But Lois isn't acting anything like she did during that time," Clark insisted.

"I'm sure she's not." Then Dr. Jensen pulled a sheet out of the stack in front of her and glanced at it. "Our evidence indicates that 578 people were affected to Revenge."

"That many?" Lo-Lo asked. Her initial investigation had suggested only about half that.

"Yes. The Daily Planet was the smallest of the three tests that Miranda performed. All but seven of those 578 people returned to normal after 36 hours. Those seven had the same reaction at first, but it didn't wear off the same way as for everyone else."

Dr. Jensen paused long enough to make sure she had Lo-Lo's attention. "For those people, including you Ms. Lane, both the ACC and amygdala remained impaired. Your amygdala has recovered the ability to produce anger triggers, but only to a greatly reduced degree. At the same time, the production of the sexually related triggers remained artificially high. The effect on the ACC is similar, but it's more difficult to determine when the amygdala is out-of-balance. We are continuing to investigate, but the evidence suggests that the ACC is not working at its normal levels."

She pushed an envelope toward Lois. "Here are your test results. You're blood chemical levels and EEG scans are entirely consistent with the other six victims. You are in a state of continual positive emotional and sexual stimulation combined with an impaired ability to control your reactions to those feelings. So, going back to what I said when we began, if you are affected by Revenge, you will certainly be feeling well."

"Is Lois in any danger from these imbalances?" Clark asked, concern clearly in his voice.

The doctor shook her head. "From what we can tell, there's no apparent physical danger from her condition," she said in a reassuring tone. "They're significant enough to affect behavior, but not enough to endanger her health."

Clark sighed, visibly relieved. "Will I... recover?" Lo-Lo asked.

"We really don't know," the doctor admitted. "The data we have indicates that you, and all the other long-term victims, appear to be completely stable. There are no indications that your body is correcting this on its own. At this time, the opinion of the research team is that without something to reverse the effect of

Revenge, it is possible that you may remain the way you are now for the rest of your life."

"So we can't get married," Lo-Lo said once they were both in the car.

Clark looked as sad as she felt. "I'm sorry, but I don't think we can yet."

"It's because I'm not a whole person," she replied dejectedly.

Clark didn't respond and it seemed clear that he couldn't think of anything to say. He reached over and squeezed her hand, then started the car and headed for the Planet. After a few blocks, he seemed to think of a new approach to try to lessen the blow. "She really didn't tell us anything we didn't already suspect," he said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Do you think they'll develop a cure?" Lo-Lo asked, more to keep Clark talking than any real interest in the answer.

"I don't know. They seem to have a good understanding of the mechanism of Revenge. She seemed confident that they'll come up with something."

There had been something in his voice. He sounded like he wanted her to go back to being Lois. "If they develop a treatment, do you want me to get... fixed?" she asked, slightly afraid of his answer.

"I want you to be healthy," he replied immediately.

"But what if my feelings — my attraction to you — are only because of a broken armadillo..."

"Amygdala," Clark corrected.

"Whatever. What if without that extra boost, I don't love you anymore?"

Clark considered this for nearly a minute. "I hope with all my heart that what we have is real enough to survive. If it's not... It will hurt. A lot. But at least you'll be able to make decisions about where you go from here knowing that it's not because you were suffering from the aftereffects of a chemical attack."

He paused again, but Lo-Lo had no response so he continued. "I have to believe that what you told me that first night will prove true. We are where we are today, because you convinced me that you were falling in love with me before Revenge."

"I was," was what she said, but 'I hope I was,' was what she thought. She took a second to quell her fears, then continued. "But without Revenge, I might never have shown it. I'm afraid of how I might be without the drug. I just don't know how I'll act. From my perspective now, I don't understand why I acted the way I did before Revenge. I'm afraid there's something I felt, or something I thought, that I'm missing."

"You said you were scared of showing your feelings... scared of being hurt," Clark suggested.

"I was. And I was angry. I feel like I was angry all the time," she explained.

"You were certainly a lot more — intense," Clark commented.

There was that tone in his voice again. Then she had it. Clark missed that intensity. "Clark, did you like old Lois better than me?"

Clark pulled the car to a stop and turned to her. "Honey, there is only you. Remember, I was in love with you from the beginning. I swear that's true," he pleaded.

"No. You were in love with her!" she retorted with a flash of anger that popped out in spite of Revenge.

"Now you aren't being fair. You know I love you." He really sounded like he meant it.

"Then marry me. Today!" she begged.

Clark looked like he was in pain. "Lo, we've been through this before. I wish I could. But..."

"You might as well call me Lois," she snapped back at him. "She's the reason we're stuck. She might come back and not like our relationship." Lo-Lo barely got the words out before she

started crying. “She’s the one you want to be with,” she sobbed.

Clark leaned over and pulled her into a hug. At his touch, she felt the anger slip quickly away, but the hurt was still there. She needed him so much. She loved him so much.

“Lo, please,” he pleaded. “We’ve been over this. You’re only one person. The old and new versions are both the woman I love. I owe it to both parts of you to do the best that I can for all of you.”

“I’m just so scared,” she whispered through soft sobs. “I don’t want to lose you. I don’t want to lose me.”

Dinner had been pleasant as always. Clark cooked and they’d cleaned up together afterwards. She’d been worried that after the events in the car, there would be an uncomfortable tension between her and Clark all day. Fortunately, that hadn’t been the case. She guessed that it had something to do with Revenge. Once she’d gotten past that moment, she found her cheerfulness return quickly. Clark also helped. He’d been even more attentive than usual all day and she loved him all the more for that.

They were just finishing the dinner dishes when there was a knock on the door. Clark lowered his glasses and looked in the direction of the door. “It’s your mom,” he said.

Lo-Lo felt herself frown. “I’ll get it,” she said tiredly. She crossed the apartment, pasted a smile on her face, and opened the door.

Lo-Lo started to say hello, but never got the chance as Ellen cut her off. “Lois, once you told me the news about the Lex Labs results, I knew that I had to see you tonight.”

Her mom was the only person with whom she interacted on a regular basis that still called her Lois. She’d given up asking her mom to call her Lo-Lo after the first few days. “Hello, mother. Please come in.”

Ellen Lane came in, took off her coat and handed it to her. While she was hanging her mom’s coat on the hook by the door, Clark stepped out of the kitchen and tried to greet her mom. “Good evening, Mrs. Lane. Would you like some tea?”

Ellen looked at him coldly and said, “No,” her voice filled with venom. From the moment that her mom had met Clark, and learned of his relationship with her daughter, Ellen had been barely civil to her fiancé. After a cold few seconds, her mom turned to face her. “We need to talk,” she said urgently.

This tone was never a good sign. Lo-Lo headed for the sofa and sat down. “Okay, let’s talk,” she replied, trying to sound cheerful. Where was that Revenge attitude fix when mom was here?

Ellen indicated Clark with her eyes. “When we spoke on the phone, I’m sure that I told you that I wanted to talk without *him* nearby.”

Even Revenge couldn’t keep her from feeling a burst of rage at the way her mom had referred to Clark. “You did, mother,” she said in as controlled a voice as she could muster. “But anything we need to talk about, we can talk about in front of Clark.”

“I can leave,” Clark offered.

“No!” Lo-Lo said sharply. “I want you here. Now come and sit with me.”

Clark’s eyes widened for just a second at her tone, but his smile told her that he didn’t mind her commanding attitude. In a flash, she realized that for just that instant she’d acted the way she would have as Lois. No wonder Clark smiled. When he sat beside her, she immediately took his hand in her own.

Her mom’s eyes remained locked on their clasped hands for a solid second or two. Then she got to the reason for her visit. “Now that you know your condition, you need to stay away from... him,” she said sternly. “When are you going to move out?”

She just had to smile at her mom’s audacity. “Mom, you know that isn’t going to happen,” she said easily.

“You still have your own apartment, don’t you?” Ellen asked.

“Yes, but I don’t plan to keep it. I don’t need an apartment of my own anymore. And that’s not the issue anyway. I’m not going to leave Clark.”

Her relaxed reply seemed to catch her mom off-guard. “But the test results... He’s taking advantage of you. You know that now.”

“I don’t know any such thing. It’s not as if I lost my memory from the time before I got hit with Revenge. I was in love with Clark before that,” she said confidently.

“That’s the Revenge talking,” her mother countered. “My daughter would have never been interested in someone just off a Kansas farm. You had aspirations. You were dating Lex Luthor.”

“We weren’t dating. I just had dinner with him a few times.”

“How many times did you go out for dinner with the farmer here before Revenge?”

“His name is Clark, mother.”

“Fine,” Ellen said sharply. “How many times did you go out for dinner with Clark before Revenge?”

She paused for only the barest moment. “That doesn’t matter,” she said.

“Yes it does,” Ellen countered. “You told me that Lex Labs is working on a treatment for your condition.”

“So?”

“After we talked I called them and was able to speak with Dr. Jensen. She told me that no one under the influence of Revenge is able to make decisions about... personal issues. I’m going to meet with her so that she has a correct picture of how much Revenge has changed you.”

“Mother, I know that I’ve changed,” she tried to explain.

“But can’t you accept that I’m happier than I’ve ever been in my life? I don’t care if this is part of being exposed to Revenge.”

“That’s why you have to leave. The drug has you all confused. You’ve turned away from your future because that poison has twisted your mind to think this... man is what you want. He’s just using you. He doesn’t really love you.”

That was too much. Clark’s love was the single thing she needed to count on most. It took several seconds to regain her composure. Then she stood. “Mother, please leave.”

“What?”

“I said leave. When you’re ready to accept me and Clark being together, you can come back.”

Ellen stood and walked quickly to the door. She took her coat and walked out leaving the door standing open behind her. Lo-Lo walked slowly to the door and closed it. She heard Clark following and when she turned away from the door, he was right there. “Clark, hold me,” she pleaded.

His arms went around her. “I do love you,” he offered. “More than anything.”

“I know.”

“But as much as I hate to admit it, your mom has a point,” Clark added. “The decisions you make now aren’t necessarily the ones you would make if not for Revenge.”

She pulled him tighter. “I know that too... and that scares me most of all. I really am afraid that if I ever go back to the way I was before, I won’t love you anymore. I don’t want to live that way. What I said to my mom was true. I’ve never been happier than I am now. I’m sure that if Lois had known what this would be like, she would have jumped at it.”

“I kept hoping you’d see me,” he mused aloud.

“She... I... She was so scared of being hurt,” she explained. “And so angry. I just don’t trust her. If that all comes back, I’m afraid she’ll do something stupid.”

“Stupid?” Clark asked fearfully.

“I know her. I know everything she did and felt, but the reasoning she used to make decisions just seems completely wrong. Her fear makes her nasty. There’s a good chance that

she'll shut you out. Or even worse, she'll attack you."

"Why? Won't you — Lois — remember what you and I have talked about... what we've shared?"

"If she doesn't, it will be really bad." Lo-Lo closed her eyes and concentrated for a few seconds. "You know she'd been taken advantage of before."

Clark nodded slowly.

"I'm sure she'll think all the worst that my mom does. She'll feel violated. And since she liked and trusted you, she'll feel betrayed."

Clark shuddered at the thought. "All we can do is hope that she... that you'll remember what we've had."

"Even if she does, there still might be a problem. She'll be angry because she'll feel like she didn't make the decision to start our relationship. She can get so very angry." Lo-Lo pulled Clark into an even tighter hug. He felt like a life preserver in a storm. "I'm afraid of what she might do."

"I'm afraid of that too," Clark said solemnly.

Chapter 6 — Court

Revenge + 6 weeks

As Lo-Lo approached the county court house, she could hardly believe that it had come to this. Two weeks ago, she'd finally reached the point where she felt comfortable in her new life. First, and most importantly, Clark had agreed to start making detailed wedding plans. Also, after no small struggle, she'd found a writing style that suited her new outlook and that Perry had declared to be acceptable. And, the most unexpected development, she had a new best girlfriend.

In some ways, it felt odd that she was setting aside at least one night each week for a girls night out, but it was so much fun. At first, she almost hadn't done it. After all, what could be better than spending every evening in Clark's arms? But he'd convinced her that she needed to get used to being out in the world with her new personality. Even with Clark's encouragement, it probably wouldn't have happened without Cat's help.

Lo-Lo was grateful that Cat had made such an effort to be her friend. Who would have thought that the columnist would become her best friend? In her Lois days, she'd never gotten along with Cat. But as had been the case with her relationship with Clark, Revenge allowed her to see the positive aspects of Cat that she'd dismissed before. There were still parts of Cat's personality that Lo-Lo didn't exactly admire, but they didn't seem to be a big deal anymore. Cat was just a fun and free-thinking person. Lo-Lo didn't understand why Lois had been so up tight about the things that Cat did. Their girls-night-outs were a blast. After the third time out together, Cat had even stopped trying to get her to "sample" any of the men they met on these outings.

She found that she enjoyed clubbing more than she ever remembered as Lois. She danced and flirted a bit with the men she met on these evenings, but she had no interest in letting it go beyond that with anyone but Clark. There had only been one instance of a man trying to not take "No" for an answer, but Cat had intervened and everything had turned out fine. Afterwards Lo-Lo had been so impressed with the way Cat had flattened that jerk that she'd gotten her friend to promise a few lessons in handling that kind of man.

But then, just as she thought she'd hit her stride, she got the call that Lex Labs had developed a cure for Revenge. Dr. Jensen had suggested that she take it right away. For Lo-Lo this was a no-brainer. She loved her new life and wasn't interested in a cure, so she declined.

That news led to a long talk with Clark that evening. He thought she should take the treatment. In fact, he was really worried about the fact she didn't want to risk going back to being Lois. He spent most of an evening trying as hard as he could to

convince her that she should take the cure. However, once she made her position and feelings clear, he'd reluctantly agreed to support her decision. But since that day he'd refused to talk any more about wedding plans. Clark didn't know that since that night, every time she thought about their now-obviously-cancelled wedding, she broke down in tears. She knew that he loved her, but he loved Lois more. She feared that no matter what their future held, he'd always long for Lois over her.

She stopped on the sidewalk looking up the steps that led into the courthouse building. "I don't want to be here," she mused aloud.

Clark had been true to his word and had not let go of her hand the whole time they'd been walking toward the building. "I know," he said reassuringly. "But we don't have a choice. Your mom was way more determined than we thought she'd be."

"She can be that way, but there's more going on here than just my mom," Lo-Lo replied, never taking her eyes off the imposing building in front of them. "I know she wanted to do this, but I don't think she would have been able to make it happen on her own. I think she's getting legal and financial help from somewhere else."

"Your dad?" Clark suggested.

She turned to Clark. "No. I was able to reach my dad and he didn't know anything about any of this. He didn't even know what Revenge was."

"Then... who?" Clark asked, clearly confused.

"Lex," Lo-Lo said accusingly.

"Luthor?" Clark countered in a tone of disbelief.

"Don't you remember the way he acted when he found out that I wasn't interested in him?" Lo-Lo challenged. "I do. I can still hear his, 'I will bring Lois back,' echoing in my mind."

"Sure," Clark counted in soothing tones. "We always figured that was why he was funding the Lex Labs research into Revenge and developing a cure."

"And they succeeded," Lo-Lo cut him off. "But then I refused to take it."

"And you think that moved him to help your mom? I guess it makes sense. When he decides that he wants something, the man can be very determined. And he wants you."

"No," she said sharply. "He wants Lois. I'm nothing more than something that's keeping him from her." She couldn't keep the bitterness from her voice.

"Lo, he's got to figure that even if he were to force you to undergo the treatment for Revenge, you're likely to remember that you aren't interested in him anymore."

"The way I am now, he'll never have me. He knows that. I'm sure he also knows that one-half of the people who have been treated for long term Revenge have little to no memory of the time they were affected. He's got to figure that my taking the cure for Revenge gives him a fifty-fifty chance of getting me back. I'm sure he sees those odds as too good to pass up."

Clark seemed to consider her words. "I don't think Dr. Jensen is part of the plan... at least not knowingly. Even she said that the evidence continued to show no long-term health risk to remaining untreated," Clark said supportively.

"But she's scheduled to speak against me in this competency hearing. I'm convinced Lex is behind this. There had to be some special pressure applied to get this in front of a judge. Especially to get this to happen so quickly."

Clark glanced at his watch, "Lo, we need to get inside. The proceeding is about to start."

They reached the courtroom with only a minute to spare. Lo-Lo's lawyer, Cynthia Bryce was already there and ready. She released Clark's hand and continued to the front of the courtroom alone. Cynthia had insisted that it would look better if Clark didn't sit with her, so he was in the gallery in the back of the courtroom.

After another minute, the bailiff told them to stand and the judge entered. He sat down, looked at the papers in front of him and turned to his bailiff. “Harry, is everyone here?” He seemed to have a nice voice.

“Yes, Judge.”

The Judge looked around the room. “Ms. Ellen Lane has challenged the competency of her daughter Ms. Lois Lane and is seeking power of attorney for the purpose of compelling her to receive medical treatment. Are both Ms. Lanes present and have representation?”

The lawyer sitting next to her mom stood. “Yes, your honor,” he said. “I’m Bob Jones and will be representing Mrs. Ellen Lane.”

The judge turned to face her table.

Cynthia stood. “Your honor, my name is Cynthia Bryce and I’m representing Ms. Lois Lane here beside me,” Cynthia said, gesturing in her direction.

“Very well. Before I begin, let me review what we’re doing. This is not a trial. No one is accused of a crime. This is a hearing and based on the information and testimony presented, I am charged with deciding if Mrs. Ellen Lane will be granted the authority she is seeking.” Then the judge turned to the opposition table. “Mr. Jones, your opening statement please.”

The other lawyer stood up. “Thank you, Judge. On November 28, my client’s daughter, Ms. Lois Lane, was a victim of a chemical attack. The chemical was a drug called Revenge that altered the personality of its victims. The majority of those victims spent 36 hours in various states of believing that they were in love. In most cases, these individuals spent that time in pursuit of the first person that they saw for which they felt any attraction. Fortunately, for almost everyone that the drug affected, the symptoms wore off after approximately 36 hours. Generally speaking, those people who were afflicted with Revenge deeply regretted the things they did and the decisions they made while under the influence.”

“Unfortunately for some, such as my client’s daughter, the drug did not wear off completely. She has continued to suffer from a personality change due to the chemical. Research performed by Lex Labs discovered that there were seven victims — Lois Lane and six others — who remained affected by Revenge after the 36 hour period of primary exposure. Approximately two weeks ago, Lex Labs developed a treatment that completely reverses the effect of Revenge. We are here today because in her affected state, Lois has refused the treatment. It is our intent to show that due to the chemical, she is not in a position to make this decision. Our petition for power of attorney is only to compel Lois to receive that treatment. Once she has been cured of her exposure to the drug, she is free to get back to her own life with no further interference or loss of rights to make her own decisions.”

The whole speech sent a chill through Lo-Lo. Everything he said was true. What if they could convince the judge that she was unable to make decisions for herself?

“Ms. Bryce, your opening statement please,” the Judge said.

Cynthia stood. “Thank you, your honor. My client doesn’t contest the fact that she was and is affected by the Revenge drug. However, after considering her options and with due deliberation, my client has declined treatment. Our view is that this is a disagreement between Lois and her mother and it is our intent to demonstrate that she is fully competent and that there is no basis for stripping Lois of her right to make her own medical decisions.”

“Very well,” the judge said. “Mr. Jones, please present your arguments.”

“Dr. Althea Jensen, please take the stand.”

Dr. Jensen took the stand and was sworn in. Lo-Lo struggled to pay attention while Dr. Jensen went over the way Revenge

altered brain function. This was all old news and Lo-Lo really wished Clark could be sitting with her. This was very stressful and she wanted him next to her so that he could hold her hand.

“So they have the same pattern of regret as the people that were only affected for 36 hours?” the other lawyer said, suddenly in a tone loud enough to capture Lo-Lo’s attention.

“That is correct,” Dr. Jensen answered. “We were actually surprised how similarly the other six people reacted after they were treated for Revenge. Three of these people have amnesia very similar to the short-term victims. For all of them, the brain chemistry was very similar to the short-term affected.”

“Dr. Jensen, based on your knowledge of those treated, did all of them take the treatment voluntarily?”

“No, only two of the affected took the treatment voluntarily,” she replied. “The other four were compelled to do so.” Lo-Lo hadn’t heard this part before. So she wasn’t the only person that liked their new life. That very thought gave her hope that she’d get through this.

“So, just like Lois, they did not want to be treated.” Lo-Lo didn’t like the voice of her mom’s lawyer. He sounded so much like a... lawyer.

“That is correct,” Dr. Jensen replied.

“Why were they treated?”

Now Lo-Lo was listening intently. She had an urge to blurt out, “Yeah, why!”

“There were other people that worked to compel them. Three of the four were married and had abandoned their spouse. For them, the spouse was involved in the decision. However, my involvement was in administering the treatment, not in arranging for the person to be there.”

At this point Cynthia stood. “Your honor, I object to this line of questioning. Dr. Jensen is offering hearsay.”

“Your honor,” the other lawyer cut in, “this is only foundational. We will be presenting testimony from the individuals. Dr. Jensen’s testimony is important as she is one of the few people that have interacted with all of the victims of the extended time Revenge affliction.”

The judge paused for a few seconds. “Given the nature of what we are trying to achieve, I’ll allow this. But Mr. Jones, I expect to hear from the individuals that Dr. Jensen is describing. Please continue.”

“Thank you, your honor,” he replied. “Now, Dr. Jensen, have you met with any of these people since they were treated?”

“Yes, all of them.”

“And, after the fact, how did they feel about being treated.”

She turned and looked directly at Lo-Lo. “Every one of them thanked me for giving them their life back.”

“What about the four who were treated against their will?” the lawyer asked.

“They have been the most thankful,” Dr. Jensen answered.

Lo-Lo had known all this, but it scared her nevertheless. She suddenly had an image of Lois locked behind a door trying to get out. Lo-Lo knew she was doing the right thing. But what if she wasn’t?

“Thank you, Dr. Jensen.” And Mr. Jones went back to his desk.

Cynthia stood. “No questions.” Lo-Lo was glad that Cynthia had briefed her on the plan. Since they were not going to challenge the technical testimony, there were no issues of fact about which to ask Dr. Jensen.

“Doctor, you are dismissed,” the Judge said.

Mr. Jones had never sat down. “We call Clark Kent,”

Lo-Lo knew this was coming since Clark had been served with a subpoena. She was sure that Clark would never deliberately hurt her, but he had this bad habit of telling the exact truth no matter what. That might work against them.

The lawyer went after him as soon as he was sworn in. “Mr.

Kent, what is your present relationship with Lois Lane?”

“We’re engaged to be married.”

“Isn’t it true that she also lives with you?”

“Yes, she does.”

“Prior to Lois being exposed to Revenge, were you engaged?”

“No.”

“Were you living together?”

“No.”

“Were you involved romantically?”

Clark hesitated. She could imagine him reviewing what she’d told him about her pre-Revenge feelings. “Not really,” he answered after several long seconds.

The lawyer paused for a second. “Mr. Kent, what does ‘Not Really’ mean? Were you and Lois Lane actively involved in a romantic relationship prior to her exposure to Revenge?”

Clark let out a long sigh. “No,” he said in a morose tone.

“Are you familiar with the behavior that Dr. Jensen described earlier as the norm for the initial exposure to Revenge?”

“I’m not sure I understand the question.”

“Did you see how most people acted during the first 36 hours after they came in contact with the drug?”

“If you mean where the people would aggressively pursue the person with whom they became infatuated, then yes, I saw that at the Daily Planet.”

“During that attack on the Daily Planet, was Lois exposed?”

“Yes.”

“Who did Lois lock on to?”

“Me.”

“At the time, how did you feel about her behavior?”

“It was scary. I knew Lois wasn’t acting like herself. I did my best to keep things under control.”

“So you were in control of yourself?”

“Yes. By chance, I missed being exposed. I’m not sure how.”

“What did you do during that time? I mean with respect to Lois and her attentions.”

“I kept my distance.”

“Why?”

“She clearly wasn’t herself.”

“So you could see that a person under the influence of Revenge was not in control of their actions?”

“Based on what I saw, I’d have to agree with that.”

“Mr. Kent, have you seen the medical data from Lois’s tests?”

“Yes.”

“So you know that from a medical perspective, she is still suffering the effects of Revenge?”

“I know that the reports say that she hasn’t completely recovered. I also know that her behavior now is nothing like when she was first exposed.”

Lo-Lo expected the lawyer to challenge Clark on that last part, but instead he let it go by.

“Lois moved into your apartment on December 1,” the lawyer continued without missing a beat. “Do you believe that she would have done that had she not been exposed to Revenge?”

“No. She would not.”

“I’m done,” said Mr. Johnson.

Cynthia stood up and went over to Clark. “Mr. Kent, are you from Smallville, Kansas?”

“Yes.”

“Did you and Lois do a story from Smallville before she was exposed to Revenge?”

“Yes.”

“When the two of you were in Smallville, where did Lois stay?”

“We both stayed at my parent’s house.”

“So when Lois was at your parent’s house, where did she

sleep?”

“In my old room,” he answered. Then he added quickly, “I slept on the sofa.”

“While you were in Smallville with Lois, did you go to the corn festival?”

Clark flashed his first big smile since he’d taken the stand. Lo-Lo had come to love the corn festival. They both viewed that Smallville trip as the first small beginning of their romantic relationship. Cynthia thought it would be critical since it established a pre-Revenge foundation for her most obvious post-Revenge decision.

“Yes. It was fun. We did the carnival events, the dance, everything.”

“So while you were on that assignment, you took Lois on a date to the corn festival?”

“Yes.”

“So before Revenge, your relationship was, if not romantic, more than just coworkers?”

“Yes.”

“And the two of you were interacting in ways that were foundational for a developing personal relationship.”

“Yes.”

“No more questions.”

Clark smiled brightly at Lo-Lo as he returned to his seat in the gallery. That seemed to go well.

“I call Perry White,” said Mr. Jones

Perry took the stand and was quickly sworn in. Mr. Jones wasted no time in getting started. “Mr. White, how long have you known Lois Lane?”

“Almost five years. I hired her right out of college.”

“Is she a good reporter?”

“She’s the best on my staff.”

“Prior to the Revenge exposure, did Lois usually work alone?”

“Usually, but not always. I have partnered her with other reporters from time to time.”

The lawyer offered Perry a sheet of paper. “Mr. White, here’s a list of articles from the Daily Planet. Please look at the list and tell me if it looks familiar.”

Perry took the list and looked at it for a moment. “This looks like a list of Lois’s work from early 1993.”

“Where did this come from?”

“As part of the proceeding, I was asked to prepare several lists of articles published in the Daily Planet that Lois authored. This is one of those.”

“Mr. White, this indicates that in the month of March 1993, Lois authored fifty-three articles. All of these are marked with Lois Lane as the only reporter. Does this seem correct based on your recollections of the publishing history of the Daily Planet and Lois’s contribution?”

“I believe that this list is correct.”

He handed Perry another list. “Mr. White, this list is from the month of October 1993. It indicates that in that span Lois authored fifty-seven articles. Forty-eight of these were solo and nine were co-authored with Mr. Kent. Please look at this list and tell us if it looks correct.”

Perry looked over the list. “It does.”

“Okay, one more list. I promise that this is the last one. This list covers the articles for the past month up through last Friday’s edition of the Planet. This indicates that this past month, Lois has been involved in forty-six articles. Of these, forty-one with Mr. Kent and five have been with Catherine Grant. Please examine this list.”

“This looks right.”

“Do you have an explanation for the recent lack of solo articles from Lois?”

“She’s had a hard time adjusting after Revenge.”

“Mr. White, do you know if Lois has ever been recognized for excellence in reporting?”

“Yes,” Perry answered, pride clearly present in his voice. “She’s won the Kerth award for exceptional journalism three years in a row. She’s always sworn she’ll win a Pulitzer.”

“Based on her body of work and she talent she showed in earning those Kerth awards, do you believe Lois Lane could win a Pulitzer?”

“Absolutely. She has the skill and the fire.”

“Fire?” the lawyer asked.

“Fire,” Perry reiterated. “Son, in the news business it isn’t enough to be a talented writer or even a good investigator. You have to have a drive... a hunger for getting to the bottom of things. You have to eat and breathe your profession and commitment. That’s fire.”

The lawyer paused as if considering a follow up, but after only a second or so, he moved on. “Mr. White, who is Lo-Lo?”

Lo-Lo felt her mouth drop. Somehow, she hadn’t expected to hear that name during the trial today.

Perry hesitated for a long time. “That is Lois’s nickname in the office.”

“When was the first time you heard her use the name Lo-Lo?”

“The day after everyone else recovered from Revenge.”

“Since she has been going by Lo-Lo, have you ever heard her speak of Lois as if she were another person?”

Perry hesitated again. He looked like he was in pain.

“Mr. White,” the lawyer said, more intently this time. “Have you heard her speak of Lois as if she were someone else?”

“Yes,” Perry replied reluctantly. “But it just makes it easier for her to differentiate the time before Revenge.”

“Of course,” the lawyer said, his voice thick with disbelief. “Let me clarify an earlier point. Lois only started using this different name — Lo-Lo — after the Revenge attack. Is that correct?”

“Yes,” Perry admitted in a defeated tone.

“Mr. White, in your professional opinion, in her present condition, does... Lo-Lo have what it takes to ever win a Pulitzer?”

Perry simply sat mute.

“Mr. White. Consider that the whole point of this hearing is to do what’s best for Lois. We are trying to determine if being under the influence of Revenge has affected her in a negative way. So, in her present condition, will she win that Pulitzer?”

“No.” Perry answered, barely above a whisper. “She’s lost the fire.”

Chapter 7 — Consequence

As Cynthia stood and asked Perry some follow-up questions, Lo-Lo found that Perry’s words continued to echo in her ears. “She’s lost the fire.” Perry was saying that she wasn’t the award-winning reporter that she’d been before Revenge.

But she was so happy. Did she have to be miserable — like she was when she was living Lois’s life — to be a good reporter? Now that she thought about it, Perry had been telling her all along. Not only was she no longer the best, she wasn’t even good enough to get a solo article accepted for print. It hadn’t come up when he was on the stand, but she’d probably submitted twenty or more stories of her own to Perry over the last month. He’d rejected all of them. He’d been kind — maybe too kind — in the way he rejected her stories. However, now it was clear that he was rejecting them because she wasn’t working up to his standards. She’d thought it was just her writing style, but now she knew it was more.

“Samantha Smith, please take the stand.”

Mr. Jones voice snapped her out of it. Samantha Smith? Who was this? Did Cynthia finish with Perry already? Before Lo-Lo

could ask Cynthia what had happened, the door at the back of the courtroom opened and a pretty young blonde woman came in. Lo-Lo watched her as she was sworn in. She looked like she didn’t want to be here any more than Lo-Lo did.

“Ms. Smith, do you have any experience with Revenge?” Mr. Jones asked.

“Yes. I work as a production assistant for Concepts advertising. I was in the Daily Planet offices the day that Miranda released Revenge in that area.”

“What was your reaction to the chemical?” Mr. Jones seemed to have softened his voice. When he’d questioned Clark and Perry, there was an edge to his voice. Now he sounded much friendlier.

“My memory of the incident is kind of fuzzy. I’m one of the people that ended up with partial memory loss. What I do remember was a feeling of attraction and arousal for Jason.”

“Who is Jason?”

“Jason Casey, one of the photographers that worked on the shoot.”

“Did you know him very well before that day?”

“He was a regular contractor for my company. I’d worked with him off and on for nearly a year. A few times, we’d been part of the same group that went out for drinks after we finished a shoot.”

“So you were casual friends.”

“Yes, but that was all. We’d never been on a date or anything.”

“But things changed that day?”

“Yes. I remember that before that day, I’d found him attractive, but I was too shy to tell him. That day he was much more than that. He was the sexiest, most virile man I’d ever seen. All I could think of was that I had to do whatever I could to get him into bed.”

“Are you aware that is the normal reaction for a person that’s just been exposed to Revenge?”

“I know that now.”

“What happened after the initial dose of Revenge wore off?”

“The details are fuzzy, but I remember that I’d convinced Jason to take me to his place. We were there almost continuously for more than a day. The second morning I remember waking up feeling different. It wasn’t just about sex anymore. I remember thinking how lucky I was that Jason had accepted me. I was in love and wanted to be with him forever. In fact, I proposed to him that morning.”

Lo-Lo felt a chill run through her at the similarity of that point.

“But you didn’t get married?” Mr. Jones continued.

“No. He put me off and suggested we just live together for a while. I remember being disappointed, but as long as I could be with Jason, I was happy to be with him on whatever terms he wanted.”

“How did your friends and family react to your new relationship?”

“My friends were mostly supportive. Some of them commented that I didn’t seem to be acting like myself, but there wasn’t any obvious change. I had more trouble concentrating on work, especially when I’d been away from Jason for a long time. My family didn’t like him at all. They thought he was taking advantage of me.”

“When did you find out that you were one of the people for whom Revenge didn’t wear off?”

“Lex Labs contacted me a few days after the attack. About two weeks later they told me that I was still under the influence.”

“Did Lex Labs contact you after they developed a cure?”

“Yes. Dr. Jensen called me personally.”

“What was your reaction when she told you that there was a cure?”

“I refused it. I loved being with Jason and didn’t want to give that up.”

Lo-Lo could hardly believe how similar their stories were. No wonder they put this girl on the stand. Her experiences mirrored Lo-Lo’s own.

“Did anyone try to change your mind?”

“Yes. All my family. I refused them all. I was convinced that they just didn’t understand how much I was in love.”

“What finally happened?”

“About 10 days ago my sister convinced me to get a flu shot. But she’d tricked me and it was actually the Revenge antidote. My family had bribed one of Dr. Jensen’s assistants and convinced him to steal a dose of the Revenge antidote. Dr. Jensen was really angry when she found out and she’s been very supportive in my care since then.”

“Your sister and family... Did they know that you didn’t want the treatment?”

“Yes. They all, especially my sister, acted against my wishes.”

“How do you feel about your sister now?”

“I thank her every day for freeing me.”

“What is the status of your relationship with Jason?”

“When I look back at it now, the whole thing with him feels like a terrible nightmare. It’s like I was riding along in my body but I didn’t have control. It was sort of like sitting in the back seat of a car with a crazy person driving. That person, the person I was under Revenge, couldn’t see how wrong it all was. How wrong he was. I’ll never forgive him for taking advantage of me. He knew what he was doing and knew that I couldn’t help myself. Knowing all that, he used me. I’ll hate him for the rest of my life.”

“We are here to try to get Ms. Lane over there to take the Revenge antidote. Do you have anything that you would tell her based on your experience?”

She looked at Lo-Lo. “I’m the one person here who knows how you feel. I’m sorry to tell you this, but it isn’t real. Think about it, if you were really that into him, you would have done something before. I understand that in your present condition, you won’t believe me, but I’m telling you the truth. Get the antidote and get your real life back.”

“No further questions.”

Cynthia got up. “Ms. Smith, I am sorry that you are having to recall this. I’ll keep my questions brief.”

Samantha simply nodded.

“You said that prior to Revenge, you had only a casual relationship with Jason?”

“That’s right.”

“So you hadn’t been to his home town or met his parents?”

“No.”

“If you had been working closely with him for several months... If you had been comfortable enough with him so that you had stayed with him on a field assignment... Do you think it might have been different?”

“Maybe. But none of that happened.”

“I understand. Thank you.”

“Ms. Smith, you are dismissed,” the judge said. Then he looked up at the clock. “It’s just about lunchtime. We’ll break now and reconvene at one o’clock.”

Lois sat with Clark at a sandwich shop down the block from the courthouse. She’d barely absorbed Perry’s testimony when that girl threw her for a loop. Now she was here with Clark and he looked like he was more out of it than she was.

“Clark, are you okay?” she asked.

He looked up at her. He worried a lot, but the stress was extra evident on his face. “Not really. I’m trying to absorb all this.”

She squeezed his hand. “You heard what Cynthia said when

we broke for lunch. The fact that I changed after Revenge is not a legal basis for stripping me of my rights. For something that drastic, they have to establish that I’m a risk to myself or to others. Failing that, they have to show that I’m clearly impaired in some way. Unless they have something much more compelling, the judge should have no choice but to rule in my favor.” Lo-Lo paused for a moment. “Clark, did you hear me?”

“That girl...”

“You mean Samantha?”

“That was so wrong. She was violated.”

“But she’s not me. We had a relationship.”

“Did we? Lois, I love you but the similarities between your story and hers are scary.”

She let his use of her ‘Lois’ name pass. “You’re right. If it was just my judgment, then I wouldn’t trust my feelings. But I remember how I felt before. I remember what we did together before.” She looked at Clark hopefully. After several seconds, she could tell that he was not going to smile. “But that’s not enough is it?” she finally asked.

He looked up and she could tell that he was forcing himself to try to smile for her. “Yes... No... I don’t know.” Then his head dropped back to the table. “Honey, I keep hearing those words.”

“Words?” she asked.

“What Samantha said, ‘I’ll hate him for the rest of my life.’ But it’s you I hear speaking those words.” Then he looked up at her. “I want you to have the best life possible. I want you to be happy. But what if there’s a part of you inside that is crying to get out?” Then barely above a whisper. “...what if the part of you that’s Lois is crying to get away from me?”

He was too good a person for this. She knew that she had to reassure him that their relationship was real. “Clark...”

But suddenly Clark looked at his watch in panic. “Lo, I just remembered. Superman is supposed to make an appearance at an orphanage at 12:00 noon today. With all that’s happened, I forgot until just now.”

“Will you be able to be back for the afternoon session?” she asked.

“Yes. This is only supposed to go on for an hour.”

“Then go. Other people need you, too.”

He stood, but before he left, he turned back, “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” she called as he hurried away. But as she sat there alone, she couldn’t help but think that given the nature of their situation, love might not be enough.

Clark loved to help in places like the Metropolis Children’s Home, but today he wished they’d just finish. After he’d made his appearance and the appeal for help for the orphans, he’d been obligated to stay around so that other dignitaries and officials had their chance. It should have taken 20 minutes, but now it was less than five minutes to 1:00 and they were still making speeches.

When the clock hit three minutes to one, he decided it was time to go. He stood suddenly, “I’m sorry,” he said, interrupting the orphanage director who had been speaking. “I’m needed elsewhere right now.” He didn’t wait for a reply and used some super speed to get himself to the courthouse in only a few seconds.

By the time Clark made it back into the courtroom, everyone else was in place. Lois was whispering intently with Cynthia and didn’t see him arrive. He’d barely sat when the bailiff told them all to stand for the judge. When the judge was ready, he turned to Mr. Jones. “Are you ready to continue?”

At that point Cynthia stood. “Your honor, Ms. Lane would like to address the court.”

The judge looked at Mr. Jones. “Any objection?”

Jones whispered to Lo’s mom for a second the replied, “No objection.”

“Go ahead Ms. Lane,” the judge said to Lo.

Lo stood. Clark could see how nervous she was. “Well, first off, for the record I’m not happy that I could be brought to court with the potential to have my rights stripped in this way. I am an intelligent adult and feel that I can defend my decisions. However, the proceedings this morning made an impression, and I am ready to undergo the procedure to reverse the effects of Revenge. I make this offer on the condition that upon receiving the treatment, this action will be dismissed with prejudice.”

Clark had to fight the impulse to jump up and yell, “No.” What was Lo doing? Didn’t she realize that in a very real sense, curing Revenge could cost Lo her life? Clark calmed himself and noticed that Mrs. Lane and her lawyer had been whispering. Before Clark could even think to listen in, Mr. Jones stood. “Your honor, Mrs. Lane is ready to agree to those terms. Since this action is limited to compelling her daughter to get this treatment, once that occurs, our action in front of this court is moot.”

“How long does the treatment take?” the judge asked.

Mr. Jones checked a paper on the table in front of him. “The treatment is a simple injection. However, there are side effects while the treatment is taking effect that require the presence of a medical staff. It would be best if this were done in a hospital environment. We can set it up for this afternoon so that Lois can be monitored overnight. There is every reason to believe that the entire treatment will have run its course by 9:00 am tomorrow.”

“Ms. Lane. Are you sure this is what you want?”

“I’m sure,” she said solemnly.

“Then we will reconvene at one o’clock tomorrow afternoon,” the judge replied. “If Ms. Lane has gone through with the procedure, we will dismiss the proceeding. So unless there is something else...”

“I’d like to say one more thing,” Lo cut in.

“Go ahead Ms. Lane.”

“I’m doing this because Clark asked me to. He’s always wanted me to get the treatment and has been worried from the very beginning that he was taking advantage of me. I was the one that didn’t want the procedure. I like my new life and I love Clark. I’m scared to death that if I get — fixed — then I’ll lose everything that matters. But now I realize I can’t keep hiding.” Then she turned to face her mom. “He’s a better person that you can possibly imagine.” Then she turned back to the judge. “That’s all I wanted to say. Thank you.”

“Court is adjourned,” the judge said sharply.

Lo had been exceptionally quiet after they left the courtroom. When they arrived at their apartment, there was a message waiting. She was due to check into Memorial General Hospital. Dr. Jensen was already there with her staff. They would begin the procedure as soon as she checked in.

They arrived at the hospital 45 minutes later. They would have been there sooner, but Lo had insisted they stop at the Daily Planet so she could give Perry some papers.

At the hospital, they entered through the emergency room and went to an admitting office. Lo’s mom and Dr. Jensen were there waiting.

“That’s all you packed?” Mrs. Lane exclaimed looking at Lo’s small overnight bag.

“It’s only one night.” Lo defended.

“But you know you probably won’t want to go back to his apartment.”

“It’s our apartment. Besides, I’m not going to hate Clark when this is over.”

“But... I thought... Lois, you heard what that Samantha girl said.”

“Yes,” Lo said calmly. “And I talked to her during the lunch break. It was different.”

Mrs. Lane tried to pursue the issue but Lo’s refusal to say any more finally quieted her down. It took another ten minutes to

complete the admission forms but they were finally ready. When they’d finished the forms Dr. Jensen turned to Lo. “You’ll need to remove all your jewelry,” she said.

Lo took off her necklace and her earrings and put them in her overnight bag.

“You ring too,” the doctor added.

“Can’t I please keep just this on?” she pleaded.

“No. I’m sorry, but I can’t allow it.”

She reluctantly pulled it off. She started to put it with the other jewelry, but suddenly turned to Clark. “Please hold this. Since I can’t be with you tonight, will you promise to keep this with you?”

“I’ll keep it close,” Clark promised.

“I’ll take you to your room,” Dr. Jensen said. “We can start the treatment as soon as you change clothes.”

Clark started to follow behind but Dr. Jensen stopped him. “I’m sorry, Mr. Kent. I can’t allow anyone else in the room while we’re administering the treatment.”

“But I want him there,” Lo-Lo pleaded.

“I understand,” Dr. Jensen said in a tone that made Clark believe that she meant it. “But I can’t allow it.” The doctor turned back to Clark. “Come back later this evening. Lois will be in room 137. Depending on how she responds to the treatment, and if she wants to see you, then you may be able to visit for a few minutes.”

Lo turned to Dr. Jensen. “Could you give me and Clark a minute?”

“Sure,” she replied. She stepped out of the room leaving Lo and Clark alone.

As soon as the door was closed, Lo threw herself into his arms. “I’m scared,” she told him.

“Me too,” Clark admitted.

“If I don’t come out on the other side...”

“Lo, don’t say that. You’ll be fine.”

“This body will be fine. But I might not survive. In case that happens, I want you to know how much I love you.” She lowered her voice to a whisper. “The world may call you Superman, but they have no idea how truly good you really are. You are the best thing that could have ever happened to me and I’m the luckiest woman in the world just to have shared your love for these few weeks.”

“Lo... I wish there was some other way. If... I don’t know how I’ll go on without you.”

Without a word, Lo let go and went quickly out the door. Clark stood in a stunned silence for a few minutes then started out. On his way through the emergency room, he heard a report of a massive car pileup at the edge of town. He headed out the door so that Superman could be the person Lo loved.

It was well after 6:00 p.m. by the time Clark made it back to the hospital. The car accident was a mess with many people injured and trapped in their cars. In many cases, Clark had flown the car to the hospital with the injured people still inside.

After he was finished at the accident site, he did a quick patrol of Metropolis and ended up sitting on the top of the LexCorp tower television mast. Clark did enjoy the irony of sitting on top of everything that Luthor held most dear, but the truth of the matter was that he simply loved that view of Metropolis.

When he arrived, the hospital seemed busy, so Clark headed right for Lois’s room. He was just down the hall when he heard the unmistakable sound of Lois’s voice in distress. He rushed to the door of her room and looked through the small window in the door. Lois was in the hospital bed and seemed very upset. She was yelling at Dr. Jensen...

“Let me out of here!” There was venom in her voice that he couldn’t remember ever hearing before.

Dr. Jensen was trying to reason with her. “Lois, you have to try to remain calm. Remember that we talked about this.”

“You can’t keep me here,” she yelled. “I have things to do. I need to find that son-of-a-bitch!”

“Lois, please, this isn’t helping.”

“The coward! Where is Clark!?”

“I told you. I asked him to stay away.”

In that instant something changed and Lois’s screams turned to cries of anguish. “How could he betray me like this? He... he took such advantage of me. He used me... He used me over and over. I thought... I thought he was my friend.”

Dr. Jensen took advantage of Lois’s change from anger to anguish to comfort her. “Lois, you will get through this. You need to focus on being calm.”

Lois’s despair seemed to flash suddenly back to anger as she turned and looked intently at Dr. Jensen. “You be calm! You weren’t the one who was betrayed by a friend. You try being used the way I was and see how you like it.”

Then Lois turned her head away from Dr. Jensen. In the process of moving her head, her vision locked on Clark. Her eyes went wide and Clark could see her rage boiling. “You bastard! I hate you!”

Dr. Jensen’s head spun around and she saw him. She rushed to the door. “Mr. Kent, I told you to check with me first. You can’t be here. Leave now!”

Clark fled as quickly as he could without using any of his powers. As he hurried out of the hospital, he couldn’t manage to tune out Lois’s shouting voice echoing from behind him.

“I know you can hear me!” His super hearing and sensitivity to her voice made it sound like she was right behind him. “I thought you were my friend! Lo-Lo’s gone! You hear me? She’s gone for good and I’ll hate you forever!”

Chapter 8 — Perspective

Clark had never been in this place before. There was a stark beauty to the area, but he never realized before how nice quiet could be. It was too bad it didn’t appear that he could freeze to death. That would probably be best for everyone.

As near as he could tell, he was a few hundred miles from the South Pole. The Antarctic summer meant that he wasn’t sitting in the dark, but that wasn’t the point. When he’d fled the hospital with Lois’s voice echoing behind him, he’d wanted to get as far away from everyone as he possibly could. He’d succeeded in that, but he’d failed to get away from himself.

He’d been wrong in the worst possible way. He’d hoped that what Lo had told him about her feelings before Revenge had been true. But now, that had been exposed for the fantasy that he’d always feared. Lois, the one person that he’d ever met that he most wanted to like him, was going to hate him forever.

He’d let his parents down. He’d let himself down. But worst of all, he’d let her down.

What were his parents going to say? When he’d taken Lo to Smallville for Christmas, it had been so great. His mom had loved being able to talk with her about him. Really talk, not just the parts that everyone else knew about. Both of his parents knew that he and Lo had started their relationship with the cloud of Miranda’s Revenge over them. But Lo had convinced them of how she felt as thoroughly as she’d convinced him.

He’d lost track of how long he’d been here. When you’re at the South Pole, you can’t exactly use the sun to tell the time. At least, you can’t if you don’t know how to interpret the sun’s position against the landscape. If he’d thought about it, he should have brought a watch. Then again, it would certainly have frozen.

Still, it had been long enough. He had to be ready when Lois came looking for a reckoning. After what he’d done, he owed her whatever price she deemed necessary. She already had Superman’s secret identity. He hoped that for his parent’s sake,

she would keep that secret. But that secret, along with as full and complete interview as he could grant, would almost certainly get Lois that Pulitzer that she wanted.

It was time to start getting his affairs in order. He took off and headed north. In less than a minute he’d found his bearings and another few seconds later he was landing in Smallville. It was still dark and not even the other local farmers were awake yet to see Superman landing at the Kent farm. Clark retrieved the spare key and let himself in. The kitchen clock told him that it was 5:00 a.m. Good, he could wake up his parents and it would only be slightly earlier than normal.

He went upstairs to their room and knocked lightly on the doorframe. “Mom, Dad, it’s Clark.”

He heard his dad’s voice. “Clark, what are you doing here at this time of the night?”

“Hi, Dad. I need to talk to you and mom. Could you please get dressed and meet me in the kitchen.”

“Sure, son. Give us a minute and we’ll be right down.”

Clark took advantage of the delay to change and look around his old room. Lois had slept here during that story where Bureau 39 was digging up the Irig farm. Clark’s eyes lingered on the double bed that had replaced the single that Lois had used that first visit. When he and Lo had spent those days here at Christmas, the single bed was simply too small. Clark felt himself choking up and sensed the tears starting to flow again. He was going to miss her so much.

By the time his parents came down, Clark had regained some of the composure that he’d lost in his room. Martha came right over and put her hand on his shoulder. “Clark, what’s wrong?”

“Lois got the anti-Revenge treatment. Lo’s gone.”

“What?!” Martha exclaimed. “I can’t believe she lost that competency hearing. What do they use for rights in Metropolis?”

“She didn’t lose. But the trial showed her the parts of Lois’s life that she’d lost. Then there was this woman. She was just like Lois in that Revenge had kept working on her. She told the story of how she hated the man she’d been with, and how it ruined her life. That part scared me and I think my fear drove Lo to get the antidote.”

“Can you back up a little and tell us exactly what happened?” Jonathan asked.

Clark sighed heavily and sat down. “I’d say that her decision was because of the testimony of just two people. There was that girl that I just told you about and Perry. The other lawyer asked Perry all about how Lo was as a reporter compared to Lois. He got Perry to admit that she’d lost much of what made her great. Perry ended up admitting that she’d lost the fire that she’d had before Revenge. I think that got to her nearly as much as my reaction to the girl. After the lunch break, Lois volunteered to get the treatment to reverse Revenge.”

“I know that you wanted her to get the treatment all along,” Martha said. “You’re clearly upset, so there must be more than you’ve said so far.”

“We... I always hoped that Lois’s recovery would be a good thing. I hoped she’d be happy about our relationship. But... well, I went back to the hospital later yesterday evening to see her. When I got there, the Lo part of her seemed to be completely gone. And Lois... she was very angry. When she saw me she said... she said that I’d betrayed her. She said that she’ll hate me forever. I can’t get her voice out of my head.”

“Surely she didn’t mean it that way,” Martha offered. “We talked a lot over Christmas. I was worried that what you and Lois were doing was a mistake. But she talked all about how she’d viewed you before the Revenge. I’m sure that she really cared for you, and it wasn’t just the drug.”

“That’s what I thought... what I hoped,” Clark said. He paused for a moment. “That girl at the trial who I mentioned a moment ago, her name was Samantha, well after she was cured

of Revenge she regretted everything she'd done. And she hated the guy she'd been in love with during that time. From what I saw in the hospital last night, it looks like Lois is going to be the same way."

"What are you going to do?" his dad asked.

"Go back to Metropolis and face her."

It was 6:45 a.m. when the elevator door opened providing Clark entry to the Daily Planet bullpen. There was some activity, but nothing like it would be in another hour or so. Given that Lois would be home today, Clark had to wonder if this was the last time he'd ever stand here. He already knew that he was going to offer to quit the Planet and leave Metropolis, if that was what Lois wanted. Given what had happened, she wouldn't want to continue working with him.

A clacking of heels drew his attention. "Cat? What are you doing here this early?"

She looked up and smiled. "Clark, you know me better than that. You should have asked why I'm in the office so late. I had a long night and it's only just ending."

That brought the first hint of a smile to Clark's face since he'd seen Lois in the hospital. "Sorry, I should have known."

"No worries," she replied. "Where's Lo-Lo? I didn't see either of you after that court travesty her mom forced on her. I have a lead on that post office call girl ring that she and I were working on."

"Lo... Lois is at the hospital. She decided to get the Revenge antidote."

Cat had been standing next to her chair. At this news she dropped into it heavily. "Why?" she asked in disbelief.

"Stuff that came up in court," Clark answered. "I'd rather not talk about it. Lois got the treatment last night, and based on what I saw afterwards, Lo is gone."

"What you saw afterwards?" Cat asked.

"I saw Lois in the hospital. I was looking through a window in the door to her room. She was very angry... at me. When she saw me she... she started yelling. She... wasn't happy."

Cat reached over and took his hand in a comforting gesture. "I'm so sorry. Lo-Lo really loved you. She'd matured so much in these weeks. I was beginning to think that Lois was right there with her. Except for Lo-Lo being so cheerful and nice, I swear that I was working with Lois. Based on everything I saw, I would have sworn that even if the old Lois came back, you two would remain together."

"Thanks, Cat. But that's not how it worked out."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I need to talk with Perry. Based on what Lois wants, I might not be around anymore."

Cat looked like she wanted to say something but ended up merely nodding. He gave her hand a quick squeeze before heading for Perry's office.

Perry's presence this early came as no surprise. Clark knocked lightly and Perry motioned him to come in. "Did Lois talk to you yesterday afternoon?" Clark asked, as soon as he was in the office.

"Yes. I'm not sure what to think of it. I know that Lo didn't want to take the antidote. But to tell the truth, I wasn't that shocked that she decided to go ahead either. I thought that the two of you would be in together after she got out of the hospital."

"That was the plan. But based on her reaction to seeing me last night after the treatment, I think it would be best if someone else picked her up."

"What happened," Perry asked.

"Lois... well, she doesn't seem to be happy with the way our relationship changed while she was under the influence of Revenge."

"You knew that was a possibility right from the first," Perry

reminded him.

"Yes. And I won't duck the consequences. But for this morning, I think you're the right person to get her from the hospital if you can get away."

Perry took a moment before he responded. "Do you know what this is about," Perry asked, holding the two envelopes that Lo had carried into the Planet yesterday.

"No," Clark replied. "I thought it might be an assignment. All I know is that she wanted to drop it off before we went to the hospital."

"I don't know what it is either," Perry admitted. "There's a small envelope for me to open after she's out of the hospital. I guess it contains instructions for what to do with the larger envelope."

"It's almost like Lo gave you her will," Clark speculated morosely.

"Son, I know this hurts, and I'm sorry, but we both knew that if there was any way to give Lois her life back, you had to give her that chance." They were both quiet for a moment until Perry finally asked, "What time should I pick her up?"

"Nine this morning," Clark answered,

Perry checked his watch. "I'll be there. She's at Memorial General?"

"Yes. And thanks Chief. I'll be cleaning up here and I'll be in my apartment if Lois wants to find... or avoid me. I don't want to make a scene here."

"You'll be cleaning up?" Perry asked.

"I have to assume that she's going to ask me to leave. I need to get my ongoing stories ready for you to reassign."

"Maybe it won't be so bad," Perry offered.

"You didn't see her."

It was after 9:30. Where was Lois? The waiting now was something of a change of pace for his morning. He'd been using his super speed rather freely until just a few minutes ago. He'd had to be careful — using it there in the office — but it had come in handy for categorizing his working notes. There were now five clearly marked piles on the top of his desk. Each pile had a cover sheet detailing the state of that investigation. He'd also included notes on what he believed to be the remaining steps to bring each investigation to fruition.

Here at home, he'd used that speed to make sure the apartment was as clean as he could make it for Lois. Being here was really the hardest part. After living here for all these weeks, her scent permeated the place. In the past, Clark had always loved the fact that even when she wasn't home, just walking in the door reminded him of their life together. This morning, all it did was remind him of those last words, "I'll hate you forever."

He glanced toward the entryway. There were three large suitcases packed and ready to go. Lo had insisted on giving up her apartment just before they'd learned of the Revenge antidote, so all her stuff was here or in storage. She'd need a place to live, and he was clearly not going to be part of that. The suitcases were there as a visible olive branch. He was abandoning his apartment to her and moving out and on.

Despite the waiting, Clark was startled just a bit when he heard a key slide into the lock. The door opened and there she was. He stood as she started walking slowly across the room toward her. "Lois, I'm sorry that it's come to this," he offered.

"What," she said, apparently confused.

"I never meant to hurt you," he said. And then his words kept rolling out. "I really did think you wanted us to be in a relationship. You were so convincing. I should have known better but I..."

By the time he'd run out of words, he was standing right in front of her. Then without warning, she dropped her bag, lunged at him and threw her arms around him. He was so in shock that

his own arms just hung at his side.

“Clark, I’m so sorry,” she said, her voice heavy with emotion. Now it was his turn to be confused. “What?” he asked.

She broke the hug and pushed back a bit. Her hands were still there on his shoulders and she didn’t seem upset. “I don’t hate you,” she said seriously.

He knew that should make him feel better, and to some extent it did, but his confusion was getting in the way. “But last night in the hospital…”

“You didn’t see what you thought you did,” she said abruptly.

“But you said…” he stuttered. “And I heard you yelling as I was leaving the hospital.”

Lois let out a long sigh. “Do you know why Dr. Jensen told you to stay away?”

“I figured it was to try to avoid something like what happened. We both heard Samantha. Once she was clear of Revenge, she hated the man she’d been seeing. I figured that the doctor wanted to be able to talk to you first and find out if you wanted to see me.”

“That was part of it, but there was something else.” She paused and looked around for a second. “Can we sit down? I have a feeling that we have a lot to talk about.”

She didn’t wait for his reply. She picked up her overnight bag and headed for the chair in the main living area. As soon as Lois sat down, she pulled an envelope out of her overnight bag and put it on the coffee table.

“What’s that?” Clark asked as he sat down on the sofa across from her.

“Those are the lab results showing that I’m free of Revenge and my brain is back working normally.”

“Oh,” was all Clark could think to say.

“You never got briefed on the details of how the Revenge cure worked, did you?” Lois asked.

“No. We… Wait, how’s your memory? Do you remember the time you were under the influence of Revenge?”

“I remember everything,” she replied.

“Then you must remember that we never wanted to look into it.”

“Yes, I remember,” she answered. “Dr. Jensen insisted on briefing me yesterday before she gave me the antidote. Her team found a chemical mixture that affects the amygdala in the opposite way as Revenge. It stimulates the anger and rage centers. They found that after a few hours of that imbalance, the amygdala went back to normal. The excessive rage also caused the ACC to have to work extra hard to clamp down on the processing of that rage. That seemed to bring it back to normal as well. Do you understand what that means?”

“Not really,” Clark replied half-heartedly.

“It means that during the treatment, a person is going to be angry. It also means that person is no more responsible for what they say or do than a person would be during an initial exposure to Revenge.”

Not responsible for what they say… Maybe there was still a chance for them. “So you really don’t hate me?”

She smiled. “No. I’m not sure it’s possible for me to hate you. Not with all my memories intact.”

“After what I heard last night in the hospital, I was sure you were going to have the same reaction as Samantha,” Clark commented.

“I should have told you this part yesterday.” Lois said, as she shook her head. “Remember when I told my mom that I’d talked to Samantha during the lunch break?” She paused long enough for Clark to nod. “Well, it turned out that her situation was not as much like ours as it looked. She’d never had a real relationship with that guy. And he really was taking advantage of her. The problem wasn’t just Revenge. The problem was that the guy was a slime ball and the Revenge kept her from seeing it. Once I

talked to her, and heard the rest of the story, I decided to go for it. I knew how careful of my feelings you’d been all along. And I feared that we’d never be able to get anywhere in our relationship with Revenge in the way.”

Those words, combined with her genuine smile, finally broke the tension he’d been feeling. He felt a wave of relief followed closely by a wave of fatigue as he released the stress he’d been holding in. It was really true that Lois didn’t hate him. Whatever followed now, that fact was the most important. However, just because she didn’t hate him, didn’t mean that she wanted to continue their relationship. “I’m glad,” he said finally. “I couldn’t bear you hating me. I’m also glad that you have your memories. I was scared to death that you’d be one of those people who lost their memory of their time on Revenge. I think that would have been almost as bad as if you had ended up ha… mad at me.”

“I had a plan,” she replied. “Perry told you about that envelope I gave him?”

“Sure, he asked me about it this morning.”

“It contains a diary of my… Lo-Lo’s time with you. I wrote it as a message for myself. That way, if the amnesia did occur, I’d have my own account of what had happened while I was… missing. There’s a note asking Perry to try his hardest to get me to read it. I gave it to him because I figured that if I had amnesia, he’d be the person I trusted most.”

“That was brilliant,” Clark observed. “That was part of how I always knew you — I mean Lois — were there. Lo may have lacked your intensity, but the Lois Lane intellect was right there every day. Do you think it would have worked?”

“I hope so. I tried to include the important stuff. For example, Lex has his own section. I wanted to make sure that what you told me, and what I’d seen, didn’t get lost. Cat has her own section too. But that one is more about keeping that friendship going.”

“Do you think you will want to?” Clark asked.

“I think so. But I’m not sure it will work. Being Lo-Lo was sort of like living in a sugary fog. Without that fog, many of the wilder things she does are going to annoy me again.”

“I think you made Cat a better person,” Clark said. “If you’re willing to put in the effort, the whole you could be even better for her than Lo was. So what else was in your letter to yourself?”

“There’s note after note about how cautious you tried to be about what I — Lois — would want.”

“I did try,” Clark confirmed. “I wasn’t sure that I always succeeded in finding a balance between what you… Lo wanted, what I wanted, and what I thought you as Lois would want.”

He paused but she said nothing. “Now that you’re yourself again, do you know what you want? Clark asked.

“I want to know who I am,” she answered. “I’m not sure I can be *her* anymore.”

“You mean Lo? I wouldn’t expect you to be,” Clark tried to reassure her.

“No. Without Revenge in my system, I don’t think I could ever be Lo-Lo. What I mean is that I’m not sure I can be Lois anymore.” There was a hint of fear in her voice.

He moved so he could see her face. “I don’t understand. You are Lois. The test results…”

She tilted her head to indicate the envelope with the results. “Those say that my brain is working correctly. But the Lois I used to be… the Lois you fell in love with… the Lois from before Revenge… she’s gone as surely as Lo-Lo.”

What was she saying? “Lois, I don’t understand. I… You’re scaring me.”

She leaned back into the overstuffed chair and stared at him intently. “You’re the problem,” she said.

“Please, Lois, I’ll help any way I can but I really don’t understand.”

She stood and walked across the room. When she reached the

far wall, she stood there for a minute before turning to face Clark. “Last night I remember yelling at you that Lo-Lo was gone forever. When I walked in that door a few minutes ago...” she glanced at the front door to the apartment, “. . . and saw you, and I felt my reaction, I became sure that the Lois you knew before Revenge is just as gone.”

She paused, but since he was still lost, he just waited for her to continue.

“Old Lois was a loner,” she continued. “She knew that she had to fight everyone and everything because no one cared about anyone but themselves. That Lois also knew that love was only for fairy tales. Then some magic happened, and for six weeks this cynical woman got to live in one of those fairy tales. She found herself in a world where she had real friends that cared about her. She found a real-life Prince Charming that loved her so much that he’d give up everything he had for her.”

Clark found himself blushing at her comparison. “Aren’t all those good things?” Clark asked.

“Of course,” she said abruptly. “That’s the problem. I’m Lois again, but I don’t want my old life back.” Then she paused for a second. “No, that’s not true. I want part of my old life but I also want what Lo-Lo had. While I was under the influence — while I was Lo-Lo — I knew how good that life was. That’s why I fought so hard to avoid the cure. But me — Lois — I don’t know if I can live that life. Lo-Lo had all that, but I’m not sure I can.”

“You can have as much of that life as you want,” Clark countered. “Cat was telling me just this morning that she saw the real Lois all the time and enjoyed working with you. Perry... Well, Perry does want that aggressive edginess back in your work, but I’m sure you can get that without sacrificing yourself.”

She considered that for a moment. “What about you, Clark? What do you want?”

“I want you to be happy.”

“That’s not an answer,” she barked, her voice thick with irritation. “You know what I’m asking.”

Her look left no doubts in his mind that she was demanding a much more complete and direct answer. This was raw Lois Lane. It was a look that he’d never really seen from Lo. There’d been a few flashes, but it was like comparing a shock of static electricity to a bolt of lightning. “You said that you have all your memories,” he replied. “If you do, you know what I want.”

“Tell me,” she threw right back at him.

He let out a heavy sigh. “Lois, I want you. I have from the beginning and I can’t imagine a future where that isn’t true. If you want me to spell it out, I love you.”

“Are you sure that you don’t want Lo?”

“Of course I want Lo,” he replied sharply. Then he took a second to calm down. The full Lois was much better at getting on his nerves. “We never talked about why I preferred to call you Lo instead of Lo-Lo like you wanted me to.”

“It was easier to say?” she suggested in a sarcastic tone.

“No. It was so that I never lost sight of the fact that the person I was with was only one half of the woman I fell in love with.” Clark paused for a moment. “But what about you? The reason that we got involved the way we did is that you — as Lo — convinced me that you — as Lois — had started to want... me. Can you at least tell me the truth about that? As Lois sees it?”

That request seemed to put her on the defensive. “The things that I said about how I felt before Revenge were all true.” She said softly.

“So can you believe that it’s you — the whole you — that I really want to be with?” Clark asked, half-afraid.

She seemed to be considering how to respond. After a moment she started back across the room. But this time she went by the chair and sat on the sofa next to him. She reached over and gently took his hand. She stared at it for a long moment doing nothing but rubbing her thumb on the back of his hand. “There’s

something else in that diary that I gave Perry,” she said as she lifted her eyes to meet her own. “I always knew that you were in love with the Lois version of me, not the simplified person that was Lo-Lo. When I was Lo-Lo, knowing that you wanted something that I couldn’t be... That was the only thing you did that ever caused me pain.”

“So where does that leave us?” Clark asked hopefully.

Her expression turned thoughtful. “There’s this girl I met a few weeks ago. She has a name a lot like mine. She told me that you’re the best thing that could have ever happened to me.” Lois paused to let that sink in for just a second.

Then Lois leaned toward him in a gesture that he hoped he was reading correctly. The kiss started out tentative and hesitant. Here was a woman he’d been sleeping with for more than a month, but this felt more like a first kiss than anything is his experience. And as this tentative, almost chaste kiss lingered, Clark became convinced that this was the single most wonderful kiss he’d ever shared with this woman who was the center of his life.

When they finally separated, despite the fact that her eyes were closed, Clark could see that Lois had felt the impact of that kiss. A moment later, she opened her eyes and her smile almost cost him control of gravity. “It won’t be as smooth this time,” she said with a soft seriousness. “I’m sure we’ll fight.”

“Lois, I’ve known that was going to be the case from the moment we met.”

That evoked an even brighter smile. One that Clark had feared he was never to see again. “Do you have my ring?” she asked.

Clark pulled it out of his pocket. “I’ve kept it with me since the hospital,” he said.

“Then if you’re sure...” and she let that hang.

Clark shifted quickly to his knees. “Lois,” he said with extra emphasis, “will you marry me?”

“Yes,” she answered, as tears of joy started to flow.

She held out her hand and he placed the ring back where it belonged. The kiss that followed was every bit as wonderful as the previous one.

THE END