



An Untold Story from *The Adventures of Superman*

By Bruce Kanin

July 2012

MASTER MIND
Episode 1 of 3
“Attack of the Zombies”



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MASTER MIND

“ATTACK OF THE ZOMBIES”

DEDICATION

To my family, who puts up with me.

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As *Master Mind* is intended to be, in effect, a new story based on the television series *The Adventures of Superman*, the characters, concepts, elements and even images from this series have been included. The images, in particular, are used solely to help tell the stories within.

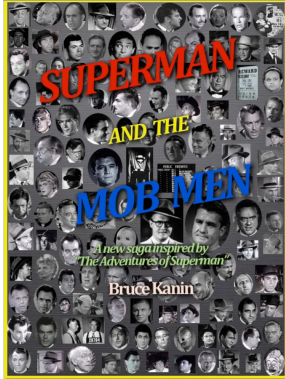
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ABOUT "MASTER MIND"



MASTER MIND is yet another other "untold story" from *The Adventures of Superman* not unlike my other saga, *Superman and the Mob Men*.

Like that adventure, this one consists of three segments, as follows:



Each segment is divided into four acts, just as was done with *Superman and the Mob Men*. Unlike that story, there are no prologues and epilogues.

The first story, "*Attack of the Zombies*" begins not long after the final episode of Season Two, which was the utterly wonderful and memorable "*Around the World with Superman*" in which Superman flies a little girl around the Earth.

The third story, "*The Super-Menace of Metropolis*", occurs some number of days following the end of "*Attack of the Zombies*". Both of these stories are akin to typical episodes of *The Adventures of Superman* (albeit longer).

The middle story, "*Man in the Shadows*" is somewhat different. It contains an introduction by someone familiar to fans who sets the context and explains why the story is "different". It is not a typical episode of *The Adventures of Superman* but very much exists in its "universe" and is most certainly a "bridge" between the first and third stories.

Whether you imagine *Master Mind* in color or black & white is up to you. I prefer B&W. ☺

-Bruce Kanin
July 2012





ACT 1: "PEOPLE, PLACES AND PUZZLE PIECES"

CUNNINGHAM PRISON



CUNNINGHAM PRISON was built in the late Nineteenth Century across the Hobbs River from Metropolis. Back then it was considered a modern, humane facility unlike the dingy, rat-infested Metropolis City Jail. But by the time of the Great Depression, Cunningham became underutilized and as such fell into a state of disrepair.

As a result, around the time Franklin Roosevelt was elected to his first term as President, Cunningham's doors became shuttered. However, two decades later both the City Jail and other prison facilities in and around Metropolis experienced a new surge of demand. The City Jail, having been refurbished during World War I, was bursting with inmates. A new prison, Strykers, became filled to capacity.

An upstate prison used partly by Metropolis and considered a "country club" of sorts, Hackenbosch, had little room to spare, as well.

That left officials with only one practical option: re-open Cunningham. They began filling it with a new breed of criminal, in a sense, who had sprung up since the early 1950s.

These were criminals captured by a newcomer on the scene – *Superman*.

With the advent of The Man of Steel, particularly during the notorious "crime wave" in 1952-53¹, courts and jails were overflowing, courtesy of Superman.

¹ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 1), "Crime Wave"

One of the inmates of Cunningham Prison was Rick "Baby Face" Stevens. Stevens earned his nickname as a kid growing up in the tough Metropolis neighborhood of Fort Granville. He earned the moniker from his mother, being the youngest of five brothers. When his mother, stepfather, aunts and uncles would call him that, he had to grimace and bear it.



But even as early as six years old, if any of his peers would call him "Baby Face", fists would fly. Eventually, as a teen and then a young adult, "Baby Face" Stevens, as he would be known, became both feared and respected. Having grown up in Fort Granville, along with his toughness and temperament, he became a "natural" for the underworld.



By the time he reached his mid-thirties, Stevens was renown in the criminal world as a professional assassin with his own personal style. He would typically empty his gun of most of its bullets – leaving only as many bullets as intended victims.

He was that good a shot.

Stevens was paid handsomely and demanded his money in advance. One such assignment occurred in the Blue Hills at a motor court called the *Restwell Tourist Cabins*. He was called in to rub out three people – a patron named Clara King, a reporter Lois Lane and their would-be rescuer, cub reporter Jim Olsen.

"Baby Face" might have succeeded if not for a certain Man of Steel intervening. With super-fisticuffs he quickly vanquished Stevens and the two hoods taking refuge in the motor court.² Superman then left the criminal trio in the hands of a local sheriff until state troopers could transport them to Metropolis. However, Stevens was able to escape and easily crossed through backwoods terrain across the unguarded border into to Canada.

² *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 1), "Night of Terror"

It wasn't until a year later that he was apprehended in the city of Sherbrooke, Quebec and extradited to the United States, ending up at Cunningham Prison. While awaiting sentencing for a murder conviction, Stevens was visited by his girlfriend, Cookie "Dough" Warner ("Dough" because her rich uncle left her millions – until it was found to be counterfeit). They sat in the prisoner-visitor area.

Stevens nodded in the direction of a well-dressed woman and a prisoner talking through the glass, several windows away. "What's *she* doing here?"



Cookie's low-rent accent occupied the same space with a wad of gum being unmercifully mashed in her mouth. Her provocative clothing drew subdued catcalls from other inmates and quick glances from guards. "Probably for her article in the *Planet*. There was a write-up about it in today's paper. Right next to the one about you awaitin' sentencin'."

"Oh yeah? Since when did *you* learn to read?"

Clearly annoyed, Cookie said, "Since *you* ain't been around to read me the jokes."

He shrugged. "Eh."

"What? I thought it was kinda romantic when you'd do that." Cookie had a half-smile that exposed the wad of pink gum.



"OK, so what about Lane and the article?"

"Said she's gonna be interviewing Boulder. You know, the guy who had an operation to look like Superman."

"Oh, him. Gives me the creeps every time I pass his cell."

"I think he's kinda handsome."

Baby Face sneered. "Anyway, I don't like Lane."

"No kiddin'. She's one of the reasons you could end up on death row."

"Yeah, you should hear what I overheard her tell that creep reporter Kent during the trial."

"What's that?"

"That instead of the chair, she'd love to see me in front of a firing squad, with each rifle having just one bullet."

"That's a laugh – just like you do, Mister Baby Face."

"Ain't healthy to disrespect me like that, Cookie."

She knew he meant it. "Aw, I was only joshin'. You know I love ya."

Baby Face asked, "So did you hear from The Soleman?"

"Oh, yeah, almost forgot to tell ya. He said the shipment's on its way. Any day now."

Baby Face smiled. "That's the best news I've had all month. Thanks Cookie."

She had a mischievous smile in return. "Well, maybe you'll return the fava if ya get outta here."

"Oh, I will, Cookie, I will." When he said that, she smiled even more. "I certainly *will* get outta here."

With that comment, her smile vanished and a guard came over. "Time's up, miss."

A few rows away, Lois Lane and John "Boulder" Crane were having a more amicable and lighthearted discussion. Boulder had been at Cunningham Prison for a few months since his capture, arrest and trial. He was still awaiting a cell assignment in Hackenbosch, where he would spend the remainder of his sentence. One event that was scheduled, however, was to have him stay a week or so at Mercy General Hospital in order to reverse the effects of plastic surgery performed on him the year before.

In advance of John – *Boulder's* – pending surgery, Lois Lane of the *Daily Planet* was assigned to do a multi-part story on the criminal – interviews before the corrective surgery, and at least one afterwards. Perhaps *criminal* was too harsh a word. Boulder was a two-bit "hood" at best. He was a burly, well-built man and as such often used by high-powered felons to strong-arm others. Luke Maynard, Baby Face Stevens, Lou Crane and even mob boss Luigi Dinelli were known to have engaged Boulder either as a bodyguard, an intimidator or both.

But it was industrialist-cum-criminal Carl Fairchild who enlisted Boulder for his most prolific job – a *performance*, one might say, for Boulder bore an incredible resemblance to the protector of Metropolis, *Superman*. Fairchild had come across Boulder in a meeting with Luke Maynard, a nasty Metropolis hood. The moment he saw Boulder, Fairchild's wheels started turning.



With Maynard caught by Superman following a series of crimes, Fairchild jumped at the chance to bring Boulder into his small organization. Before long, Fairchild had him undergo plastic surgery at the hands of shady but talented Dr. Christian Moray.



With his face now transformed to appear seemingly identical to the world's greatest super-hero, Fairchild arranged for voice training that made Boulder's *Brooklynese* into, well, if not Shakespeare, something that would fool people into thinking he really was Superman.



Fairchild had Boulder test his new face and voice with the theft of a mom and pop store and then a jeweler. In both instances Boulder wore a Superman uniform, and as a result it appeared to all involved, as well as the media and ultimately the public at large, that The Man of Steel himself was the thief. In each situation, however, the cash and jewels were soon given over to charity. The desired effect was to make the real Superman think that he was, perhaps, sleepwalking, or worse – really committing these thefts but at the same time playing a sort of Robin Hood. Fairchild's goal, in the end, was to drive the real Superman off his rocker and distract the police so that he could commit *real* crimes – and *keep* the goods.

As a result, while the police and Superman were distracted by the Man of Steel's situation, Fairchild had Boulder rob a bank – and its gold.

It might have worked if not for the steely determination of Clark Kent, who in the end concluded that someone out there was impersonating him in his super-guise. Ultimately The Man of Steel subdued Fairchild and Boulder, with both landing in prison.³

Whereas Fairchild was deemed a dangerous criminal and as such put away for several years, John "Boulder" Crane was not. His police record, save for his stint as the faux Superman, was simply deemed by judge and jury to not warrant a harsh, long-term sentence.

Lois Lane was on an out-of-town assignment when this all had happened, so Perry White, her boss and *Daily Planet* editor, gave her the choice assignment to do a human interest story on Boulder. She sat down with him at Cunningham Prison in an area where a glass partition separated visitor from inmate.

Boulder was just finishing a conversation with a diminutive prisoner, Willy the Whisker, who was being visited by his over-sized wife.

³ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 2), "The Face and the Voice"

"Whiska, I tink your speaka's gettin' a little scratchy. Maybe ya need a new one."

"Thanks Boulder. I'll see if I can get hold of one."

Lois Lane, smiling at the men, sat down across from the Superman lookalike.

"Hello Boulder."

Boulder smiled back. "Hiya Miz Lane."

"Say, who were you just talking to?"

"Oh dat's *Willy da Whiska*."

"Willy the Whisker? Hmmm... his name sounds familiar."

"He's a small-time hood. But he's been here awhile. Dey call him *Whiska* because he's a radio guy. Makes them, uh, crystal radios, y'know, wid da cats whiskas? Dey let'm build one in da shop an' he keeps it in his cell." Boulder grinned. "Sometimes it picks up da Monarchs games. Pretty neat, huh?"

"I suppose so."



"Anyway, whatcha wanna talk about today, Miz Lane?"

"Well, last time you were going to show me how you sound like Superman, but we were interrupted."

"Oh yeah, you had to take care of something wid a little goil ..."

"That's right. She won a contest and *Superman* flew her around the world."⁴

"Geez. Will ya getta loada that. Imagine bein' able t'fly. Jus like Superman. An' around da woild, too."

Lois chuckled. "Boulder, right now, I just want to hear you talk like him."

"Gee, Miz Lane. Ya really wamme to? I mean, om tryin' t'forget dat whole ting, y'know?"

"Oh, well, Boulder. My co-workers and even my boss, Mister White—"

⁴ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 2), "Around the World with Superman"

"I rememba him. I wuzzun too nice ta him." Boulder had a look of embarrassment.

Lois Lane smiled. "I think he's gotten over it. Anyway, they were amazed at how much you looked *and* sounded like Superman – I wanted to find out for myself, since we didn't get to talk for long my first time here. It'll really help my story, too."

But Boulder was distracted. He looked beyond the reporter and into the far end of the visitor area. "Can ya dig dat, Miz Lane?" He nodded behind her.

Lois turned around. It took her a few seconds and then she asked, "Oh, the television set?"

"Yeah." Boulder smiled as he watched and listened to an *Alka-Seltzer* commercial. "I love dat Speedy. Heeza cute little guy. Y'know last time you came heah dey had dat Lucy on. She's a regula riot."

"I know. I know. I love Lucy, too." She winked.

Boulder stared at Lane for a moment and then it registered. He laughed out loud and slapped his hand on the counter. "Dat's a good one, Miz Lane. *I love Lucy*." He laughed some more.



"Anyway, Boulder. If you don't mind? The *Superman* voice?"

"OK, sorry, well, den, uh, heah goes." The convict, Boulder, cleared his throat and then spoke, but differently. "Hello Miss Lane. How are you today? Did you have a long trip from your newspaper, the *Daily Planet*? It's a lovely sunny day outside. My, you're looking *very* pretty—"

Lois held a hand up, along with a slight smile and raised eyebrows. "That's fine – incredible. You sounded *exactly* like Superman. Really. You've got the face – and –"

"Da *verse*. Yeah, yeah, I know. But I tell ya, Miss Lane, I cann waidill dey gimme my own kissa back, y'know?"

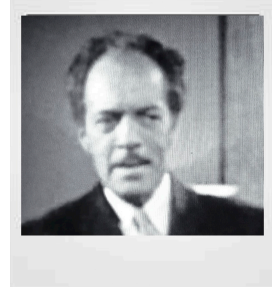
"Well, Boulder, they tell me you're going in for surgery any day now."

"Yeah, doc heah sezom set f'Friday. Cann wait."

"Speaking of doctors – the one who performed the *original* surgery, Boulder. Just one more thing."

"Yeah, what's dat, Miz Lane?"

The reporter pulled a photo from her handbag and pressed it against the glass partition that separated prisoner from visitor. "Do you recognize the man in this picture?"



Boulder pushed his seat back slightly and lifted his head a bit, as well. He then squinted and shrugged. "He looks like-a ... I tink ... uh." Finally he turned to a guard standing a few feet away. "Hey Benny, couldja do mia fava? Doc jus gimme some new specs. Fa readin'. Couldja get'em from da cell?"

The guard replied, "Well, I'm not supposed to leave you here, John. How 'bout we walk there together and then I'll bring you back here, ok?"

Boulder nodded to the guard. "Sure ting Benny." Then he turned to his visitor. "Uh, Miz Lane. The doc here sub-- sub-- subscribed—"

"**Pre**-scribed?"

"Yeah, dat's right. Anyway, he saw I cann see too good close up, so he gimme sum specs f'readin'."

"Oh, well that's nice, Boulder."

Boulder grinned. "Yeah, waidilya see me. I tink dey make me, uh, real, uh ... *extinguished*."

Lois laughed. "They probably *do* make you – **distinguished**, Boulder."

"Anyway, Benny's gonna take me back to my cell t'get'em. Backina jif, Miz Lane." He stood.

Lois smiled and said, "All right." Then she mused, *Boulder wearing glasses? Hmmm, I wonder how he looks*. But before Lois could develop that thought, another guard walked over to Lois from the opposite direction. He tipped his hat and smiled. "Miss Lane. Warden Raines would like to see you. Says he has a call for you in his office."

"Oh, for me? Well thank you. Would you or someone else mind telling Boulder – I mean, John, that I was detained? Hopefully I'll be back soon."



The guard escorted Lois to the Warden's office. Stan Raines, upon seeing her, tilted the phone receiver away from his mouth, covering it with his other hand. He said, "Hello Miss Lane" and they shook hands. Although they had met before, this was her first time in his office. Raines looked at Lois, saying, "He said to hang on for just a moment."

"Who did?"

"Oh, well, your colleague, Mister Kent."

As she sat, Lois looked around the office, casually glancing at a number of photos and plaques on Raines' office walls. She then did a double take at a familiar sight hanging on the far wall behind Raines. "Warden Raines. Where did you get *that* from?"

"What?" Then he turned around. "Oh, *that*." Raines smiled. "From The Man of Steel himself. Complete replica of his uniform."

"Incredible."

"Yes, a gift from him. Heck, he's pretty much the reason Cunningham re-opened." Raines, still with the receiver next to his ear, pointed below the uniform, which was encased in glass. "The number underneath is incremented each time he brings in a prisoner. As you can see, he's made over one hundred captures!"



Lois was wide-eyed. "And that's just here in Metropolis – since he first appeared. It's incredible."

"Whenever an inmate comes to my office, it can serve as a reminder of what – or *who*, actually – has helped to populate this place." Raines cocked his head. "Ah, Kent's back." He handed the phone to Lois.

"Hello? Clark?"

DAILY PLANET

"Hi Lois. I'm with the Chief in his office. How's the interview going?"

"Fine, so far, Clark. What's up?"

"Well, we were wondering if you have any leads on that doctor who did the plastic surgery on Boulder's face."

"No, not yet. Why do you ask?"



"Well, I'm seeing Henderson soon and I'm sure he'll ask me. He knows you've been visiting Boulder. That Doctor Moray is the only one of Fairchild's gang not rounded up. Bill's been bugging the Chief about it, too."

"I know all that, but no, nothing yet from Boulder."

"Did you show him any of the photos? Bill was hoping you'd have more luck with it than the mug shots he had. Boulder seemed a bit rattled when Henderson came by the prison."

"I don't know. Boulder had trouble seeing the first photo I showed him. And get this - turns out he's far-sighted. The doctor here prescribed him reading glasses."

"Son of a gun - I didn't realize that." Now it was Kent's turn to wonder how Boulder would look in glasses - something he didn't want to consider. *He'd better get his original face back and fast*, Clark thought. "Oh hang on, the Chief wants to talk to you." Kent handed the phone to his boss.



Suddenly the door to Perry White's office swung open and cub reporter Jimmy Olsen came running in, carrying a torn piece of paper. He went up to White's desk, still holding it.

"Chief! Mister Kent! A message just came through on the wire!" Olsen was out of breath.

White stood up from behind his desk and shouted back. "How many times have I told you not to burst into my office?!"

Kent took the piece of paper from Jimmy and waved a hand at his boss as if to calm him down. "Hang on, Chief." Then he read it aloud, his voice adding more urgency with each sentence. "Man climbs east tower of *Jefferson Bridge*. Distracted motorists cause accidents. Huge truck in trouble. Snarled traffic blocking emergency vehicles access."



White was so excited he forgot about Lois on the phone and walked over to Kent. "*Great Caesar's Ghost!* Kent - get out there right away! And take this young *idiot* with you!" White then pointed at Olsen. "And you don't forget to take your camera!"

Kent protested, backing towards the door. "But Chief, I'm due at police headquarters to meet with Inspector Henderson - you remember. Lois is closer, being at the prison. Perhaps she can get there sooner than I could from here."

White was about to yell at his star male reporter but then shrugged. "I suppose so." Then he went back to his desk and picked up the phone. "Lois, did you get that?" Satisfied that she did, White hung up the telephone. Then he looked back at Kent, shouting "You'd better be right!" but Clark was gone. He looked at Jimmy and, still agitated, asked, "Where the devil is Kent?"

The cub reporter shrugged. "I dunno, Chief, I guess he went to see Inspector Henderson, like he said he would."

Then White gave Olsen a strange look, twisting his head with a mock smile. He spoke softly. "And where are *you* supposed to be?"

Jimmy swallowed. "Um, on my way to the bridge?" As he said the words Olsen thumbed in back of him like a hitchhiker begging to be picked up. Then he sheepishly began to back towards the door before disappearing.

As the door closed behind Olsen, White stood there, staring at the afterimage of the cub reporter. And to this imaginary figure, he calmly spoke, "And Olsen..." followed by a growl, "Don't call me *Chief!*"

White shrugged and then sat down at his desk. With a look of content he realized that he was alone with no one around and nothing but his own thoughts. His thirty seconds of peace were shattered when Miss Ames buzzed to remind him of a board meeting.

Meanwhile, White's star male reporter had rushed to a familiar storeroom down the hall. Once inside, in a blur, Kent became Superman, and leaped hurriedly out the window. It was a beautiful spring morning with white puffy clouds high above the spires of buildings rising from Metropolis.



In no time, Superman had approached the Thomas Jefferson Bridge, which linked the northwest section of Metropolis with communities and suburban towns west of the city. The suspension bridge spanned the wide Hobbs River that flowed from the Blue Mountains.

The Man of Steel could see that he had a dilemma: a man was standing atop the 570-foot east tower that held suspension cables which in turn helped to keep the roadway aloft. At the same time, a *Sinclair* oil truck was dangling, cab-first, over the north side of the roadway, having crashed through the guardrail separating the road from a precipitous drop to the river.

There were smashed cars with passengers requiring immediate medical attention, as well, but help would not come soon because the rest of the span's roadway – in both directions – was akin to a parking lot, due to accidents presumably resulting from drivers rubbernecking at the sight of a man climbing up the tower, followed by the domino chain reaction of subsequent collisions.

As he hovered high above the bridge, Superman saw stymied emergency vehicles on the approach roads leading to both sides of the span. In an instant he mentally prioritized the work ahead before committing to the tasks at hand.

First he swooped down right next to the driver's side of truck cab dangling two hundred feet above the Hobbs River and shouted inside at two shaken but uninjured men inside. "Stay put! Any movement and you're liable to cause this thing to *topple*! I'll be back for you in a minute!" Superman looked inside the cab and then nodded at the driver. "And keep your foot on the brake!"

The two men, astonished to see a figure standing in mid-air outside of their truck, nodded with a combination of relief and – *disbelief*.

All the time, Superman kept looking back up at the top of the east tower with his telescopic vision, making sure the seemingly suicidal man was still there. The Man of Steel then flew over to the span's roadway. He could have retrieved injured drivers and passengers from the various cars that had smashed into each other and the guardrails, but did not want to risk further injury.

Instead, Superman gently but deliberately lifted each automobile with stricken passengers, carrying each vehicle to the closest end of the bridge. He advised those inside to stay put, much as he did the truck drivers. In each of the two locations on either side of the bridge, personnel from the emergency vehicles – ambulances and police cars – quickly tended to the injured drivers and passengers.

In only one instance did Superman need to directly rescue a seemingly uninjured but distraught woman. Her driver's door was stuck and The Man of Steel had to remove it before helping her out of the car to comfort her. As he car was near one end of the bridge, emergency personnel were able to reach her without further intervention by the Metropolis Marvel.



With the last of the automobiles addressed, Superman stood beside an ambulance on the Metropolis side of the bridge, once again looking up to the east tower in order to check on the man that seemingly started all the commotion.

He was *gone*.

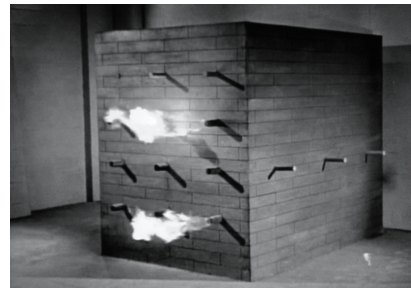
Superman quickly scanned the space between the top of the tower and the roadway, and then down to the river. In a split-second, his amazing vision saw the man plummeting towards the Hobbs River. The Man of Steel immediately leaped from the east approach road, over the snarled traffic and then down towards the river, catching the apparently troubled man just before he was about to smack into its choppy waters.

As he flew him to the Metropolis-side approach road, The Man of Steel looked closely at the face of the man he had saved and was now holding. Two things startled him right way: first, the man's eyes suggested that he was *delirious* – or in some drugged state. The other thing is that Superman *recognized* the man!



It was Professor Milton Adams. Superman had last seen him at *Project X* – the nuclear pile facility in the outskirts of Metropolis. While he flew Adams to a waiting ambulance, Superman briefly recalled the circumstances in which he met the man...

It was several months ago. A government facility called *Project X* contained a nuclear pile that had gone out of control. A meltdown was imminent and certain to spread radiation for miles – no doubt the deadly fallout would have been bound to impact all of Metropolis and its suburbs.



But Superman saved the day and tamed the atomic pile. However, it came at a terrible price: The Man of Steel became filled with *gamma rays* – radiation that made him deadly to all nearby living things. He exiled himself to the Blue Mountains until hearing from Adams about another scientist's suggestion that a powerful electrical force could counteract the radiation pulsing through Superman's body.

Sure enough, Superman's flight through an electrical storm, with lightning bolts striking his body over and over, neutralized the deadly radiation.



As Superman carried the apparently troubled Adams over the bridge, he thought back to his conversation with the Professor during the crisis. The Man of Steel had

scolded him and his colleagues for being unable to control this new force of nature – the atomic pile.⁵ It was a seemingly effective lecture because the pile had not been an issue since.

With his momentary recollection of past events over, Superman deposited Adams on an empty stretcher beside an ambulance. The Man of Steel attempted to talk to him, but clearly the scientist was unable to communicate.

His thoughts were interrupted by shrieks coming from the bridge. Superman saw that in almost the same general location as the place where Adams had fallen, the moving van had rolled off the bridge and now was in mid-air, plunging towards the river.



Soon Superman was there, gripping the underbelly of the large truck. Slowly and carefully he lifted the vehicle high above the roadway of the span. Before long he had deposited the truck well beyond the ambulances on the west side of the bridge, on a road leading away from the chaotic scene there. The truck had some dents but was otherwise in decent shape. The two men inside the cab thanked The Man of Steel and were soon outside their cab inspecting the large vehicle.

In the distance Superman could see a taxicab slowly making its way towards the bridge – it contained Lois Lane. He chuckled just a little bit. After scanning the bridge to make sure that there were no other situations requiring his attention, Superman flew off to his appointment – the one between Clark Kent and Inspector Henderson. As he did, he made a mental note to do a follow-up visit at Mercy General, where Adams was no doubt headed.

On the other side of the bridge, Jimmy Olsen had shown up via a taxi. He, too, recognized Professor Adams and rushed over to the scene after The Man of Steel had flown off. Olsen made his way to Adams, taking photos of him and the bridge scene; then he noticed a piece of paper fall out of Adams' pants pocket as he was being loaded into an ambulance.

The cub reporter quickly picked it up and pocketed it, to be examined later.

METROPOLIS POLICE HEADQUARTERS

In Metropolis Police Headquarters, Clark Kent and Inspector William J. "Bill" Henderson were examining several photos strewn on the policeman's desk in his office. Henderson held a magnifying glass that he used and Clark pretended to need.

⁵ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 2), "Superman in Exile"

"Before we start, Bill, can you continue what you didn't finish on the phone?"

"Sure. Remember you told me that almost to the day after you got your job at the *Planet*, you met some guy named, uh, Fleming?"

"That's right. Richard Fleming. Odd sort of fellow."

"Oh, in what way?"

"Well, we both sat in the one of the waiting rooms. He seemed to stay in a shadowed area, away from the lights. Wore a wide brim fedora, too. Almost reminded me of *The Shadow*, in fact." Kent chuckled.

"You mean, like the comic book?"

Clark chuckled. "That's right. Anyway, he was anxious to see Perry White. He told me he had some evidence about something – said it'd be the scoop of the year."

"And as you know, your boss told me about him. Said Fleming had pulled together evidence about a man named..." Henderson paused to remember. "...Randall Endicott. Fleming claimed that Endicott had been wrongly accused of being a spy, of all things, against the United States."

"As I understand it, Perry didn't want to go near it at the time, particularly with all the 'red scare' business going on."

"Well, anyway, I had my man Bill Dithers look into Fleming's claims. He actually worked two tracks at once, trying to connect them."

"I'm not sure I understand."



"You may - after we go through these photos Dithers collected. We reached kind of a dead end and I let your boss know the other day. He said he was too busy, and to get *you* involved."

"I see. Like I'm *not* busy." Kent frowned. "Anyway, let's take a look at what you've got." He nodded at the photos on Henderson's desk.

The police inspector tapped a photo and then held it up. "Edward Stanton. He's the one who built that crazy machine."

"That's right. They called it the 'mind machine'. It was stolen from him."⁶

"By Lou Crane. How can I forget him?" Henderson paused and then pointed at another figure in the photo. "What was *his* name?"

"Stanton's assistant, John Hadley" Kent pointed to the photo, as well.

"That's right. So now, let's look more closely at this photo. Now, look beyond Hadley. At the window. See anything, Kent?"

"Well, look at that." said Kent. "There's a silhouette. Clearly a man. Kind of a shadowy figure, but he's impossible to make out. Say, where'd you get this photo from, Bill?"



"Dithers was following up on a clue. After some arm-twisting by yours truly, Stanton let my guy take some photos of the place."

"Well, your man Dithers got a very interesting one."

Henderson pulled out another photo. "OK, now look at this picture. Only two weeks later."

"From Dithers again?"

Henderson flicked the photo with the back of his fingers. "Yep. Detective Dithers. Ace photographer."

"The Jimmy Olsen of the police department, eh, Inspector?" Kent expected a smile from Henderson, but didn't get it.

⁶ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 1), "The Mind Machine".



Henderson said, "Something like that." He pointed to the photo. "This was a lucky one. Dithers happened to hear gunshots near Mason Street. Ran over to take a look. Saw two men coming out of an alley." Henderson grinned. "Recognize one of them?"

"Oh, well, that looks like me and a two-bit hood named Rausch. He was shot and died a little while later. He worked for that crazy scientist, Doctor Ort."

"That was the nut who drugged the kid Olsen, your editor White and Miss Lane."⁷ Henderson hesitated, then, "And you said he tried it on you but it didn't work?"

"Uh-huh." Kent changed the subject. "But look – at the photo – behind me, in the alley."

"Exactly, Kent. There's a shadow of a man. The plot thickens, eh?"

"I'll say."

"Well, anyway, there's more on Ort in one of these photos, but I'm trying to show you these in time sequence."

"Go on."

Henderson pulled out another photo and said, "So here's another one. That wasn't taken in Metropolis. I don't remember the face, though. Thought you would."

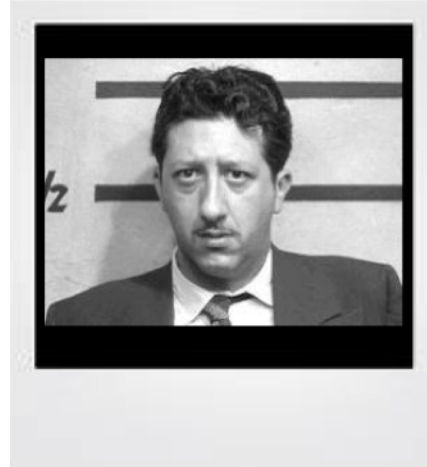
"I'm surprised, Bill, because you really should recognize him. Where'd you get this picture from? Your man Dithers?"

⁷ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 1), "The Secret of Superman".

"No, not exactly. Dithers got a tip from all places, Haiti, and phoned the local authorities, a man named *Barbarier*.

"Sure, I met him."

"Barbarier arranged to take a few pictures down there. That photo was taken in Port-Au-Prince. His name's William Johnson. It's actually a mug shot."



Kent picked up another photo "Here's another look at him."

"Holy cow! Who in blazes is that?"

"If I recall correctly, he was called *Paploi Legbu*."

"Pretty nasty looking brute. So what's the story with him? I was hoping you could help jog *my* memory this time."

"Well, I'll make a long story short and maybe it will. This Legbu character and" Kent pointed at the other photo "William Johnson, are – or *were* - one and the same."

"Hmmm..."

"Yes, that's right. Johnson was after some sort of treasure hidden in caves deep in the Haitian jungles. Perry's sister Kate and Jim Olsen were captured by Johnson – or Legbu. He thought they were spying on him and were after the treasure themselves, which was of course nonsense."⁸

"This is starting to come back to me, Kent."

"Anyway, it was all resolved – Superman—"

Henderson chuckled.

Kent asked, "What's so funny, Bill?"

⁸ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 1), "Drums of Death"

"Superman again. He sure gets around."

Kent responded with a grin, "Well, Inspector, that's why they call him *Superman*."

The reporter's face then changed to a far-off look, as if he was pondering something. Henderson noticed and said, "I've seen that expression on you before, Kent."

"Bill, something just occurred to me."

"What's that?"

"Bear with me." Clark was getting ever so slightly animated. "So this William Johnson drugged Kate White with something to make her obey him. Now, hold your curiosity while I finish."

"All right."

"That story was written up in the *Planet* by yours truly, including the part about the mysterious drug used on the Chief's sister. Not long after that, Johnson escaped from his Haitian prison."

Henderson nodded. "That I remember – there were stories that someone helped him."



"That's right. And then not long after that, someone named Roger Thorwood showed up in Metropolis – looked just like Johnson."

"Because it *was* him – Johnson – escaped from Haiti." Henderson shuffled through more photos. "Here, this is Thorwood – really Johnson, after he arrived here."

Kent asked, "Another Dithers photo?"

"Yeah, he confronted him in a boarding house. Got pretty nasty."

Kent said, "I remember hearing about someone bringing Thorwood – or really Johnson - to Metropolis. And that's when you, Bill, investigated strange occult rituals and murders in the city. Superman was in the thick of it, too."⁹

"Sure, I remember. In fact, Dithers observed a voodoo ritual in Southside Park."

⁹ *The Adventures of Superman* (The Lost Episodes, Vol 1.), "Voodoo Master of Metropolis"

Kent said, "No photos?"

"Dithers got a few, but some of the voodoo people saw him and destroyed his camera. But get this, Kent." Henderson paused. "Dithers noticed Johnson talking with—"

Kent said, "Don't tell me – a shadowy figure."

"That's right."

"I remember hearing stories that Johnson died as a result of the voodoo, Bill."

"More like some sort of drug poisoning. We never did get to the bottom of it. Dithers took this photo of Johnson on his deathbed in the hospital. You can tell the voodoo drug took its toll."



Kent was aghast at the photo. "*Great Scott!*"

"Perhaps another reason to find this 'man in the shadows'. Is that what you were driving at, Kent?"

Kent said. "Yes, you're close." Kent pointed to another photo. "Looks like another great shot by Dithers."

"Sure. It was his last one as part of this investigation. This was taken less than a year ago. That's Ort, the crazy doctor again. Came back from the dead, or so we thought. He never really was killed that first time around. You remember when he returned to terrorize Lois, Perry, Jimmy and you, Kent – revenge of sorts."¹⁰

"Yes. Only too well." Kent said. "And this photo's even more distinct. Ort's talking to someone, but once again, we can't see him."



"Though not because of a shadow, but a window shade."

"Bill, where's Dithers now? Can I talk to him?"

¹⁰ *The Adventures of Superman* (The Lost Episodes, Vol 1.), "The Nine Lives of Doctor Ort"

"Would love to have you speak with him, but you can't – no one can." Henderson looked away, somber.

"I'm afraid to ask why."

"It's the reason I called you in here." Henderson looked grim. "Bill Dithers' body was found two days ago in the Hobbs River. Concussion from a fall, only there are no places along there to suggest that a fall could've caused his fatal injury."

"Oh *no*." Clark shook his head.

"It gets worse, Kent. One *week* ago he called me from a pay phone across town, saying that he had a lead on the man that appears throughout his photos – connecting him with Richard Fleming."

"Is it possible that *Fleming* is the man in the shadows?"

"If he is, that's not his real name."

"Oh?"

"We did a nationwide – no, check that – a *world*-wide search of Richard Fleming. Scotland Yard. Interpol. You name it. It took awhile. Oh, there are lots of Richard Flemings across the U.S. and elsewhere, but they all check out. None of them were even *near* Metropolis." Henderson paused, somberly. "And that phone call to me was the last anyone heard from Dithers. He had a wife and three children, too."

"That's tragic. I'm sure you want to find out how Dithers met his death."



"Oh, I've got some men on that." Henderson paused, and then, "So Kent. What's your big idea with all this?"

Clark stared at the photos laid out on Henderson's desk. Then he nodded and pointed at the pictures. "There's a pattern here. I'm sure of it. In fact, it's plain as day."

"You mean, besides this so-called man in the shadows?"

"Yes, besides him. Something perhaps more frightening. Think about it..."

Henderson thought for a couple of seconds, and then his face lit up. "*Holy Cow!* The drugging ... Stanton's machine ...!"

"Uh-huh. All of these situations – the ones with Doctor Ort, William Johnson and even Doctor Stanton – they all involve some sort of *mind control*."

"It *can't* be a coincidence!"

"I don't think so. And not only that, but our friend, this ... 'man in the shadows' ... seems to either be interested or otherwise involved."

Henderson's phone rang again. "Yes? Oh. He's right here." He turned to Clark. "For you, Kent. It's your boss."

Kent's super-hearing allowed him to eavesdrop who had called and what he had said, but feigned surprise as he took the phone. "Hello Chief."

White barked out his orders. "Kent, I want you to get down to Mercy General right away. Meet up with Olsen in the ER."

"Oh?" Clark had an idea already as to what it was about.

White went from issuing orders to scolding. "While *you* were there with Henderson, *Superman* showed up at the Jefferson Bridge. Of course, we had no reporter on the scene right away to cover it." Clark sensed a facetious smile from his boss at the other end of the line. "Lois was stuck in traffic and so was Olsen, but somehow our boy wonder made it there near the end."

"That's good, so—"

"Get this, Kent. Olsen followed the ambulance holding the man who seems to have caused the entire ruckus – a certain Professor Adams. Remember him?"

Kent went along like this was news to him. "Sure, from the atom plant, but tell me--"

"It's a long story – just get over to the hospital now." Kent heard a 'click' and then he looked at the phone.

Henderson asked, "What was that all about?"

"You heard about the incident at the Jefferson Bridge?"

"Sure – I sent a half dozen squad cars over and was in constant touch until you came by. Seems like Superman had it under control."

Clark picked up his fedora. "Care to head over to the hospital with me? Could be worth your while." Kent's wheels were already turning, wondering if there was a connection between his discussion with Henderson and the delirious-looking Professor Adams.

MERCY GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mercy General Hospital sat in the Kanewood neighborhood just across the East Hobbs tributary from the center of Metropolis. The turn-of-the-century facility rose above the mix of warehouses and middle-income low-rise apartments. The hospital specialized in, amongst other things, psychiatry and drug-related situations.

There was an area next to the main lobby of Mercy General with a row of phone booths. A woman walked into one and put her coins in to make a call, then closed the door.

When she heard a voice at the other end, she said, "You were right. They took him all the way to Mercy General." She didn't speak her brother's name for fear that someone might be eavesdropping even through the closed door.



A man at the other end said. "He climbed the bridge thinking he could escape the broadcast range."

The woman thought for a second. Her brother sometimes conserved his words, often to challenge others to think. Or to constantly prove that he had all the facts, the ideas – and the upper hand. "Oh?"

"He was mistaken."

"But last time we saw him – after the injections – he seemed to be going mad. Why would he be thinking rationally?"

The man explained. "His subconscious is still rational."

"And that drove him to climb the bridge."

"Did you talk with him?" Her brother would also phrase questions, knowing the answer, setting the person up for a disappointing response – for failure, in effect.

"No. He's in a private room."

"See to it that he doesn't recover."

She knew what her brother didn't say that Adams, in his condition, was too dangerous now. Adams had learned enough about their plans to blow the whistle on them. If he recovered, it could be the end of their operation. Then she heard her brother sigh. It bordered on a whimper. She imagined where he was in his office, in front of the aerial large photo of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Memories of another life trickled into her mind as it must have been filling his. She thought that for her brother it was a wonderful time, long ago, when the two of them and their parents were a family.

She said, "I know what you're thinking."

Suddenly anger and words came cascading through the phone. He was like a planet rotating out of darkness into energizing sunlight. "We must *never* forget them. And we must never forget what was done to them plus what *must* be done to avenge their deaths – especially our father's murder and the tarnishing of his name – the family name." He paused and then, "We must set things *straight!*"

She said, "I know."

"*Operation X-2* will commence tomorrow night. *Operation X* is scuttled due to the Professor's condition. I had thought that he could help us, but he's no longer an option."

"And *Operation X-3*?"

"If necessary. Virtually everything is in place for that."

"That'll be challenging." She paused and whispered a name. "Superman." Another pause. "I don't know."

"I've done my research. I'm sure of my facts. We just need to prove my theory about him ... and his origins..." He paused. "...so that we can make use of him to our advantage."

"But he will try to stop you." She almost said her brother's name out loud.

"Oh, I'm sure he will *try*. That's why we need to be one step ahead of him. And if need be, if we have to implement *Operation X-3* as I think we will, he may never know what hit him, and if he does, by that time – it will be much too late for him – and anyone standing in our way."

They finished their conversation and each hung up.

At the other end of the phone, the man in the shadows had resumed reading the day's *Daily Planet*, meticulously reviewing every article, as he always did each day.

And then he smiled.

Had Clark Kent and Inspector Henderson known to whom the woman on the phone was talking, they'd have taken a greater interest in her conversation. Kent certainly could have easily eavesdropped. However, despite his super-hearing, he wasn't all knowing or "all-listening".

So the Fates allowed the reporter and police inspector to walk right past her, instead meeting Jim Olsen in the ground floor Emergency Room at Mercy General Hospital. Soon a Doctor named Fox joined them. He was a medium-height middle-aged man who Henderson thought looked a bit like the actor Robert Mitchum.



The doctor spoke. "Inspector. Mister Kent." They exchanged handshakes. "I understand that you're here about Professor Adams."

"That's right." Henderson confirmed. "Can we see him, Doctor?"

"I'd like to keep any visits to a minimum, but certainly, if only for a few minutes. I will warn you that he's not all that coherent. We have him in an isolated room adjacent to the ER. I'm waiting for confirmation that he can see visitors."

Doctor Fox noticed Olsen holding a soda bottle. "Oh, sorry, young man, but you can't bring that any further." A nurse with a clipboard came by to speak with Fox.

Olsen said. "This?" He held up the soda bottle. The label said *Red Star Cola*.

Clark saw that the doctor was occupied and took the bottle from the cub reporter, examining the label. "Where'd you get this, Junior?"

"Jeepers, they're handing them out all over the place, Mister Kent. It's a promotion."

"Really."

"For the game tomorrow night. You know."

"Well, I know all about the game, but never heard of this." Kent held up the soda bottle and examined it, briefly.



"It's new. Pretty good, too. Kind of a cherry-flavored cola." Jimmy smiled. "Might give *Coke* and *Pepsi* a run for their money. You should try it."

Clark frowned. "I'll pass". Then he placed the bottle down at the nurse's station.

Just then the doctor returned and indicated that Adams was ready to be seen. They walked down a corridor that came to a junction. Led by Fox, the four men turned left and then the doctor stopped at a door. A sign outside to the right of the door had "*M. Adams*" posted. Fox put a hand out, stopping the others from entering. He lowered his voice. "Like I said, he can be delirious. Or simply quiet. But he's not the Professor Adams I've known for years."

Kent asked, "You *know* him, Doctor Fox?"

"Went to Syracuse University together, then our separate ways, but kept in touch." Fox seemed to tense up. "I'll get to the bottom of this if it's the last thing I do."

Henderson jumped in. "And we'll be there with you. Let's go inside, if you don't mind, doctor."

They went in. Adams was laying in his bed, hooked up to an IV. His eyes were wide open, as if he was staring at the ceiling. Henderson walked over. "Professor Adams, I'm William Henderson, Metropolis Police."

Adams just blinked.

Jimmy said, "Jeepers, that's what he did on the stretcher, before."

Then Clark went over to Adams. "Professor, I don't think we've met. I'm Clark Kent of the *Daily Planet*."



Adams stirred and looked at Clark. He seemed to stare at the reporter for several seconds, almost with a look of recognition. Then he licked his lips and spoke. "You told us it was *new* and we hadn't quite figured it out yet."

A chill went up Clark's spine. *That's what I told Adams and his fellow scientists – but as **Superman**.*

Clark replied, "Professor Adams?"

Adams continued. "A *shock*. A *counteracting* shock."

Clark looked at Jimmy, Henderson and the doctor. Fox spoke in a low voice, “Incredible – Adams hasn’t been this lucid since he arrived. It’s like he *knows* you, Kent.”

Henderson put his hands on his hips and looked at Clark with a hint of suspicion. “I thought you two never met.”

Clark ignored the Inspector. While the doctor checked some instruments, the Reporter of Steel again spoke to Adams. “Professor Adams, can you tell us what happened to you? Why did you climb the Jefferson Bridge?”

“He wants it. He wants to *steal* it. All of it. You, too. You, too.”

“*Who*, Professor Adams?”

“A shock. A counteracting shock.”

Kent shook his head, looked at the others, and then back at Adams. Clark increased the urgency in his voice. “*Who* wants to steal something, Professor Adams, and *what* is to be stolen?”

“I won’t let them take it. You, too. You, too. Booby trap will stop him. *Destroy* him.”

Then Henderson bent over the bed and spoke, “Professor Adams, what—”

Adams went on. “We must get you a Geiger Counter. A *Geiger* Counter. At *once*.”

There was a knock and an orderly came in. He whispered to Doctor Fox. The orderly then left and Fox motioned for the others to come outside.

Fox led them to a small examining room where they could talk quietly. Back in the hallway, a hospital worker walked deliberately down the corridor towards Adams’ room. At least, he *appeared* to be a hospital employee, what with his white outfit. He was a large hunk of a man who stretched the limits of his uniform.

The man turned left at the junction and then left again to enter Adams’ room.

Back in the examining room, Doctor Fox spoke. “We have a preliminary analysis of Adams’ bloodstream.”

“Oh?” Henderson asked.

The doctor continued. “It’s a very strange mix, unlike anything I’ve seen before. Remember, it’s preliminary.”

Kent jumped in. “What is it, doctor?”

"We found moderate quantities of *amatol*. I--"

"*Great guns!*" Henderson was shocked and turned to Clark. "Kent, isn't that the stuff Doctor Ort was monkeying with ... on both of you ..." he motioned at Clark and Jimmy "... plus Miss Lane and your boss?"

Clark answered, "Yes, Bill, but go on, doctor. You referred to a 'mix'."

"Well, we also found *tetrodotoxin*."

Now it was Clark's turn to be shocked. "You mean - 'zombie powder'?"

Olsen shuddered. "Jeepers. *Zombies?*"

Clark patted Jim on his arm. "Hang on, Jim." Then he turned back to Fox. "Doctor, are you certain?"

"No, like I said, this is preliminary. We need to do a few more tests to confirm our findings. But our lab boys are the best in the business."

Jimmy looked at Clark. "Mister Kent. That tetro- tetro- doc--."

"*Tetrodotoxin*." The doctor corrected him.

Olsen continued speaking to his *Daily Planet* colleague. "Well, that zombie powder -- didn't we run into it in Haiti? Mister White's sister - that spooky witch doctor guy gave it to her. Made her--"

Again Clark patted Jim on his arm. "Perhaps, but let's hear more from Doctor Fox."

At the same time, Clark's super-hearing went into high gear. They were a few doors down and around a corner from Adams' room. Clark had been keeping his super-sensitive ears locked in on the Professor's room just in case Adams had uttered anything more that could shed light on the situation.

In Adams' room, at the sight of the bulky doctor, Adams said, "No no *no*."

The massive man dressed in white said, "Don't worry professor, no one can hear you, and then soon, no one will ever hear you again." The man pulled a syringe from a pocket and removed the protective covering.

"No no no!" Adams tried to shout, but didn't have the energy.

The big man aimed the needle at the IV bag held above Adams.



And then a hand gripped the hairy short-sleeved arm. It was Clark, who had excused himself from the examination room.

"What are you doing?" Clark demanded.

"I'm a doctor. Get your hand off me or I'll have you removed."

But Clark had overheard when the large man threatened Adams, thinking he couldn't possibly any kind of doctor he had ever met. "No, you've got it reversed. I'll be removing *you*."

Then Kent gripped the large man's shoulders and pushed him out the door of the room. The force was enough to send him across the hallway with the man's head and chest thudding against the wall. But strangely enough, the "doctor" wasn't fazed and he returned to charge at Kent, who now was standing in the doorway as if to block its entrance in order to protect Adams.

This time around it was the goon's turn to grip Kent by his shoulders. And to the reporter's surprise, he was lifted off the ground. Kent quickly knocked himself into the assailant with the intent of maneuvering the battle away from Adams' room. The scheme worked in spectacular fashion, as the two men went crashing through a window at the end of the short hallway.



Both men fell to the ground – they were now in a small alleyway separating the rear of the hospital from a warehouse next door. The alley was filled with garbage bins along with newspapers and liquor bottles left by derelicts that stayed there overnight. One, in fact, had been asleep under a pile of papers but scrambled out of the alley to a nearby street after being startled by the commotion.

Kent, amazed that he was being given a run for his money by the phony doctor, stood up over the prone thug. He thought about changing to Superman, but wondered who might be looking out from one of the windows bordering the alley. At the same time, mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent couldn't be seen winning a fight with someone seemingly built like Rocky Graziano.

But the reporter had little time to think about it, as powerful hands pulled on his right leg to upend him. However, this time Kent was ready. He had figured that the man was more powerful than anyone he'd encountered, perhaps in some drug-enhanced manner. *Drugs*, Kent thought. *The pattern continues.*

Kent had no patience now. This goon was here to silence Adams. His reporter's instincts told him that there was something sinister going on that required a deeper investigation by both Clark Kent *and* Superman – along with the authorities. He gave a kick to the goon's gut. When the man seemed unaffected, Kent repeated the kick, but this time with more force than usually employed, as he typically pulled his punches and such so as not to *kill* an opponent.

The more powerful kick was effective and it knocked the wind out of the brute. Clark quickly found some soiled bed sheets thrown out in one of the trash bins and fashioned them as bonds to tie up the phony doctor's hands and arms. Next, in an eye blink, taking a small chance if someone was watching, Kent lifted the goon and deposited him in one of the garbage bins.

He shut the cover of the bin and sealed it shut with his heat vision. Then, somewhat satisfied, Kent climbed through the broken window frame, only to find Henderson and Doctor Fox coming down the hallway.

Henderson twisted his face. "What in blazes happened to you?"

Kent clearly must have looked disheveled, for the doctor spoke next. "You look like you could use some medical attention."

Clark waved them away as he dusted himself off. "No, I'm fine, but thank you. Anyway, I'm more concerned about Professor Adams. Doctor Fox, is he all right?"

Fox responded, "Why yes, why do you ask? I mean, he's like he was before."

"That's a relief." Kent found his hat lying in the hallway. He retrieved it, dusted it off and placed it on his head.

Henderson was still inquisitive. "Kent, what's going on? That window – what happened?"

Kent didn't answer the Inspector, but instead asked, "Doctor, is there another way out to the alley?"

"The alley? Why yes – come this way."

Fox led them down another short corridor and then to a door that opened to the alley. Then he excused himself to check on Adams. Once outside, Kent showed Henderson the garbage bin where he had left the goon, but then stopped and looked around.

Henderson, hands on hips, asked, "Now what?"

Kent had x-rayed the bin – now it contained only garbage. The goon had somehow come to his senses, broken his bonds, climbed out and escaped somewhere. Clearly he had great strength, enabling him to overcome the heat vision melding by Clark to seal the bin cover. "Well, a man posing as a doctor attempted to poison Professor Adams. I tried to stop him but he seems to be gone."

"Kent, are you feeling all right?"

The reporter was annoyed. "Never better!"

"Well, you look like you've been through the mill."

"I'm telling you, Bill, someone tried to *poison* Adams—"

"With this?" It was Fox, standing in the doorway leading outside. He was holding the syringe that the goon had apparently dropped in Adams' room. Kent and Henderson approached him, and then the trio went inside the hallway of the hospital.

Kent was somewhat gratified. "Yes, he was trying to inject *that* into Adams' IV."

The doctor nodded. "I'll have it examined."

Kent spoke. "Thank you, doctor." Then he turned to Henderson. "You owe me one, Bill, for not believing me."

Henderson put his hands on his hips. "Oh really."

"Tell you what. I've got to get back to the office. Why don't you have some of the nurses here look through your mug books. Maybe one of them will recognize the character who tried to kill Adams."



Henderson shook his head but in the end agreed to Kent's request.

As the pair was leaving, they ran into Olsen at the nurse's station. Before long, the trio exited the hospital, going their separate ways. After a half-hour subway ride to another side of town, Jimmy was strolling down a tree-lined residential street.

FORT GRANVILLE



James Bartholomew Olsen, cub reporter for the *Daily Planet*, pictured being, if not editor of that great metropolitan newspaper, one of its star reporters at some point in the not-to-distant future. Though he admired his co-workers, Clark Kent and Lois Lane – and even considered them good, close friends, with Kent being a mentor of sorts – he privately *envied* them. Certainly if he were at their level, so to speak, Mister White would treat him with a great deal more respect.

So it was after visiting Professor Adams in the hospital that the cub reporter made up his mind to track down an apparent lead provided by a slip of paper that had fallen out of Adams' pocket at the Jefferson Bridge. Olsen was vague to Kent at the hospital, saying he was running an errand. He felt that had he let any of his colleagues – or the Chief – know what he was doing and where he was going, one of them would tag along. Maybe even steal his thunder.

No, this was *his* lead and maybe it would result in a *scoop* for him. *He* was hopefully going to bring back the big story all on his own. Who knows – maybe with enough scoops would come a raise *and* a promotion!

As Olsen walked down a street in the Fort Granville neighborhood, he fantasized about what things could be like, daydreaming of a possible exchange in Perry White's office:

"Good morning, Mister White. You wanted to see me?"

Editor Perry White sat at his desk, looking up to Olsen, one of his star reporters. "You know, James, I was thinking about the idea you pitched to me the other day."

Olsen, smiling, said, "Oh, what was that, sir?"

*"You said that we should all practice ... now, what was it? Oh, yes ... a **conservation** of words."*

Olsen nodded and smiled. "I see you remembered, Mister White."

*White raised his eyebrows. "Well, it occurred to me that you're absolutely right. If we **minimized** the number of words in our conversations, as you said, James, we'd have more time to do other things, like investigating stories and writing articles."*

Olsen looked serious. "Not only that, Mister White, but if we practiced that same, er, practice, in the news articles we write, we'd have more newspaper space for, well, more articles."

White stood up. "**Great Caesar's Ghost!** And more room for **advertising**, too. That's **brilliant!**"

Olsen added, "Of course, we wouldn't want to conserve so much that we stopped getting our point across. Of course."

White, still standing, said, "Olsen, you're a **genius!**"

Olsen's face lit up. "Well, golly. **Thanks**, Mister White."

White sat down and paused, clearly ruminating, and then said, "You know, I'm going to make it an edict. We'll let **every** employee know! We'll call it... the 'Olsen Conservation Rule'."

"Jeepers."

"And it's going to start **here and now**." White paused and then thumped his desk twice. "James, my boy, you know how you call me 'Mister White'...?"

Olsen, with a dead serious look, said, "Yes, sir, I know, that's... " He swallowed. "...**three** whole syllables."

White took a cigar from his suit jacket pocket and pointed it at Olsen. "Precisely."

Olsen, a little sheepish, replied, "Well, sir, I'm just being respectful. Of course. I mean. You **are** Mister White. I couldn't just call you 'sir', especially when there are other men and even women in the room who I should call 'sir'. Or ma'am. Or. Well. You know. Sir."

White jabbed the unlit cigar towards Olsen again. "Makes perfect sense." The Chief Editor then offered a broad smile. "You've always been a **logical** thinker, son."

Olsen, beaming, said, "Thank you. Well, then. Sir. Mister White. Sir. So what were you thinking?"

White shook his cigar for emphasis, like it was a sixth finger. "From this day forward, the **first** new practice to be put into effect under the ... 'Olsen Conservation Rule' ... will be what **you'll** call **me**."

"Golly, what's that, Mister White?"

White spoke matter-of-factly and waved his cigar before smiling. "It's very simple, James. From now on, just call me ... 'Chief'."

At that very instant, the fantasy abruptly vanished when Olsen's right foot struck the edge of a sidewalk segment that protruded from the level part of the walkway because of expanding tree roots. He went flying and would have fallen if not for crashing into a trunk of a man in front of him.

"Jeez, kid. Ya should be more careful."

Olsen momentarily hung on to the large man but then backed off when he could smell sweat on the man's chest. "Sorry about that. Guess I was daydreaming."

"Hey, don't I know you? Olsen, right?"

"Oh, hey, yeah. I know *you* too. Bibbo, right?"

"Yeah, yeah. See ya at the bar every now n' den. But yer not a drinka."

"Nah, I get cigars from the bartender. For my boss. Long story."



"Whatcha doon in Fort Granville? Not da safest place for a pipsqueak like you."

"Lookin for..." Olsen reached into his pocket and looked at the name and address on the piece of paper from Adams. "Someone named *Brentwood*. Doctor Brentwood."

Bibbo raised an eyebrow. "Funny you should menchinit, 'cause I'm goin' dere too."

Olsen smiled. He had known Bibbo on and off for a few years. Bo "Bibbo" Bibbowski was a longshoreman who worked on the docks along Metropolis Harbor. He was also a part-time bartender. Bibbo was a huge stocky guy and could be tough, too. At the same time, Olsen regarded him as a big teddy bear, because Bibbo was about as good-hearted as they came.

Bibbo was someone you'd want on your side in a fight, for sure.

He said and pointed, "In fact, Brentwood's right here."

Doctor Horatio Brentwood lived in Fort Granville, an eight-by-eight stretch of blocks that sat between the Shadow Hill and Chesler neighborhoods. It contained mostly dilapidated turn-of-the-century single homes.

Brentwood himself was as seamy as the neighborhood. He attracted the poorest and most destitute in the vicinity.



Olsen and Bibbo walked inside Brentwood's house, which doubled as his doctor's office. The waiting room was filled with other big men like Bibbo. Even with them all sitting, Olsen felt like an elm amongst Sequoias. "Golly, do you know all these guys?"

"Yeah." Bibbo nodded at a few of the men seated and exchanged a few pleasantries.



Bibbo and Olsen took the last empty seats in the waiting room. Jimmy noticed that, oddly, Brentwood had no receptionist. Olsen himself had no appointment and had no idea if Brentwood would see him. The cub reporter thumbed through a pile of magazines on a table directly across from him. The December 1953 *Look* caught his attention with Betty Hutton on the cover, so he snatched it from and settled in for the long haul.

It was an hour and a half before Brentwood had exhausted the queue in front of him and Bibbo. The doctor came out and asked, "Who's next?"

Jimmy looked at his bulky friend, "Oh, uh, Bibbo, aren't you next?"

"Nah, kid, I told da boss I'd be playin' hooky for the rest of the day. I'm in no rush. Gaw head." He waved at Olsen.

"Jeepers, ok. Thanks." Olsen then shrugged at the doctor. "Guess it's me."

Brentwood, early fifties, about six feet tall and a belly protruding just enough to stress the lower buttons of his white shirt, had a sea of greying dirty blonde hair on his head that appeared to have been parted, if not by Moses, then by advancing baldness.

The doctor led Olsen into a small, narrow office bounded on one side by a desk and cabinets, and the other side by room-length shelves filled with all sorts of medicine bottles having varying shapes, sizes, contents and colors. A fairly large rectangular mirror separated the shelves right in the center of the wall.

Dr. Brentwood pointed to a circular chair on wheels for Jimmy, saying nothing. Jimmy sat on the squeaky chair and said, "Sorry I don't have an appointment." Brentwood picked up an apple from a counter.



He answered, "Don't take'em.", and then took a bite from the apple that made a loud, crunching noise. Brentwood stared at some papers as if he was barely paying attention to his new patient. Then he opened a file cabinet and slipped the papers in one of the folders. Olsen thought he spotted a name "Carney" on the folder tab, but the doctor quickly closed the drawer.

"Golly, how do you manage, then?"

"First come, first serve." Another loud bite of the apple. With that, Brentwood turned around to look at Olsen and sat on his own squeaky circular chair. He studied Jim and for almost a half-minute didn't say a word. While he was doing this, Jimmy's mind was racing. *I need to find out why Professor Adams was seeing Brentwood. But if there's something nasty going on, I don't want Brentwood to know I'm snooping.* Then he quickly cobbled together a plan.

Brentwood said, "So young man. You seem to be in good shape. What brings you here to this god-forsaken neighborhood?"

"Uh, well. I mean ... can I use your washroom?"

The doctor raised an eyebrow. "The washroom." It wasn't a question.

"Well, yeah. I'll only be a minute." He paused. "If that's ok."

Brentwood spun around on his circular chair and opened the door of a low cabinet. He pulled a clear glass out that contained a blank label. "Well, as long as you're going there, might as well give me a sample."

"A what?"

"You know. *You're in the army now?*" Brentwood winked.

"The army?" Olsen thought, and then grinned. "Oh, I get it. Never heard that one before." He stood. "Sure thing."

Jimmy walked out of Brentwood's office and deliberately closed the door behind him. The washroom was at the other end of the waiting room, near the front door of the house. As Jimmy walked by the few people waiting to see Brentwood who had since arrived, he tapped Bibbo on the knee, winked, and nodded in the direction of the washroom.

Bibbo didn't take the bait, so when Olsen reached the washroom door, he did a "psst" in Bibbo's direction and then motioned with his finger to come over. Bibbo finally figured it out, got up and walked over.

"Geez, what's up, kid? Ya gotta problem?"

Jimmy put a finger up to his lips. "*Shhsh!*" He then spoke quickly and quietly, enlisting an eager Bibbo in a key part of his plan. As Bibbo went back to his seat, Olsen went into the washroom, pretending to use it. Then he realized that he had to bring back a sample and tended to that, as well.

Before long Olsen was back in Brentwood's office. He handed the doctor his sample with, "Here you go" and sat down again. As he did, he said, "I assume you want to examine me", and began unbuttoning his shirt.

Brentwood, who had been standing and reviewing a file of papers once again, turned to Olsen and held up a hand. "Now hang on – you haven't told me why you're here, son. Not even your name."

But Olsen had taken his shirt off, leaving his white tank top undershirt exposed. "Well, I—"

There was a knock on the office door. *Just in time*, Jimmy thought. Brentwood got up to open it. One of the burly men from the waiting room was by the door. "Hey Doc, you got someone in pain." The man nodded at Bibbo.

Brentwood looked out at Bibbo. "What? Oh. Can you come in to my office?"

Bibbo called out and was clearly hurting. Or, at least, he tried to make people *think* he was hurting. "Can't, Doc. My right ankle. Can't seem ta move it. Really hurtin'. Canya come heah an' takea look?"

Brentwood looked back at Olsen, sitting there in his undershirt and then back at Bibbo. He turned back to Olsen. "Sorry, this will hopefully take just a minute."

Olsen said, "That's ok." *But he thought, hope it takes more than that.*

The doctor walked out, leaving his office door open. Olsen called out, hand on the door as if to shut it, "Do you mind?" and pointed to his being shirtless. Not giving Brentwood a chance to respond, Jimmy closed to door. There was lock on it and he gently pushed it in. *I'll pretend that locking it was an accident.*

Then the cub reporter quietly pulled the file cabinet drawer Brentwood had open before. The rows of folder tabs were all **C**'s, **D**'s and **E**'s. He silently closed it, but as he did, there was a squeal from the metallic drawer. He quickly cleared his throat to cover up the noise. Next, Olsen opened a drawer above it and looked at the folder tabs. **A**'s and **B**'s. Almost immediately he thought, *Bingo!*



Olsen spotted a file labeled "Adams, Milton", and pulled it out. Inside were papers. Predictably, Brentwood's scrawls were hard to read. But Jimmy could pick out medications and observations recorded by the good doctor. Or Jimmy thought, *was he a **bad** doctor?* He was able to make out a comment, *"Adams follows simple commands."* Followed by *"Adams able to follow more complex requests."* Both comments were check-marked.

But there was a new, more ominous comment, *"Adams displaying near-dementia signs. Reducing dosage."*

And finally the chilling, *"Adams' behavior remains severely erratic even under reduced dosage."*

Jimmy gulped after reading that. In fact, the room seemed to get hotter, despite him still being in his undershirt. He plowed through a few more files and entries under other patient names. They were similar – lists of medications followed by observations. Most were like the entries he found in Adams' file. Some, though, had additional comments, "500 lbs, 700 lbs, 900 lbs, 1 ton". There were check marks against some of the entries.

Jimmy thought, *those can't be someone's weight. Maybe weight **lifting**?* He remembered reading about John Davis in the Olympics. He won the gold medal lifting close to 200 lbs. *If someone's lifting five times that – they must be almost like – **Superman**.*

Meanwhile, Brentwood had completed his examination of Bibbo's ankle. It wasn't long before he became suspicious, since it was Bibbo's *left* ankle that he was now complaining about – not the *right* ankle that he first claimed was hurting. But giving the behemoth longshoreman the benefit of the doubt – he could be confused between left and right, although that could be a problem on the docks – Brentwood ran a few pressure tests.

Then, to see if Bibbo was indeed telling the truth, he suddenly grabbed Bibbo's right ankle as a distraction, and then his left. Bibbo was so confused that he, well, forgot to

cry out in pain. At the same time, Brentwood thought he heard both a file cabinet squeal and the clearing of a throat – coming from his office.

He stood and lied to Bibbo, "Let me see if I can get you something to numb the pain" and strolled towards the office door. Bibbo, concerned for his friend Jim Olsen, called out "Gee Doc, uh, are you sure you're done examin'in' me?"

Brentwood, as if to read Bibbo's mind, said, "Oh, I'm not going in my office. I have a supply closet over here." Then he opened a door adjacent to the office door, flicking on a light via a pull-chain, revealing in fact a long, narrow walk-in closet with shelves. Upon seeing this, Bibbo was relieved. The moment Brentwood closed the closet door behind him, the longshoreman jumped up and went over to the doctor's office door.

Strangely, the remaining people in the waiting room seemed oblivious to it all.

Bibbo tapped on the door. "Hey kid, whatever ya doon, ya betta stop soon."

He heard back a muffled, "OK".

Meantime, in his supply closet, Brentwood was looking at the wall adjacent to his office. Or, rather, a window on the wall. It was a one-way mirror. The doctor could see into his office – but Olsen, on the other side, had no idea he was being watched.

Once Brentwood was done, he flicked the light off and left the supply closet. He looked at the four people in the waiting room, Bibbo included, and announced, "I'm sorry, but I have to close my office for the rest of the day. I have an emergency at Mercy General Hospital. Again, my apologies. Please come back tomorrow."

Bibbo protested with, "But Doc—" as the other three men simply stood and almost like robots, walked out the front door. Bibbo noticed that but was more concerned about his friend from the *Daily Planet*. He nodded towards Brentwood's office and said, "What about—"

"Your friend?"

"Yeah."

"Don't worry. I'll take care of him." Brentwood smiled, almost like a cat about to eat a canary. "Now please go. I assume your ankle is fine now." He added a facetious eyebrow.

Bibbo stared at the doctor for a few seconds and then got up. He said, walking a tightrope, "The kid better be all right." Bibbo left off "Or else", but it was implied.

Brentwood chuckled, "My dear man. I'm a doctor. Of course he'll be all right."

All Bibbo then said was, "Doc", with a nod, and walked out the front door.

Brentwood then locked the front door before returning to his office. As he approached his office door he saw that it was opening. It was of course Olsen, this time with his shirt back on, along with his tweed jacket and signature bow tie.

Brentwood blocked his path. "Oh, I am *so* sorry to have kept you waiting, young man."

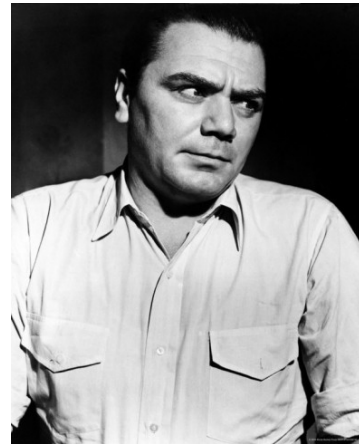
"No problem, Doc. But I need to get back to work." As Jimmy stood in the doorway, he noticed that the waiting room was empty, sending a chill up his spine. *Even Bibbo is gone.*

The doctor moved closer to Olsen, causing Jimmy to take two very fateful backward steps from the doorway and into Brentwood's office. Now it was Brentwood who was standing in the doorway, continuing to inch closer to Olsen, giving him no escape margin. "You know, I never got your name. Isn't that funny?"

"Well, Doc, to be honest, my boss, Mister White, gets pretty angry when I'm late for an appointment with him."

Brentwood kept closing in and Olsen kept backing away. "I'm sorry that you'll have to disappoint him." Once the doctor was fully inside the office, he reached for a drawer and pulled it open, not even looking at it. Olsen saw it as an opportunity, trying to slither around the doctor and out the door. But Brentwood planted his other hand on Olsen's chest and pushed him back, causing the cub reporter to fall to the floor.

Jimmy quickly recovered and stood up, ready to again charge past Brentwood.





"I'm not a great shot, but probably am at this range." The doctor was holding a pistol he had retrieved from the drawer. Though the front door to the house was locked, Brentwood closed the office door behind him and locked it, as well, doing both without taking his eyes off of Jimmy.

"Empty all your pockets and put everything onto that counter." The doctor motioned to Olsen's right. With a defeated look, Olsen complied. "Now, take your jacket and your shirt off, and throw them behind you, on the floor. You can leave the undershirt on." Brentwood grinned. "It's a little chilly in here." Again, Jimmy complied.

"Good. Now, sit on the chair and roll it away from me as far as you can, towards the window. And then spin around and *face* the window." There was a barred, frosted window at the rear of the office. Jimmy pushed back, avoiding the jacket and shirt he had just thrown there. "That will insure that I'll have ample time to blow your head off should you foolishly decide to suddenly charge at me."

Jimmy's heart was racing. *If only I had told someone at the office I was coming here. Some scoop.*

Brentwood kept the gun on Olsen, who twisted his head to look at the doctor. Meanwhile, with his free hand, the doctor opened the kid's wallet that was sitting on the counter. He managed to pull out his *Daily Planet* ID card and glance at it. "Well, well, a reporter. James Olsen. Impressive." Upon hearing this, Jimmy actually felt somewhat honored, but the feeling was short-lived. "*Daily Planet*. Yes, the great newspaper. I've heard of it. But I read the *Star*." Brentwood looked up and said, "Sorry."

Jimmy finally composed himself and continued to strain his neck, looking at the doctor. "Listen, if it's all right with you, I'd really like to be going."

"Oh, you will, James. You will." With his free hand, Brentwood moved closer to the phone on his desk. He unhooked the receiver, placing it on the desk, and dialed a number before bringing the headset to his ear and mouth. All Jimmy could hear was Brentwood's side of the conversation.

"It's Brentwood."

"Someone here rifled through my files. A patient."

"Yes. I have him right here. He's not going anywhere."

"Name's..." He looked again at Jimmy's *Daily Planet* ID. "... James Olsen."

"That's right. That's what it says in his wallet."

"I thought so, too. Was thinking of giving him the 'works'" (Jimmy cringed).

"Yes, I know he's not the type, but what else can we do, other than..."

There was a long pause and then, "I see. Interesting."

"Makes sense. He could be at that."

"I'll get it and call you back."

"Will do."

Then Brentwood opened a cabinet, barely taking his eyes off Olsen and still training the gun on him. He quickly spotted a small plastic container of pills and pulled it out. "You a baseball fan?"

Jimmy, no longer attempting to look at Brentwood, faced the window, swallowed and said, "Well, uh, sure. Isn't everybody?"

"I suppose most people are. Not me. Too slow. Ice hockey's more my speed. Turn around and face me – but turn around slowly, kid." Olsen complied. The doctor asked somewhat jovially, "So, are you going to the big exhibition tomorrow night?"



Olsen mustered a faint smile. "Am I? Wouldn't miss it. Taking my girl, too. Well, a girl I know, Elaine. She's Tony's daughter, you know, from the diner by the *Daily Planet*." For a moment Jimmy had forgotten the trouble he was in, but then the sinking feeling returned, quickly.

"Nice. Well, then, being a baseball fan, you must know how to play catch. *Here*." Brentwood threw the pill container over to Olsen, who juggled it for a moment before grabbing it. "Good. Now. Open it and take four pills."

The kid gulped and said, "Can't I just take two aspirin and call you in the morning?" He offered a meek but hopeful grin.

"Very funny. But your options are you take the pills or a bullet as delivered by this." He waved the gun.

"Well, when you put it that way." Olsen opened the container and shook four small oval yellowish pills out. "Um, what are these going to" he gulped again "do to me?"

"A fair question. They will make you somewhat sluggish, enough so that I can administer an injection."

Jimmy swallowed yet again. "An in-injection? You mean, you're going to give me a, er, shot? What it's for? What does it do?"

Brentwood smiled. "Oh, that would be telling. But don't worry. It's been given to many others, and they've all lived, although not necessarily to tell about it."

Olsen got defiant. "Now listen, Doctor Brentwood. I'm a pretty important guy. And I work with Clark Kent, who knows how to contact *Superman*. In fact, before I came here, I told Kent *all* about my visit. Any minute now Superman himself should be crashing through your ceiling." It was a desperate try.

But Brentwood ignored Olsen. "The pills, please?" He waved the gun at him.

"Uh, do you have something to wash'em down?"

The doctor pointed with his gun. "Over there, behind the roll of paper towels."

Olsen looked, and sure enough, behind the towels was a bottle of *Red Star Cola*. "Jeepers, that's the stuff I've been drinking."

Brentwood was getting bored. "Yes, yes, apparently it's the *rage* of Metropolis." Then once more, he waved the gun. "Please, hurry up. I'm getting very impatient, James."

Olsen held up the soda bottle. "Uh, a bottle opener?"

"On the same counter – look."

Jimmy saw the bottle opener. For a moment he thought of using it as a weapon but then realized that the gun was too dangerous to challenge. He popped open the soda cap and then readied the pills for his mouth.

Brentwood cautioned with a finger. "Uh uh uh. One pill at a time, back of the tongue. Big swig. Four times. *Now!*"

Olsen complied. He had hoped to wedge each pill between the gums and the side of his mouth, but it was no use. "How long will it take?"

"Oh, they should be in your bloodstream shortly, and then affecting your brain a moment or two after that."

Sure enough, less than three minutes later, Jim Olsen was beginning to slump on the circular chair. Brentwood saw this, put his gun on the counter, and then helped his

patient down onto the jacket thrown earlier on the floor. Jimmy wasn't exactly "out", but he wasn't going anywhere.

Brentwood then opened a large cabinet and pulled out two things: a rectangular box that looked like a small television set, including a view screen with two knobs and a push-button on the bottom, along with something that looked like a cross between a football helmet and a hair dryer, except it had an electrical cable running out of the back.



He plugged the cord exiting the TV-like box into an electrical outlet, clicked on a knob and waited a minute until it warmed up. When the screen was lit, he plugged the cable from the helmet into a receptacle in the back of the set.

Then, with the helmet in one hand, he carefully extended its cable and moved over to Olsen on the floor. He propped Jimmy up a little, enough so that he could position the helmet over his head. It wasn't a perfect fit, but was good enough. Jimmy moaned, although Brentwood was almost certain the kid wasn't in pain.

The doctor went back to the electronic box and flicked on another knob. Two black lines appeared on the grey-white screen: one was a straight, black, horizontal line, and the other, a jagged white one of varying peaks and valleys. Brentwood watched as the horizontal line moved up and down the jagged one.

Suddenly the horizontal line stopped and turned from black to bright white. At that moment, Brentwood pressed the pushbutton on the TV-like box. On the side of the box there was a ticker tape that spat out.

Then Brentwood picked up the phone and dialed back the man who paid him handsomely. It took him several minutes to carefully read and repeat a *fifty*-digit number that had been typed onto the ticker tape. Then he hung up and carried out the remainder of his tasks.

Sometime later, Olsen emerged from the house. Bibbo had been waiting all that time, across the street, worried about his friend. He ran over to Jimmy. "Hey kid, what happened in dere? You had me worried sick. I wuz one minute away from bustin' his door down."

"Huh?"

"Whassa matta Jimmy? Ya all right? What'd he do to you?"

"The Doc?"

"Yeah!"

"Oh, I'm all right. Just a headache."

"But werencha lookin' for somethin'? Dat's why you had me fake my ankle hurtin'."

"What?"

"Man, ya actin' strange. Why, I oughtta ring dat Doc's neck."

Bibbo started towards Brentwood's home, but Jimmy stopped him. "No, I'll be alright. Just need some sleep."

"Are ya sure?"



"Been a long day. Gotta rest." Then, from somewhere deep down, maybe simply from the conversation he had with Brentwood, Jimmy smiled and said, "Need to get ready for the ballgame. Taking my date, Elaine."

"Dat's good, kid, but da game ain't till tamara night."

"Yeah, got to sleep until then. Real tired."

"Lemme at least call ya a cab from da drug store nearby and go wid you t'yer place."

Bibbo looked at Jimmy and could see that his friend's eyes were glazed. He was torn between charging into Brentwood's place and taking Jimmy home. He chose the latter, and soon they were on Flatplains Avenue in a cab heading towards Jim Olsen's apartment.

ACT 2: "PANIC IN THE STADIUM"

MONARCHS STADIUM



THE NEXT EVENING, with the early springtime sun setting and casting an orange glow across Metropolis, the city prepared for its annual baseball exhibition at the Metropolis Monarchs' stadium. Baseball was a passion for the city, and even games such as this that didn't count in the standings drew a packed house.

The *Daily Planet* was normally given box seats for virtually all games, exhibition or otherwise, and this time was no exception. However, for this game the newspapers had to "donate" several of their seats to some very special guests and their various entourages. As a result, Lois Lane, Jim Olsen and Clark Kent were assigned seats several rows into the stands, above first base and the home team dugout.

Lois arrived first, followed by Olsen and his "date", Elaine Tomasso, daughter of the man running *Tony's*, a diner near the *Daily Planet*. Jimmy had been "sweet" on Elaine ever since they met one day in the diner.¹¹ It took seven trips to the small luncheonette before Olsen could work up the courage to ask Elaine simply to walk with him in nearby Midtown Park.

It took an equal amount of courage for Jimmy to ask his boss, Perry White, if a seat could be reserved for Elaine at the exhibition game. With some arm-twisting on the part of Lois Lane, Perry succumbed. Sitting in the stands, Lois and Elaine engaged in some "girl talk" as they eagerly awaited the opening ceremonies. Then Elaine turned to her escort.

"Jimmy, you're very quiet", said Elaine. She could sense that something was wrong, but let it play out; she hoped Jimmy would shake off whatever was bothering him as the night progressed.

Without looking at Elaine, Olsen stared towards the field and said, "Oh, I just have a headache."

Lois, very much aware of the empty seat to her left and for whom it was reserved, grumbled, "What I'd like to know is where Mister Kent is."

¹¹ *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 2), "My Friend Superman"

"So would I." It was a familiar voice coming from two aisles behind them.

Lois turned and smiled. "Why Inspector, what are you doing here?"

Henderson, who was holding an open box of *Cracker Jack*, took some nearby stairs to go to the aisle in front of Lois, Jimmy and Elaine. His relatively tall frame put him practically at eye level with them. "Well, as you probably know, there are quite a lot of VIPs here - the Mayor, our two senators, the Governor, and even the Vice President - plus a gaggle of Hollywood celebrities. I have half the force here, too, working with the Secret Service, and most of the rest of the force on the other side of town."



Lois focused on Henderson. "Other side of town - what's going on?"

"Alex Whitmore. Holed up in the Anderson Chemical Plant on the West Side."

"Whitmore? FBI's Ten Most Wanted?"

"If that's who's hiding out in the plant, yes. Like I said, I've got a good part of the force there after getting a tip."

"So between the stadium and the plant—"

"You don't have to say it, Miss Lane. There'd better not be any other big crises, or else I guess I'd have to rely on *Superman*." He smiled.

"OK, but why are *you* up here in the stands?"

He offered his snack to Elaine, Jimmy and Lois, but there were no takers. "Oh well, besides saying hello, I'm looking for Kent."

"Did somebody call my name?"

Standing in the aisle a few rows below them was a man dressed in a baseball uniform wearing a catcher's mask. Henderson cocked his head. "*Kent?* Is that *you?*"



The man lifted up the mask so that it was angled over his head. He smiled. "You were thinking I was Yogi Berra? Or maybe Dick Clancy?"

Henderson put his hands on his hips and shook his head, half-smiling: "What on *Earth?*"

Lois shook her head. "What are you doing in that get-up? You're supposed to be covering the ceremony and the game with us."

A cop came over to Henderson and they engaged in a conversation. All the while, Olsen was strangely quiet, not joining in the discussion.

Kent looked at Lois. "Oh well, you see, the Chief and I thought it would be a new angle for me to be in the dugout during the ceremony - to observe the team's reaction during the festivities. You know. I may even be the catcher during the opening formalities." He pointed to his outfit. "Hence this get-up." It was no lie, although it was Clark who convinced Perry White of the "new angle".

Lois was just a little miffed. "And how come *I* didn't hear about this?"

Kent adjusted his glasses. "Well, I don't really *know*, Lois." Then he smiled. "But I'll promise you a wave from home plate. Maybe I'll even get Ty Jurgenson's autograph for you."

Lois *harrumphed*.



Olsen continued to remain uncharacteristically quiet, something that didn't go unnoticed by Kent. "How about you, Jim? I know you're a fan of Lefty Williams. Want me to have him sign a baseball for you?" But when Jimmy just stared blankly out at the field, Kent bounded up the stairs to him. Then he held the cub reporter by his shoulders. "*Jim*, are you ok?"

The cub reporter looked up, almost like he came out of a funk. "Oh, why sure, Mister Kent." He seemed to force a smile. "What was that about Lefty Williams?"

Kent upped the ante. "I can *introduce* you to him. How'd you like that?"

"Oh, uh. No, that's ok. I'll stay here in the stands."

Lois jumped in. "Jimmy, are you feeling all right?"

"Yeah, my head hurts." He rubbed his temples. "That's all."

Clark stepped away from Jimmy and then walked around to the row in front of them, directly in front of Lois. He leaned over to whisper to her, "Keep an eye on him, Lois. I've never *seen* him like this."

Lois looked at her cub reporter colleague and then smiled back at Clark. "Looks like he's got someone *else* to keep an eye on him."

Clark gave off a thin smile, seeing Jim's date, Elaine, with her arm around Jimmy, as if to comfort him. "Well, just the same, make sure he's all right." He looked down at the field. "I've got to get to the dugout."

As Kent strolled away, Henderson soon caught up with him. The Inspector said to Clark, "Just wanted you to know. Your tip paid off. Guess I owe you an apology, Kent." He said it sheepishly.

"Oh?"

"I had two nurses look through our mug books. They recognized that goon you said you ran into at the hospital and we had him checked out. Name's *Grodd*. Long-time hood. Nasty character."

"Grodd, eh? Why do I have a feeling we'll be seeing that gorilla again?"

"Well, just in case, I've posted a twenty-four hour guard outside Adams' door."

"Good thinking. I was going to suggest that myself. Has there been any change in the professor's condition?"

"No, none at all. Doctor Fox told me Adams talks to himself – sometimes saying the things we heard him say, but other times either stares or sleeps. Very peculiar."

"I'd say. And very *troubling*!"

They reached the Monarchs' dugout and Clark excused himself, letting Henderson go back to his security concerns. Clark then found a private vestibule and quickly changed into his normal "Clark Kent" clothes. He stashed the baseball outfit and mask in a bag and threw it in a trashcan.

Next, Clark trained his x-ray vision on the interior of the stadium. In seconds he located his quarry: Bart Howell, radio voice of the Metropolis Monarchs. It took Kent a minute to wade through some crowds to reach Howell, who was in his broadcast booth devouring the second of his three ballpark hot dogs with mustard, relish and sauerkraut.

"Well, I've heard of a dog biting man, but this is a switch."



Howell spun around. He smiled with his mouth full and then gulped down what he had been chewing. "*Clarkie-boy!*" Then he had a mock-serious face. "Say, that's not going to be your headline in tomorrow's *Planet*, will it? *Man bites dog?*"

Clark returned the mock-serious face. "I don't know, Bart. *Three* hot dogs. *Really!*" Then he grinned.

Howell wiped his face and hands on a napkin. Then the two old friends shook hands as Clark sat in the unoccupied broadcaster's seat next to Bart.

"Can't have my tummy rumble during the game, Clarkie. Might interfere with the play-by-play!" Howell grinned.

Clark smiled. "I suppose you've got a point there, Bart."

"So what brings you here? Perry thinkin' of transferring you to *Sports*? I think you'd do a helluva job."

"Might be a nice diversion at that. I'll mention it to the Chief." Clark winked.

"So what's up?" Bart checked his watch. "Better make it fast. I'm due on the field in a minute."

"Sure Bart. Just one thing." Clark looked down at the floor and then back at Howell. "Believe it or not, it's a request from Superman." Clark thought, *and since it's a request from me, that's no lie.*

"*Superman*? Heck, why doesn't he ask me himself?"

"Well, you know how busy he is."

"I still owe him big time for that signed baseball he gave to Jason."

"Your nephew really appreciated it, huh?"

"Sure did! He's *still* beaming about it." Howell stood, reached for a sports coat hanging behind the door and put it on. "So, what can I do for The Man of Steel, Clarkie?"

"It's kind of an odd request."

"Oh?" Howell gathered a few papers from his desk and then stopped to look at Clark.

"He wants you to delay announcing the players until the real exhibition game starts."

Howell scratched his chin. "Hmmm... that *is* real unusual. I mean, I have it right here to do." He patted the papers in his hand. "My script. Everyone was going to be announced."

"Look Bart, Superman wouldn't ask this if it wasn't important. He didn't say why and I didn't ask. Just hold off with the player announcements until the real game starts."

Howell took a few steps out of the booth and Clark followed. Then he looked at Clark. "Superman, huh?"

"Yes, Bart. Superman."

"And you have no idea why he wants me to do this?"

"If I had to hazard a guess, it's probably so that the kids would have the spotlight all to themselves ... other than him, of course." *No lie again*, thought Clark, *although not the driving reason*.

Howell stared into space and then exhaled. Finally he said, "Well, Clarkie, if Superman *himself* is asking for this..." He paused.

"Just pretend *I'm* Superman, and *I'm* asking, Bart."

Howell chuckled. "Ha! *You* Superman. That'll be the day!" The broadcaster patted Clark on the shoulder and said, "Sure. It's no problem." Bart grabbed a pencil and put a few marks on one of the pages of his script. Then he smiled and headed towards the field. Kent, relieved, thought, *I dodged a bullet*, next headed to the dugout of the Metropolis Monarchs, gaining access as a member of the press.



Kent grinned at the thought of his novel idea. Lois had been talking for days about how she was looking forward so much to being able to sit with Clark in the stands while Superman put on an exhibition. *Well, my orchestration may make her think Superman and Clark are on the field together. I hope.*

Clark Kent continued to mill around the dugout, chatting with players, but out of sight from any of the spectators in the stands – particularly Lois Lane. Clark was impressed with the star-studded guests sitting in the box seats near home plate: retired New York Yankees baseball star Joe DiMaggio and his bride, the stunning Hollywood actress Marilyn Monroe; the comedy teams of Bud Abbott & Lou Costello and Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis; Vice President Richard Nixon, his wife Pat, their young daughters Julie & Tricia, along with President Eisenhower's six year-old grandson David, all surrounded by a secret service detail; comedian Groucho Marx;

the singer Nat King Cole; and the Hollywood movie and television star George Reeves.

On the field, at the pitcher's mound, the popular singing quartet, The Four Aces, was entertaining the crowd with a number of songs including their recent Academy Award winner, "Three Coins in the Fountain".

When the brief musical concert was over, all but one microphone was removed. The MC of the event, Bart Howell, then introduced the celebrity spectators as well as the Vice President and other political figures.



He said a few words about the ceremony and then "...also we'd like to welcome one of our big sponsors. They've got a new product that's been sweeping Metropolis." Howell held up a bottle of soda. "*Red Star Cola*." There was a smattering of applause.

Howell continued talking but per his agreement with Kent, skipped over the player introductions. "For our charity game, as you all know, we are particularly honored to have with us an extra-special guest who's going to put on an *spectacular* exhibition, no doubt. Or should I say, a **super-spectacular** exhibition."

That was Clark's cue to disappear from the dugout area.

"Ladies and gentleman, I am grateful and honored. May I present ... **Superman!**"

Howell turned to stare up at the dusk sky above the stadium and the gaze of everyone in the ballpark followed. People squinted, then pointed and finally gasped. Cries of "*Look! Up in the sky!*" and "*It's him!*" were heard throughout the stands. And then a familiar whistling sound grew and grew as Superman spun from a headfirst flight to a landing directly on the pitcher's mound next to Howell.

As he alighted, the stadium thundered with applause and a roar of cheers. It seemed to last forever, at least until Superman waved a hand to quiet the crowd. He needed no microphone to speak to the fans but used it anyway, lest his powerful voice shatter eardrums and equipment.

"Thank you Mister Howell. It's an honor to be here with you, the various dignitaries, including the Vice President and his family plus President Eisenhower's grandson, as well as a number of wonderful and well-known celebrities." Superman winked at the actor George Reeves, who winked back. "And especially, everyone who took time out from their work-a-day schedule – the *people* of Metropolis." There were more cheers and applause.

When that quickly died down, a somber and serious face replaced The Man of Steel's broad smile. "As you all may know, tonight is a charity exhibition between the Metropolis Monarchs and the Philadelphia Athletics.



"We're extremely grateful to both teams for taking valuable time off from Spring Training to be here for such a worthy cause – the *Metropolis Fresh Air Fund*, which as you should know provides much-needed services to underprivileged children."

Superman then nodded towards the Monarchs' dugout. Three little boys and a little girl were led out by the Monarchs' manager, Mack McDermott and the owner, Rock Blanchard. The kids were dressed in Monarchs baseball uniforms. The boys sported baseball caps with Superman "S" symbols on them.

Two of the boys held either end of a bat; the other boy, a glove; and the girl, a cap. When they reached the mound, Superman knelt before them. He took the bat and glove from the three boys and placed the equipment on the grass next to him.



Then he shook each of their hands with a smile and a "thank you". The boys were clearly awestruck at shaking the hand of a legend they had at best seen only briefly on their parents' televisions, photographs and comic books.

Superman, still kneeling, then took the cap from the little girl and put it on his own head. Next, he shook her hand with a "thank you", took the cap off his head and put it on hers. He then pulled the cap down slightly, in jest, and patted her on the head. Finally he picked her up and balanced her on his shoulder as he continued speaking into the microphone. "Aren't they adorable? They're an example of the many recipients of the *Fresh Air Fund*. Please – let's let them know how much we appreciate them." The stands erupted once more.

After the children were escorted away, Superman then picked up the bat next to the pitcher's mound and walked to home plate. He nodded to Dick Clancy, the Monarchs' catcher, who was standing in the dugout. Clancy, mask covering his face, came out to home plate and the two men shook hands. At the same time, the Monarchs' pitching ace, Andy Frazier, trotted over, shook Superman's hand, and went to the mound. The microphone had been taken away and Howell headed to his broadcasting booth.

The Man of Steel then went into the batter's box. He stood for a moment and stared at the bat, thinking back to his days in Smallville, playing ball as a kid. For awhile, back then, he played better than any of his friends - until Clark's foster parents advised him not to show off as his unearthly powers became more and more apparent.



Superman's thoughts returned to the present as he put the bat on his shoulder and looked out onto the field. Behind him, Clancy was about to go into a crouch when Superman turned to him and said, "You know, Dick, I could be wrong, but I think Lois Lane of the *Daily Planet* is a big fan of yours." He smiled and gave a slight nod in the direction of Lois in the right field stands. "I bet it'd mean the world if you waved to her."

"Sure thing, Superman." With that, the Monarchs' catcher turned towards the right field stands and waved. In the stands, Lois noticed and returned half-hearted wave. As she did so, the girl reporter turned to Jimmy and Elaine. "Is that *Clark*?" She shook her head. "I wonder..." She squinted, trying unsuccessfully to make out the features behind the mesh protecting the catcher's face.

Andy Frazier soon rubbed a bright green phosphorescent ball - colored that way in honor of the *Fresh Air Fund* - and then went into his windup. He threw a fastball right down the middle of the plate. Superman stuck the bat out and gently nudged it to the left field stands for a foul ball. Fans scrambled at the chance to get the souvenir of their lives.

With that, the umpire, Les Williamson, yelled "*Strike One!*" When he did, the stadium crowd booed loudly.

Frazier received another ball from Williamson, rubbed it, and then went into his windup. This time a curveball zoomed towards home plate, and Superman deliberately fouled it into the *right* field stands.

"*Strike Two!*" More boos.



Bart Howell, who now was announcing the game from his booth, could be heard on the public address system throughout the stadium. "Oh my *goodness*, ladies and gentlemen. Two strikes on The Man of Steel! Will the ace of the Metropolis Monarchs, the great Andy Frazier, *strike out* the mighty Superman?"

Frazier went into his windup and blazed a fastball down the middle of the plate. Superman swung and the crack of his bat could be heard in the streets surrounding Monarchs Stadium. The ball could barely be seen as it rocketed out of the stadium, rising well above the bleachers and over the buildings surrounding the ballpark.

Superman dropped the bat and watched the flight of the ball until he was certain it was out of the spectators' sight. He trotted towards first base and then picked up speed. By the time he had rounded first base, he had disappeared ... and was then standing on home plate. Cheers erupted as Howell boomed on the PA system, "A *home run* for the Metropolis Marvel!"

The cheers continued.



Howell tried to speak over the crowd's noise. "But *wait!* Ladies and gentlemen – *silence please* – I've just received a bulletin! Yes, it's from the captain of the *U.S.S. Bennington*. The aircraft carrier is in the North Atlantic – the exact location is top-secret, of course. But Captain Thomas Carr has radioed us that – *my goodness!* A green ball – a bit scorched from friction – has landed on the *Bennington* flight deck! He says it came from outta *nowhere* – from the east!

"Nice shot, Superman!"

Applause and cheers erupted once again. Superman smiled and waved. He then motioned with his hands for people to be quiet. With the microphone taken off the field, he then boomed back, just enough to be heard but not to hurt anyone's ears. "Thanks, Mister Howell. And now, if you'll permit me..." He dropped the bat and walked to the pitcher's mound where he retrieved the glove given to him earlier. Everything had been pre-arranged, so the pitcher, Frazier, and catcher, Clancy, knew what was coming. But Dick Clancy had perhaps momentarily forgotten the "script" – he got out of his crouch and began a slow stroll towards the dugout, as if he thought he was finished as far as the ceremonial exhibition went. As he walked, Clancy reached up to his catcher's mask, preparing to remove it. Superman noticed this and thought, *if he does that and Lois sees Clancy's face, she'll smell a rat.*

Using his super-senses, Superman effectively watched Clancy in slow motion. The catcher began to reach around to the back of the mask. Superman, appearing to casually glance in Clancy's direction, sent two thin, invisible beams of heat vision to the brass latches holding the leather straps of the mask in place. Besides melting them, they were now red hot.

First Clancy tried tugging at the straps, but the melted brass held the leather in place. As he was about to touch the brass buckles, Superman smiled and called out

to him, "Dick, need you to remain behind the plate, please." That, and the struggle with the leather, was enough for the catcher to stop trying to remove his mask. He called back "Sorry, Superman, you're right." Then he went back behind the plate, into his crouch.

Superman then took the pitching mound and was handed a ball from Andy Frazier. He thanked the ace pitcher, who trotted off the mound to cheers. Then Superman put the glove on his left hand and rubbed it lightly. He went into a windup and threw a curveball towards home plate, where no batter was waiting.

At least, not when Superman released the ball.

But in an instant, the crowd gasped as the ball flew towards home plate and the pitcher, Superman, disappeared, only to reappear as a batter – at home plate. In an eye blink, Superman swatted the green baseball high in the air towards centerfield. An "oooh" came from the stands as Superman ran around the bases – at – super-speed, but still visible.

People tried to watch him while at the same time track the high arc of the seemingly hanging baseball that soon plummeted towards the centerfield bleachers. Several fans wondered aloud, *has Superman hit another home run?* But then, once again, the Man of Steel disappeared. They saw him back at the pitcher's mound where he had dropped his glove. He retrieved it and then ran to centerfield. Would he make it in time?

The ball fell, fell, fell and was clearly heading deep into the bleachers – a certain home run. Well above the warning track, as the ball continued to plummet, Superman leaped high – higher than any mortal baseball player could – and snared the charity baseball he had pitched *and* hit.

The crowd roared in appreciation.

Echoing the catchphrase of another beloved baseball announcer, all Bart Howell could say was, "*How about that!*"

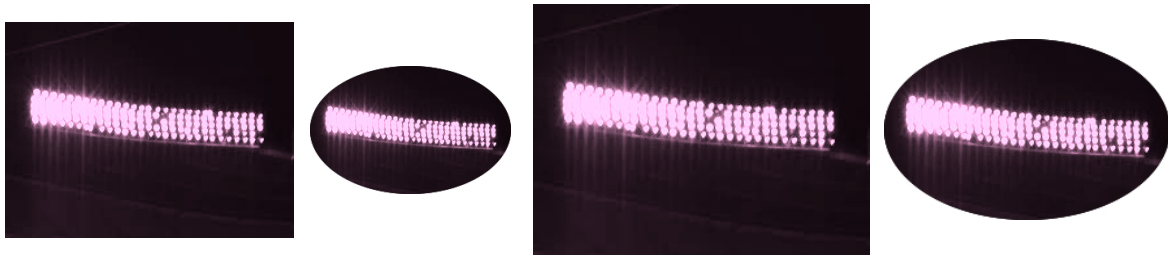
Superman then *flew* from the outfield back to home plate, once again delighting the crowd. The Mayor of Metropolis, Michael Fiorletto, along with Perry White of the *Daily Planet* (the *Planet* being the main sponsor of the *Metropolis Fresh Air Fund*) and with the managers of both the Monarchs and Athletics – who were scheduled to play a real exhibition game following the festivities – gathered at a row of microphones set up well behind home plate.

Bart Howell was there, too, and spoke into the microphone. "Superman, thank you for putting on such a wonderful exhibition for us." He paused as a ball boy handed him a note. "I'm told that one of our big sponsors, *Red Star Cola*, will donate an

additional One Hundred Thousand dollars to the *Fresh Air Fund* if you would hit a home run onto Jerome Avenue."

That wasn't on the agenda, Superman thought. Giving Howell a puzzled look, he said, "Well, that's very generous. I suppose so." The audience cheered him on. He glanced back towards the Monarchs' dugout and was relieved when the catcher, Clancy, was now out of public view, getting help to remove his mask. Superman turned back towards Howell and smiled. "OK, I'd be glad to."

As he walked back to home plate, two odd things happened: a pair of men dressed in bright *red* baseball outfits with the "Red Star Cola" logo appeared from nowhere. One headed to the mound, holding a baseball - bright *red* - and one to the catcher's position behind home plate.



At the same time, lights surrounding the infield suddenly became bright *red*. Home plate, in particular, was now bathed in a powerful red light that made everyone squint. One voice in the stands shouted, "Geez, what's with the red lights?"

Another voice shouted, "*Red Star Cola*. **Red** lights. Makes sense. Kinda neat. *Different*."

Superman picked up the bat he had used previously and looked towards the mound. The red lighting made the setting eerie as anything. It felt most pronounced at home plate - right where he was standing. Regardless, The Man of Steel took a few practice swings as the pitcher and catcher exchanged some warm-up pitches.

When the warm-up pitches were done, Superman stepped into the batter's box and stared at the odd red-garbed pitcher on the mound. It struck him as strange that he couldn't make out details of the man's face as well as he could Andy Frazier's. He shrugged it off, thinking that he knew the Monarch's pitcher well and that he had never met the *Red Star Cola* pitcher. Finally, the pitcher went into his windup and then sent a ball right down the middle of the plate.

Superman swung - and *missed*!

A new umpire - now also a red-garbed man advertising *Red Star Cola* - yelled "*Strike One!*"

The crowd gasped! It was like they were collectively thinking *Superman, a swing and a miss? Nah... he's fooling us, like he did before with the foul balls*. But Superman wondered if his concentration was off. After all, the evening until now had been orchestrated - but this was impromptu. More importantly, he had had a lot of things on his mind. Professor Adams. The so-called Man in the Shadows. That mysterious and powerful goon at the hospital called *Grodd*. Even finding a way to fool Lois into thinking both Clark and Superman were at the game.

Not to mention, most of all, Jimmy's worrying behavior.

If Superman didn't know better, he was feeling a bit ... *stressed*. Then he realized that the hair nearest to his forehead was *moist* – sweat was forming on his scalp. *Last time that happened was in ... Miss Sherman's class ... during the history test, wasn't it?*

Next pitch – sinkerball – Superman swung – and *flailed*, almost falling down.

Another *gasp* from the crowd!

Now the sweat was building on his face. It was as if he could feel the heat of the red lamps. *What's going on? I'm not in pain. There's no Kryptonite. I'd be **writhing** in pain. What is going on?* He could feel his pulse – his heart was thumping and his head was pounding.

The pitcher yelled out, "One more, Superman". The voice was emotionless and monotone. A sixth sense went wild in The Man of Steel as the pitcher prepared his next throw. *Now the pressure is on*, Superman thought. *I can't let the crowd down. I'm supposed to hit the ball out of the park*. He gripped the bat, but it felt like an oily grip because his palms were sweating profusely.

And now for the first time, Superman felt the weight of his uniform on him. The indestructible shirt and pants felt dense, like the thick woolen winter coat Pa Kent would wear for those frigid Smallville winters. The cape seemed leaden, like it was tugging on him from behind, ready to make him topple over. His boots were like anchors, so much so that shuffling his feet was an effort.

He tried to shrug off these peculiar sensations. *But why did the pitcher say "one more"?* He could foul the ball into the stands again ... or the pitch could be a ball. He'd get another pitch. *Mustn't concern myself with that. Focus on the mound, the pitcher, the ball. That's it.*

The catcher had thrown the baseball back to the mound, but this time, unnoticed by all, the pitcher pulled a special one from inside his shirt.

It *looked* like a baseball, albeit another red one - but had the density of a *stone*.

The pitcher rubbed it and then went into his windup. The super-batter focused on it. *I want to show everyone I'm all right.* But to his horror, he lost sight of the ball as it hurtled towards him. The pitch was high ... and it hit Superman squarely in the *head*.

To everyone's astonishment, Superman went *down*, just like any other *mortal* baseball player!

Officials around home plate momentarily froze in amazement but then went rushing to him. The delay, though, gave the man closest to Superman, the *Red Star Cola* umpire, the moment he needed. From his pouch where baseballs were normally stored, he pulled out a small syringe. Being the first to reach Superman, he crouched over the prone hero. As he did, the faux umpire removed protective plastic from the instrument and plunged the needle into Superman's exposed neck.

Of course, the fake ump wasn't certain the needle wouldn't snap. Superman's skin was normally, well, like steel. But he was reasonably confident it would work because the boss said it would and the boss was a - *mastermind*.

Superman, in the meantime, barely felt the sting of the hypo. He was semi-conscious. Only the grip of Kryptonite a few months before approximated his current state. He struggled to clear his head, which was throbbing and spinning. But when he didn't get up after several seconds, someone yelled, "Somebody get a *doctor*! Get an *ambulance*!"



At the same time, a man in the stands who had been watching everything intently spoke into a miniature walkie-talkie concealed in his jacket. "He's down, Boss. Just like you said."

A voice accompanied with minimal static spoke out of the walkie-talkie. "Movement?"

"Barely. I'm telling you. He's not getting up. I mean, he's alive, but seems like he's in a bad way."

"One moment."

The man in the stands heard his boss say, "Elena. Operation X-2." Then, speaking to him again. "Proceed with the next steps." And the walkie-talkie went dead.

Meanwhile, on the field, officials around home plate crowded around the motionless Man of Steel. As they did, there was a cry of "*Let me through! Let me through!*" It was Lois Lane, who had come down from the stands and somehow made it through the crowds to reach the vicinity of home plate.

Perry White, who had run over to Superman from his field-side press box, shouted at people to let Lois come to home plate. The Man of Steel was now surrounded by Perry and Lois, as well as several police – including Inspector Henderson.

Even the Vice President had come over, accompanied by Secret Service men, to check on Superman before being ushered off the field by them for security reasons. Lois Lane then knelt beside The Man of Steel. She tried talking to him, but when he didn't respond, she cried out, "*Chief! Inspector! He's not breathing! Somebody get help!*"

White looked around and yelled. "Someone get a *doctor!*" Then he squinted in the glow of the red lights and growled, "And someone shut off those blasted red lights!"

But before the Monarchs team doctor could be called, there were shouts of "Let us through!" As the crowd around Superman parted, two men dressed in white uniforms appeared, carrying a stretcher. They put it down next to the prone hero. Henderson asked the taller man, "That was fast. We barely had time to call one in."

The man replied, as his colleague bent down to check Superman with a stethoscope, "Monarchs' team ambulance. Just in case. We always stand by."

Lois, standing again, looked at the man in white listening to Superman's heart. She was still sobbing, but asked, "How is he? Do you hear—"

The kneeling man in white held up a hand, and then turned around, "He's alive but we'd better get him to the hospital."

White looked at them incredulously, "*Him? He* needs a hospital?" He shook his head. "*Preposterous!*" Then the editor turned to the police inspector. "Henderson, what do you think?"

He shook his head. "Well, I'm no doctor, but if these medics say he needs to go to a hospital, we'd better listen to what they say."

Just at that moment, the red lights were replaced by normal stadium lights. "Thank goodness", uttered White.

Then, as Bart Howell announced a game delay of one-half hour, the two men in white attempted to lift Superman onto the stretcher. The shorter one said, "Geez, he must weigh a ton!" Henderson saw that and bent down to help. Two of his officers, standing by, also assisted in getting Superman onto the stretcher.

As they did, one of them said, "Inspector, it was very strange. I was talking to Sergeant Quigley. We were watching Superman go down."

"Yes?"

"Well, a minute later, Quigley just got up and left."

"What do you mean, he got up and left?"

"That's just it – he walked right for the exit with a dozen other guys acting just like him. Quigley didn't say anything. They were like ... well ... in a *trance* or something."

"That *is* odd. Maybe he saw something."

"Well, no, I called out. Even ran up to him. It's like—he didn't even *know* me. Had a funny look in his eyes. Like I said, Quigley was in a trance."



Suddenly, another voice interjected. "Just like *Jimmy*."

The two men stood and looked around. Perry and Lois saw her, too.

Lois asked her, "*Elaine*. How did you--? Where *is* Jimmy?"

Jim Olsen's date was close to tears. "Just like the officer said. Right after Superman" she nodded at The Man of Steel, now on a stretcher, "was hit, Jimmy stood up and walked out--".

That conversation was interrupted when the two men in white uniforms attempted to lift Superman. Henderson nodded at his two officers to help once again. Soon the four men were carrying Superman off the field on the stretcher, towards the Monarchs' dugout.

"*Wait!*" Lois yelled.

White held Lois back, but then, practically reading Lois' mind, said, "*Henderson!* One of us needs to go with him!" He then turned to his reporter. "No, not you, Lois. Better that you escort, uh, this young lady" he nodded at Elaine "out of here. Take her home."

"But Chief..."

Henderson replied. "All right, I'll go." He went over to two officers next to the Monarchs dugout, spoke for a minute and then to a corridor marked "EXIT". Soon, approaching the street, he noticed an ambulance opposite a *Red Star Cola* panel truck. The rear doors of both vehicles were facing each other. The truck then left to head down Kaye Street as the doors closed on the unmarked ambulance. *Unmarked? Strange*, he thought, *given that it's from Mercy General*. Henderson called out, "Hold on!" but its doors closed quickly and the ambulance took off down Swan Avenue.

The Inspector rushed over to his squad car, parked several yards away. The two policemen who had assisted the men in white with the stretcher were inside as Henderson got in the back. "Ross, step on it! Follow that ambulance!" Henderson then reached across to the front seat and stretched to pick up the radio microphone, pressing a button. "This is Henderson. All-points—"

Ross, who had pulled out of the parking spot, said, "Don't bother, Inspector. Stopped working a few minutes ago."

"What?!"

"Just static. Like the airwaves went dead. Even Larraby's portable radio is getting static on all the stations."

"Holy Cow!"

Before long, Henderson's squad car caught up with the ambulance and pulled it over. Henderson hopped out with his men, gun in hand, and went up to the driver and the man in the passenger seat, ordering them out.

Ross, calling from the back of the ambulance, said, "Hey, Inspector, there's nobody here!"

"That *can't* be!" Henderson pushed the two drivers ahead of him and then they all looked at the rear of the ambulance. The door was open and the interior was empty. Then Henderson poked his gun at the two drivers. "OK you two, *talk!* What happened to Superman?"

"Huh? *Superman*? We work for Mercy. We got a call from the stadium that there was a sick person. When we got there, we waited and got another radio call to come back to Mercy, which is what we were doing before you pulled us over."

Henderson turned to one his cop. "Ross. Cuff'em and take'm away."

The ambulance driver protested. "*What?* I just told you what happened."

"Oh really? Well with the radios dead, how could you get a call from the hospital? Ross, hold'em for questioning. If it turns out they're innocent, buy them a hamburger. Put it on my charge."

SOMEWHERE IN METROPOLIS

"Ma, I've lost my super-powers."

"Now you'll be like Pa and me."

"Pa?"

"Hello son."

"But Pa..."

"Hush..."

"But—"

"You know, it was those infernal red lights."

"Pa? What red lights?"

"They stopped you."

"You mean ... at the stadium?"

"No more infernal red lights."

"What?"

And then Pa's voice changed. It was ...*younger*.

"No more infernal red lights, Billy. Can't take'm. The police'll catch us."

"Naw, Boss had it figured right. The police are probably chasin' the ambulance Donny and Murray are drivin'. Hope dey don't get caught."



The *Red Star Cola* truck continued making its way through the streets of Metropolis. One man, Mitch, drove, while the other, Billy, sat in the back with Superman, still laid out on a stretcher. A dim bulb protruding from the ceiling barely provided enough light to see. Mitch and Billy talked to each other through a small sliding window opening. Mitch had the radio on, loudly playing "Space Guitar" by Johnny "Guitar" Watson. Billy couldn't stand it, but he tolerated it because Mitch was the more senior guy.

At a red traffic light, the Billy said, "Mitch, whatcha stop for? Boss is waitin'."

Mitch, the driver, answered, "Another red light, Billy."

"Put the speed on. We'll go trew all da lights."

"Boss said not to attract attention. Remember? Besides, we lost the police. Lucky we moved Superman from the ambulance quick like the boss wanted." Still waiting at the light, Mitch peeked into the rear. "How's he doing?"

Billy took a swig of his *Red Star Cola* and then glanced at Superman, on the stretcher. "Still out cold, like the boss said he'd be."

"Guess those red lights and the shot at the ballpark did the trick. Took away his powers. Made him just like you n' me, huh? Man, the boss is *smart*." Then Mitch noticed something else. "Hey, where'd you get *that*?"

"What?"

Mitch stuck a finger through the portal and pointed. "The *bat*!"

Billy, a little sheepish, said, "Oh, snuck it out in the stretcher. Figured no one'd notice. It'll be worth a hundred bucks or more." He beamed as he stroked the bat. "The bat that Superman used."

Mitch turned back to look out the front window. "Not if the boss doesn't let you have it." The light turned green and he moved on.

And then a third voice joined the conversation. "I'd be grateful for a sip, if you don't mind."

Billy nearly dropped his soda and looked towards the source of the soft but firm voice. Superman had opened his eyes and was looking right at him. Billy pointed at himself. "M-me?"

Superman smiled and spoke gently. "Please. Just a sip. I'm very thirsty."

The former Man of Steel had been drifting in and out of consciousness ever since he had been loaded via stretcher into the panel truck. He was still groggy from the baseball beaming – and whatever else had been done to him. But after a brief, strange dream, he had focused on the voices in the truck, taking in as much as he could. Soon he carefully opened his eyes ever so slightly in an attempt to absorb his stark surroundings without being noticed. One thing he thought he recognized immediately was Billy, the man sitting alongside him.

Despite his features having been not completely clear during the game, the man appeared to be the *Red Star Cola* pitcher who had beaned him.

Realizing that these two were up to no good, Superman put a plan in to action, also knowing that his super-powers had somehow been sapped and appeared to remain that way, given his weariness.

Mitch, driving, called through the portal. "Billy, you say something?"

"He's *up*, Mitch. Superman woke up."

Mitch uttered an expletive, and then, "You sure?"

"Sure I'm sure. He's asking me for my soda."

Another red light and Mitch looked through the portal. He saw Superman still lying on the stretcher but with his eyes open. "Boss's instructions were to let him be until we get him to the hideout. Remember, he doesn't have his powers." He paused and then held a pistol up, visible through the portal. "And if he makes a move, I've got this."

Superman picked his head up just a little and said, looking at Billy and then Mitch through the opening, "You're both talking like I'm not here. Look, I'll accept that I'm your prisoner. But something's made me weak and *very* thirsty." He looked again at Billy. "I just want a sip of your soda. *Please*."

The light changed and Mitch went back to driving. As he did, he shouted, "Billy, don't let Superman have it. Boss'll *cream* us. Just let him be."

Billy, awed by sitting next to the famous Superman, was a little more sympathetic, saying, "Sorry Superman. Orders is orders."

Superman lowered his voice. "Look. Billy. I'll make you a deal." He nodded behind him. "See my cape?" Billy shook his head and Superman continued, "Well, I'll let you *have* it in exchange for a sip."

Billy started to respond with, "*What?* But—"

Superman held up a hand with a "*shshh*" and then said, "Listen. My powers are gone but the cape is indestructible. Bullets, fire, you name it – *nothing* can harm it. Think about it."

The thought of owning a bulletproof cape was like gold to Billy. "But the boss'll *kill* me. And Mitch'll kill me, too." He nodded towards the portal.

Superman kept his voice low. "This 'boss', whoever he is, will never know. You can say it was lost when you moved me. Plus you can hide it somewhere so Mitch doesn't see it."

"I dunno."

"Look...the cape will make *you* indestructible. You won't *ever* have to be afraid of *anyone* again. Not your boss." Superman motioned to the front of the truck. "Not your friend Mitch. Not your enemies." He paused. "Not *anyone*." He stared and pleaded, "I am *dying* of thirst. *Please*."

They stopped at another red light. Mitch cursed and complained. "Geez, look at all those people on Broadview. It's like a parade or something. Just like the boss said there'd be – they're like – like - *zombies*." He stared at the odd procession of people crossing in front of the traffic ahead.

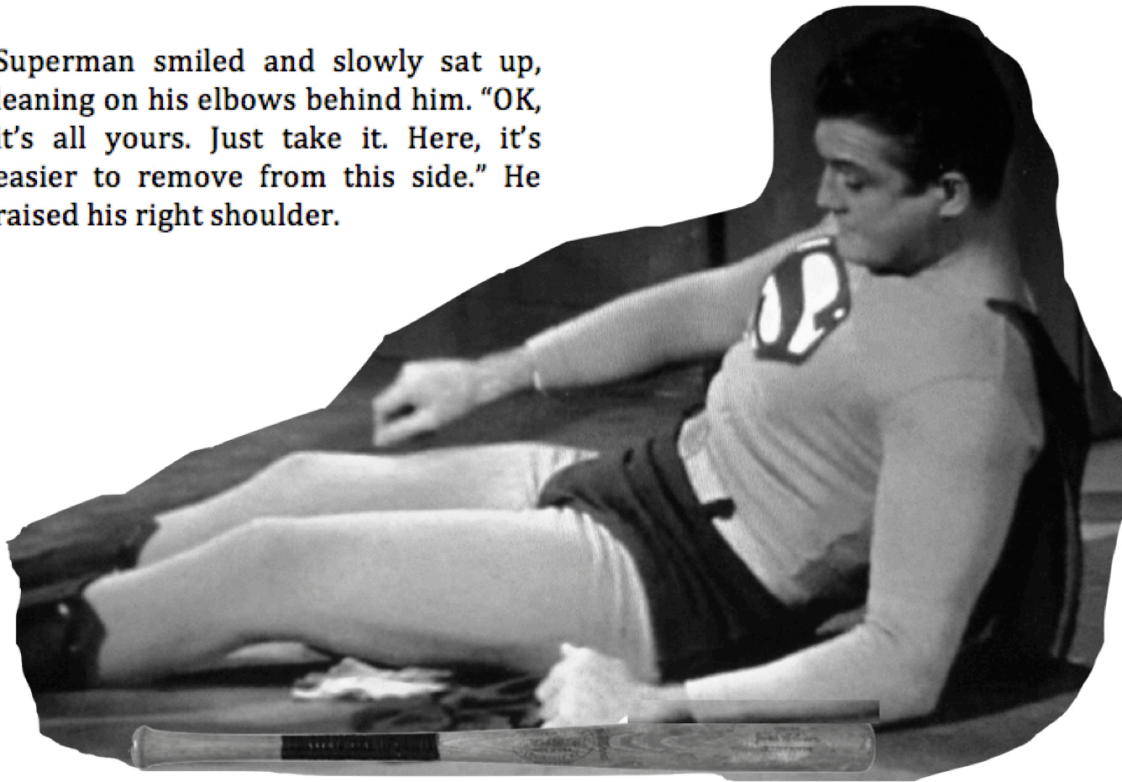
Superman made a mental note of Mitch's utterings but then focused on Billy and whispered. "My cape could be worth thousands of dollars. Maybe *millions*. Much more than this bat you took from the game." He let the words sink in. "Do we have a deal?"

Billy hesitated, and then made up his mind. He turned to the portal and gripped the handle of the small sliding panel. "Man, Mitch, I'm getting a headache from that... that radio *noise* yer playin'. Shuttin' this for a little bit."

All he heard was "Wha--?" and then the panel door was shut. Billy was able to lock it on his side via a small latch.

Then Billy looked at Superman and grinned, triumphantly. "Deal."

Superman smiled and slowly sat up, leaning on his elbows behind him. "OK, it's all yours. Just take it. Here, it's easier to remove from this side." He raised his right shoulder.



"Wha--? Oh, ok." Billy held the soda in one hand and started tugging on one side of Superman's cape that was tucked into his uniform. As he did, Superman grabbed the Louisville Slugger lying on the left side of the stretcher. With a solid grip and a perfect swing from his half-sitting position, he carefully whacked Billy on back of the head, knocking him cold. He gently brought him down to the floor of the panel truck to minimize any "thump" that might alert the driver, Mitch.

Next, Superman stood up, bending somewhat to avoid hitting his head on the roof of the vehicle. He felt dizzy and was still weak, but was determined to escape his current situation in order address what he suspected was a growing menace threatening Metropolis. Still clutching the bat, he stepped to the rear of the truck, which was apparently no longer in motion. As he stood by the rear exit, Superman tucked in the left side of his cape and turned to look at the unconscious Billy with a thin smile, saying, "Sorry. I *don't* make deals."

Superman then turned the rear latch and opened the single door. He confirmed that his x-ray vision and super-hearing were still inoperable. As such, he had no idea that Mitch would be standing there pointing a pistol at him. The thug said, "Going somewhere?"

Looking beyond Mitch, Superman saw that a short line of cars were honking their horns due to being trapped behind the panel truck. Mitch yelled back, "*Shaddap*" and then motioned with his gun to Superman. "Now get back in there or else you'll wish you *were* in an ambulance." He paused, and then, "Oh, I know about your costume

and how it stops bullets, but I've got this aimed at your *head*, so no tricks. And drop the stick while you're at it."

Superman retreated slowly, making a motion to toss the bat away. But his eyes were watching a figure behind Mitch. The irate driver of a car behind them had gotten out and was yelling at the top of his lungs. He was closing in on Mitch, who now noticed Superman looking beyond him. Instinctively, Mitch briefly glanced to see who was behind him.

It was the opening Superman needed.

Once again, the bat he used to hit a baseball hundreds of miles across the Atlantic Ocean was employed more purposefully. He crashed it down on Mitch's hand – the one holding the gun. Mitch yelped in pain as the weapon clattered to the ground, mercifully not firing.

Then Superman gripped the bat like a small battering ram and thrust it into Mitch's gut, knocking the wind out of him and sending him to the pavement. Still holding the bat, Superman bent down and picked up the gun with his other hand. Glancing down the block, he noticed a foot patrolman running towards them. Meanwhile, a crowd was gathering at the sight of Superman and the commotion.

With the gun still trained on Mitch, Superman nodded at the approaching officer, who called out, "Holy Cow! Whadda *you* need a gun for, Superman?"

Superman handed the gun to the cop. "It's a long story, officer." He then looked at the bat. "Actually, I found *this* to be quite a useful weapon."

The cop, training the gun he'd been given on Mitch, chuckled, "Yeah, you 'n Mickey Mantle. Hey, maybe *you* should call yerself the *Bat-man* from now on."

Superman grimaced jokingly, "You're very funny, but I'd hate to be confused with the vigilante in Gotham City who goes by that name. In the meantime, *this* man and the one in there..." He nodded behind him, "...badly need a prison cell, if not medical attention. And get hold of Inspector Henderson – have him impound this truck. I assume there's a call box nearby."

The officer nodded.

Exchanging a handshake with the cop, Superman said, "Thank you. Maybe one of these good Samaritans can call it in for you while you keep these two thugs under your thumb. Now, if you'll excuse me..."



The former Man of Steel then scrambled into a nearby alley. After making sure he was alone, he pulled his compressed “Clark Kent clothes” from out of a hidden pouch in his cape. The change from one identity to another took quite a bit longer than usual, given his lack of super-speed.

Soon enough, though, Clark Kent emerged from the alley. He looked back towards the *Red Star Cola* truck and saw that now a massive traffic jam had queued behind it. The patrolman had apparently put Mitch with his cohort inside the vehicle and was guarding its lone exit from the rear.

Satisfied, Clark then realized that the collar of his shirt was rubbing the back of his neck and it hurt – a sensation he wasn’t used to. He felt his skin on the neck and realized that there was a bump. It then occurred to him that the bump was a puncture. *Mitch mentioned the red lights ... and a shot. I was given an injection – but what?*

As his foster father once said to Clark as a kid, “I reckon there’s a whole lot to reckon with, son...”

ACT 3: "ZOMBIES ON THE MARCH"

DOWNTOWN METROPOLIS



MEANWHILE, a growing crowd – almost like a steady, silent march – was moving up Broadview Way, the widest thoroughfare of Metropolis. Bit by bit, every few blocks, more people would join the procession. People who weren't part of it wondered aloud if there was a parade related to the exhibition game. Some called out to the marchers, asking their purpose, but were ignored. The handful of cops in the area just scratched their heads.

To onlookers, the eyes of the marchers appeared glazed and distant. Some bystanders tried to walk along with them and they, too, would ask the marchers what it was all about. But when they were ignored, the bystanders stopped and went about their business.

And then there were other spectators – interested parties - but these men behaved differently. They were "watchers" employed by the march's organizer. They were fairly hefty and thug-like and held tiny walkie-talkies in order to remain in touch with their boss.

As it neared Ninth Avenue, the procession spilled out from both sidewalks into the street – Broadview Way itself. Cars, busses and streetcars screeched to a halt. Before long, vehicular traffic avoided the procession by moving onto side streets. But the streetcars, limited to their fixed rails, could only halt lest they injure members of the horde. Passengers, scared off by the lifeless looks on the procession-goers' faces, pleaded with the driver not to open the vehicle's doors.

The few police around were left to their own devices, partly because many members of the force were at the ballpark or elsewhere, and partly because thoroughfares were too clogged now to allow police cars through.

In the midst of this was a certain *Daily Planet* cub reporter. His mind had a singular focus – the same focus his fellow marchers had, which was to head to a pre-ordered destination. As he took step after deliberate step, he did not notice one man in the crowd gaining on him from behind. Before long, the figure had caught up to Olsen and stepped in front of him.

"Jim!"



It was Clark Kent. Still without his powers, he had noticed the odd procession on the main thoroughfare of Metropolis and decided to join it. He couldn't help but wonder if it was connected to all the other strange events and findings over the past twenty-four hours or more. Before long the reporter had found himself staring ahead of the pack. Soon Kent realized that he was seeing details of people and things far up Broadview Way – a possible sign that his telescopic vision was perhaps coming back, more or less. It gave him hope that the rest of his powers would follow.

Soon thereafter Clark saw a familiar figure - red hair, tweed sports jacket, white knit shirt and brown pants. At that point Kent hastened his pace. When he reached Jim Olsen and called his name, Kent simultaneously pulled the cub reporter aside, off the street and in front of an office building.

"Jim! It's *me*! Clark!"

Olsen showed no sign of recognition. *Even worse than he was at the stadium*, Clark thought. At the same time, one of the hefty "watchers" spoke frantically into his walkie-talkie. Soon after receiving instructions, he and two other hulking men surrounded Kent and Olsen. The man who had spoken into the walkie-talkie huffed at Clark, "Get away from the kid."

Still sensing little or nothing in the way of super-strength or speed, Clark wanted to avoid a fight versus the *three* goons. He pretended to comply and began to step away, looking dejected. But then out of the blue, Kent grabbed hold of Olsen, barreling through two of the men, knocking them off their feet and into the third man. He then whirled through a revolving door that led to the lobby of the Ellsworth Tower, like the *Daily Planet* building, one of the taller structures in Metropolis and one of the more modern ones, as well.



Once inside, Clark ushered the trance-like Jimmy past a bank of elevators to a door that presumably led to the street-side rear of the building. But the door was locked. He tried to force the handle, but it wouldn't budge. At the same time, he could see

that the thugs had recovered and each was spinning through the revolving door. For Kent and Olsen there was only one-way out and that was – *up!*

Clark pushed Jimmy into an open elevator and followed him in, pushing the top floor button. Frantically, he hit the "close" button, which mercifully shut the door. Breathing what he knew would be a short-lived sigh of relief, Kent turned to Olsen and took his friend by the shoulders. "Jim, it's Clark. Clark Kent. Say something!"

"I—I—" He stuttered and then there was a long pause followed by a series of blinks. "Leave me alone."

"What's *wrong?* Don't you *recognize* me? Why are you *like* this?"

But the cub reporter's eyes just continued to glaze, all but oblivious to Clark and the surroundings.

The elevator bell chimed and the doors opened on the top floor. The hallway was deserted and Clark escorted Jimmy out. Within seconds the elevator doors closed and Kent could hear the hydraulics send the elevator back down. It wouldn't be long before the thugs would catch up to them. *Should we take an elevator down to evade them? Hide out on one of the intervening floors?*

But when Clark pressed the button to take one of the other elevators down, none of the elevators' doors opened. He then considered going down a staircase with Olsen, but saw an "EXIT" sign above a door leading to the stairs, far down the hallway. And then he heard an ominous '*ding*' from one of the other three elevator lights.

Once again securing Jim Olsen, Clark hoped that a nearby door marked "ROOF" was unlocked. He tried to turn the handle, but like the one in the lobby, it wouldn't give. Then he tried again with a little more force. *Bingo!* In the back of his mind, Clark wondered if the door handle had just been stuck – or his powerful strength was returning.

There was no time to ponder that as he then dashed with Olsen up the stairs. Kent easily opened the next door that led to the roof. Soon he and Jimmy were outside on the gravel and tar rooftop. The twinkling lights of Metropolis surrounded them. Not far away was the majestic *Daily Planet* building. Clark longed to be on top of that building instead of the Ellsworth – at least the *Daily Planet* was familiar territory. Even more so, he wished to be able to *leap* the two tall buildings.

Kent took a deep breath – hauling Olsen up the stairs would normally have been a cinch, but in his present still-depleted state, it was a chore. *And now what?*

Taking advantage of the momentary lull, Clark thought that he could possibly hide out here for awhile, hoping the men would lose interest and go back to whatever they were doing. *Why did they bother with Jimmy?* But then his thoughts were

interrupted. There was another door leading to the roof several yards away. Two of the thugs came barreling out, immediately spotting Kent and Olsen. Clark grabbed Jimmy once more and went back to the door they had just used. When he opened it, to his dismay, the third thug was blocking their path.

The man immediately grabbed Olsen, shoved Clark out of the way and closed the door. As Clark gripped the door handle, powerful hands grabbed him from behind – it was both of the other two thugs.

One of them said, "I don't know who you are, mister, and why you're messing with that kid, but boss said to let him be, isn't that right, Moxie?"

The thug named Moxie replied, "That's what I heard, Nummy. So we're letting him be."

Kent, who had stopped struggling, said, "Oh, and just who *is* your boss?"

Nummy smiled. "You'll never live to find out." Then he turned to Moxie. "OK, Moxie. Boss only said to keep this guy from the kid, but I say to ditch him." Then he nodded to the side of the roof overlooking Broadview Way and they dragged Kent to the edge.

Clark struggled, but to no avail. The two men were overpowering.

Moxie said, "OK, meddler. Give our regards to Broadview!" The two chuckled and then heaved Kent over the side.

It was a strange feeling – *falling* - and Clark had a new sensation – *terror*. It all happened very quickly. The fear combined with the thought that something terrible was happening to his city – including at least one of his friends. *Whoever's behind this apparently needed Superman out of the way.*

And then, two-thirds of the way down, another strange but familiar sensation struck.

The feeling of - *control*.

Seeing the sidewalk come at him quickly, Clark swiveled and – with a *swoop*, landed gently on the pavement. Whether it was the adrenaline or the sinister drug wearing off – his powers were back. Or at least enough to save his life.

He had landed right in front of the Ellsworth Tower – next to the revolving door that only minutes ago he had entered with Jim Olsen. His landing was something he wouldn't ever have done in public as Clark Kent, for fear of bystanders suspecting his other identity. As such, Clark was prepared to dash away at super-speed –

assuming that he in fact had that ability back, as well – so as to give onlookers little chance to recognize him following his incredible landing from above.

But two things gave the reporter pause. First, he had landed amidst the tail end of the strange procession of zombie-like people. None of them took notice, and apparently any “normal” folks were nowhere to be found – presumably they had been scared off. Nor were any police in sight, which was odd, as well.

The second thing Clark noticed was that the two thugs who had pushed him off of the Ellsworth Tower were stepping out of an elevator in the lobby. Apparently the third thug who grabbed Olsen had already left the scene and made away with Jimmy.

So with that in mind, Clark dashed at top speed into an alleyway adjacent to the Ellsworth Tower.

After the two goons emerged from the revolving door, they took a few steps out onto the sidewalk and turned to watch as the end of the zombie procession passed on Broadview Way.

“You gentlemen wouldn’t know where they’re all headed, would you?”

Each man spun and as they took in the sight of the man who spoke, their eyes nearly fell out. Both said, “S-S-Superman!”

The Man of Steel smiled. “Yes, that’s right. How observant of you.”

Nummy elbowed Moxie. “But t-the boss said. I mean—“

Moxie said “No, it’s a trick.” He then stepped back and pulled out a gun tucked in his pants.

Nummy stepped back, as well. “Yeah, plug’em, Moxie.”



Moxie emptied his revolver at Superman, who stood there with a look of defiance and determination. Of course, less than a minute ago he had made doubly sure that his invulnerability was back in working order by smashing his hand against a brick façade next to the Ellsworth Tower. The bricks went flying and the fist that demolished them was no worse for the wear.

As such, regardless of the protection provided by his impenetrable uniform, Superman was reasonably confident that bullets would bounce off of him, as usual. When his gun was emptied, Moxie threw it at Superman in disgust, and that bounced off his chest, too.

When that was over, Superman closed in on the thugs and grabbed them by the scruff of their jackets. The smile he had a minute ago was long gone and now he meant business. "Now *talk!* What's happened to all those people? Where are they going? And where's Jim Olsen?"



The men looked at each other as if they had silently agreed to keep mum.

"OK, so you want to do it the hard way. Well, I saw you throw that man off the roof. Lucky for him I happened to be nearby." And with that, Superman gripped the thugs around their waists and took off with them, up, up and away, until the trio was on the roof of the *Ellsworth Tower*.

Superman changed his grip back to the scruff of their jackets as they stood at the edge of the roof closest to Broadview Way. "I'll give you one more chance to answer me."

Nummy, terrified. "W-what are ya gonna do? Everyone knows you don't kill no one."

Moxie said, "Y-Yeah, dat's right."

Superman offered a sinister smile. "Well, there's a first time for everything." Then, thinking back to the way they treated his alter ego, he said with anger, "Plus turnabout is fair play!" And then he pushed Nummy off the rooftop. Moxie breathed a sigh of relief, even pulling a handkerchief out of his breast pocket to wipe his forehead.

Then Superman pushed *him* off.

Immediately, The Man of Steel leaped off the roof and sped downward. He caught Nummy a few feet above the sidewalk and plopped him down on the pavement. An instant later, he caught Moxie and did the same thing.

Superman rubbed his hands together. "I can keep this up indefinitely. How about you two?"

Several miles away, the sister of the man who programmed the so-called zombies spoke urgently to her brother. "Nummy and Moxie. Getting distressing brainwave feedback."

"Raise them."

"Their talkies aren't responding."

"They could be compromised in some way."

"Possibly."

"Sever them."

Back on Broadview Way, when the two thugs didn't comply, Superman repeated the procedure. Once again after catching them from their respective fall, he plopped each one down on the sidewalk. He stared down at them as they cowered in fear. "You'd better be ready to talk."

Suddenly their obvious fear changed to a blank look and then both men collapsed into seeming unconsciousness. As that happened, a police car pulled up and Inspector Henderson popped out. "*Superman!* Are you all right?"

"Thank you, I'm fine now, Inspector. But I could use your help."

"Oh?"

"These men work seem to be connected to whatever it is that's going on in Metropolis!"

"You mean that mob of people marching down Broadview?"

"Ah, you've seen them. That's right. And maybe more than that."

"They clogged up the streets so much that my men couldn't even get through. But we're finally making headway. There's something else, though."

"OK, but please take these two characters off my hands and get them into a prison cell. Strange, though."

"What's that?"

"They seemed very lucid until a minute ago. Then, out of the blue, they conked out."

"Maybe something you did--?"

"No, it was very sudden. If I didn't know better, it was as if their *brains* suddenly stopped. Or something *told* their brains to stop."

Henderson motioned to one of the cops, and before long, the two thugs were in cuffs, sitting in the back of the patrol car, still apparently unconscious. A crowd of "normal" bystanders – not "zombies" – began to form around Superman and the Inspector.

Superman asked, "Inspector, you mentioned that there was something else?"

Henderson put his hands on his hips. "Well, you talk about strange. All of our police radios are *dead*."

"You mean, they don't have power, or—?"

"No, as in, no signal. Just static. One of my men first noticed it at the game – around the time you were having trouble. Even the public radio stations are just giving off static."

Superman stood there, his super-mind working at super-speed. Then he spoke, as if he had put things together. "Inspector, I think I've figured a good part of this out."

"Well, can you clue me in?"

The Man of Steel gazed up Broadview Way. "There may be no time. I need to determine where this procession of ... *zombies* ... is going."

"*Zombies?*"

"Can you think of something better to call them right now, Inspector?"

Henderson smiled. "Well, no. Anyway, I admit the whole thing's bizarre – something's going on there, but what?"



"I'm not certain but besides many of them being in a trance of some sort, some of the others appear to possess unusual strength."

Henderson asked, "You mean with powers resembling yours?"

Superman shook his head. "No, not exactly, but some of them seem stronger than any normal man should be. I'm almost certain that *someone* wanted me out of the way in order to send these people – including those who are extra-strong – to *something* – a rendezvous of some sort, probably to commit a major *crime*."

"Could be someone wanted *me* out of the way, too." The Inspector pointed to himself.

"Why do you say that, Inspector?"

"Well, we thought Alex Whitmore was trapped in the old Anderson Chemical Plant."

"The man wanted by the FBI?"

"That's right. But one of my men tracked me down. With the radios not working, it took awhile. Anyway, turned out to be a false alarm. Whitmore wasn't there. In fact, I finally was able to get hold of the *Bureau* on the phone. They said he was last sighted on the *west* coast less than twenty-four hours ago. But between that and the ballgame, most of the force was consumed."

"You may be right, Inspector. Could be someone wanted us *both* out of the way."

"That reminds me – are your powers back?"

"They seem to be."

"Well, what went on there? You seemed to be in a bad way at the ballpark."

"Believe me, I know, and there's a lot to figure out, Inspector. But in the meantime, if you'll excuse me, I've got to see where this ... *procession* ... is headed. I'd suggest that you lock those men up and then meet me there."

"And just *where* is that?"

"The *beginning* of the line, of course!"

And with that, Superman leaped into the evening sky, tracking over Broadview Way as it headed uptown and towards the outskirts of Metropolis. Looking down, he saw the procession of zombie-like people continue their long march towards – *what?*



He saw Jim Olsen, too, no longer accompanied by the third thug, just walking amongst the crowd. Superman considered rescuing him and taking him to safety, but Jimmy was in no overt danger, and doing so would take precious time away from his more immediate task: figuring out what was going on at the head of the march.



As he gazed ahead up Broadview Way towards the outer reaches of Metropolis, Superman reflected on recent events. Professor Adams' odd condition brought on by even stranger drugs in his bloodstream along with his rants about someone stealing something. Jim Olsen's peculiar behavior, possibly drug-induced as well. Oddly powerful thugs – the so-called Grodd and the men he encountered with Jimmy.

Then there was the incident at the ball game. The *Red Star Cola* pitcher in the panel truck. Mention of the red lights. The injection. *My lost powers. And then I got them back.*

Now, a legion of seemingly zombies advancing on ... *something*. Could they be under the influence of drugs, too?

The pieces were there but the completed puzzle was still out of reach. However, all signs pointed to some *mastermind* needing to get at something – with Superman out of the way. Perhaps with the zombies as unwilling thieves? He could stop them now – now that he seemed to have his powers back – but wanted to see this through to their destination in order to understand as much of it as possible.

A partial answer came as the zombie march swept to the outskirts of Metropolis not far from Metropolis Sound. The leading edge of the crowd came to a highway junction. To the left the road led to affluent northern suburbs along Metropolis Sound. Ahead was a dirt path leading to the waterfront and Maxwell's Rock, a large outcropping covered by high grass and geological formations.

And to the south, stretching towards the Sound, was the facility known as *Project X*.



As the procession turned right, Superman realized that they were likely headed to the atomic facility. But for what? It was a nuclear pile but otherwise contained nothing of value. Perhaps they were being commanded to *sabotage* the pile and cause a meltdown – maybe by someone wanting to hold Metropolis hostage in exchange for a kind of ransom. For a moment Superman squashed that thought, because he knew that *Project X* was heavily protected by a tall fence and armed guards.

Superman stayed high above, watching as the procession approached the fence surrounding *Project X*. Inside the fence was a guardhouse. Thinking one step ahead, he realized that the chance for injured parties was at hand. At blinding speed, he swooped ahead to the guardhouse and spoke to its occupants. Then he returned to

the sky, high enough to be unobserved by the zombie-like throng. *Although in their state, they probably wouldn't notice me, anyway*, he thought.

The strongest of the crowd, clearly those with enhanced strength, used their might to rip open the gated portion of the high fence. Before long, the entourage was streaming into the cement promenade and entrance to *Project X*.

Finally, they were at their first point of resistance – the guardhouse. But instead of its occupants coming out to defend their station and the facility, they remained inside. When goons from the procession tried to get in, they found it locked. But their immense strength enabled them to open the guardhouse door.

Once inside, they easily seized the guards' rifles and side arms. After disarming the guards, one of the goons made sure that the guards remained inside while another defended the door using one of the confiscated rifles.

Meanwhile, the procession continued across the cement promenade towards the main *Project X* building. As more and more of the throng filled the promenade, Superman made his decision to go into action. He still didn't know what they were after, but getting near the atomic pile – and affecting it in some way – was something he *had* to prevent.

Besides – now he had the upper hand.

Superman swooped down and immediately used his heat vision to seal the front door and windows at the front of the building. Hinges, locks, doorknobs, metal frames and more were fused such that they became immovable. Metal bars protecting the windows prevented anyone from breaking them, so the front of the building seemed secure.

The Man of Steel saw, though, that the building and atomic pile complex was accessible from the rear, and quickly took steps to prevent that. He zoomed to the far side of the *Project X* facility where a long, high fence separated storage buildings from a rocky precipice overlooking Metropolis Sound. For now, the fence wouldn't be needed.

At blinding super-speed, The Metropolis Marvel ripped a section of the fence from its foundation. He then lifted the entire fence, flying it above the crowd of zombie-like people.

Then he waited. Those who were thwarted by not being able to enter the front of the building slowly moved to either side of it, apparently headed for the rear entrance. By that time, the tail end of the procession had entered the outer fence by the highway and guard station.

At the moment that happened, Superman went into swift action again. He carefully lay the fence down to first block people on one side of the building, then the building itself, and then the other side. Finally, he curved the fence around to the last throng of marchers that had just entered the complex from the highway.

In effect, he had ring-fenced the zombies.

From the moment that Superman appeared, one of the watchers was on his walkie-talkie. "Boss, Superman just showed up."

The man heard an expletive come across with static. He continued. "He's doon somethin'." A pause. "Geez, he's doon somethin' to the fronuvda buildin'."

He heard another expletive but then went on. "Now he's disappeared." A pause. "People are goin' to the sides. Tryin' to get inta da back of da buildin'." Another pause.

"Yeah, dat's right."

The man at the other end – the boss – demanded to know what was going on.

"I don't see—wait." A pause. "Holy mackerel!"

"Holy mackerel! Holy mackerel!"

"He's flyin' right ovahead. He's carryin'—carryin'—"

"What?!?"

"Looks like a fence! A really big fence! Holy mackerel!"

Now only an expletive came across the walkie-talkie.

Then as the fence was made to encircle the hoard of people – including the boss's handful of watchers and strong men – some of them toppled like dominoes.

Miller was one of them. As he fell, he dropped the walkie-talkie and watched as it was crushed under the foot of the person next to him. He mumbled a few

To insure stability of the fence, he punched holes in the cement and asphalt in front of the building and forced the fence poles into them. He then hovered for a moment to insure that the entire crowd had been effectively captured.

choice curse words, realizing he was caught and unable to reach the boss.

Meanwhile, the mastermind had had enough. He turned to his sister. "Elena. This grand scheme has failed... thanks to Superman."

"I'm sorry."

"I had hoped that our mind-controlled minions would have been able to break into the facility and get away with our quarry before Superman knew what hit him back at the stadium."

"Perhaps a stronger mix..."

"Yes, no doubt. And as well we'll need something more than that." He paused. "I told you that we'd likely have to go to *Operation X-3*."

Elena shuddered, for this final plan of her brother's was the most complex – it meant direct interaction with Superman which was wrought with dangers – and their possible capture.

The boss went over to a machine and flipped a few switches. "There. No need for jamming the airwaves any more. Let them pick up the trash." Then he turned away from his sister. "Sever them."

"*What?*"

He shouted. "*Sever them! Sever them all!*"

Elena had been following her brother's orders for a few weeks now. But something deep inside of her resisted. "I don't—"

He picked up a paperweight from his desk and threw it at her, narrowly missing his sister's head. When angered he was like a dragon at its fieriest. "Do I have to do it *myself?!?*"

Now Elena cowered in fear of her brother. "N-no. I'm sorry."

But as she started to go to the controls of their machine, she heard her brother say, "*Wait!*"

She stopped and he continued. "Sever them. Sever all of them. Except the kid from the *Daily Planet*."

Elena did not want to seem uncooperative and carefully worded her response. "You mean Olsen. I will do as you say. But what purpose do you have to keep Olsen under our control?"

The boss smiled. "Because he will be the *trigger* for *Operation X-3*."

Back at *Project X*, Superman continued to hover as an unbelievable scene unfolded below. Every person below suddenly fell to the ground. It was reminiscent of what happened to the two hoods back at the Ellsworth Tower.

All dropped to the pavement except – Jimmy Olsen. He remained standing – almost unmoving. Superman saw it all and swooped down to the cub reporter.



He grabbed him by the shoulders. "Jim, do you recognize me?" Superman thought back to the time before encountering Doctor Ort, when Olsen, under the influence of amatol, led one of Ort's thugs to Perry White's files on Superman. Back then it was Clark Kent who shook Jimmy out of his funk. Superman tried the same tack and shook Olsen by his shoulders.

"Jim, can you hear me?" But this time it didn't work. Olsen was conscious, but oblivious, more so than he was at the ballgame. At the same time, Superman noticed red swirling lights approaching the complex, on the highway. He took off, leaving Olsen standing amidst a sea of seemingly unconscious bodies strewn about the *Project X* complex.

Superman landed outside the fenced-in area, by a squad car. The man who emerged smiled for a second with one corner of his mouth. "Déjà vu, eh, Superman?"

"Tell me, Inspector, are the radios working again?"

"Why, yes. How did you know?"

"Oh, just a hunch." Superman motioned to the scene behind him. "You'd better call as many ambulances as you can get."

Henderson looked beyond The Man of Steel. "*Holy Toledo!*"

"Yes. Quite a sight." Superman paused, and then, "Oh, I'll have to remove my handiwork. I've, ah, fenced them in."

"Incredible! But what happened? I mean – what happened to all of *them*?"

"Just like those two men back at the Ellsworth Tower, Inspector. It's as if something had been communicating with their minds – and then stopped. They all just collapsed."

The two men were interrupted by one of the uniformed officers from the guardhouse. He tipped his hat, "Thanks Superman. It might've gotten ugly if not for you." Superman nodded back but the guard continued. "But what happened? Who are these people? What do they want?"

The Man of Steel held a hand up. "I know. Lots of questions." He nodded at Henderson. "This is Inspector Henderson of the Metropolis Police."

The two men shook hands. After a brief conversation, the officer went back to the guardhouse to rejoin his fellow guards. Henderson had learned that Superman deliberately disarmed them to avoid anyone getting hurt. His goal was to allow the procession to be fully inside the facility's grounds so that they could be, effectively, captured.

Henderson went back to his squad car and called in an emergency request for every available ambulance in the Metropolis area. He then walked back to talk to The Man of Steel, who had just lifted and thoroughly removed the fence he had installed. With all the "zombies" out of action, there was no longer a need for it.

The Inspector pointed to the prone bodies strewn everywhere. "Are they – are they alive?"

"They are – I can hear their hearts beating, albeit slightly slower than normal."

Henderson raised his eyebrows at the thought of Superman listening to so many heartbeats. Then he asked, "Is that someone standing?" The policeman squinted and then had a look of recognition. "Why that's Jim Olsen. I can barely make him out, but I'd swear it's him."

"Yes, it's the kid. I can't for the life of me understand why he's the only one standing." Superman noticed a few more patrol cars arriving. "Inspector, now that you have backup", he nodded towards the other cars, "I'm going to take Jimmy to Mercy General. I'm worried about him."



"I understand. I'll make sure the rest will be taken to every available hospital in and around Metropolis."

"I'm sure a lot of doctors and nurses will be working overtime."

"I'll have men at every one to collect any feedback – we need to understand what's happened."

"Good idea. Oh, and, Inspector: you may want to get someone with a crowbar and some other tools. The *Project X* folks are sealed inside – for their own good. But it seems like the danger has passed."

Just then, one of Henderson's men who had been checking out the crowd of "zombies" returned. "Inspector, you're not gonna believe this, but Quigley's in there, along with a dozen other guys I recognize."

"Holy Mackerel!" The Inspector nodded at The Man of Steel. "Superman says they're all OK. How was Quigley?"

"Breathing but unconscious."

"This whole thing's incredible."

Superman then glanced to a point further down the highway from which more police cars were arriving. He noticed a panel truck labeled "*Red Star Cola*". Then a thought hit him at super-speed. "Wait a minute."

Henderson asked, "What is it?"

Superman held his chin. "That panel truck. '*Red Star Cola*.' I wonder. We've got a lot of people here acting like zombies – apparently *drugged* in some way. What if—"

Henderson smiled in amazement. "You're thinking that this new soft drink is somehow behind it?"

But Superman was dead serious. "It's possible."

"That would be incredible. But it'd make sense – lots of people drinking it – distributed across the city. I'll have the lab boys take a look."

Henderson went back to his patrol car and spoke into his radio mike. Superman leaped over to Jim Olsen, grabbed him by the waist, and took off for Mercy General.

Meanwhile, mastermind behind it all was gearing up his final plan of conquest. It required time – time to finish the preparation of new drugs – and more a few more logistical items. He told Elena, "When the time is right, I want Olsen to leak some key information. No doubt my old friend Clark Kent will be informed, and Kent will contact Superman. That's how I understand it goes, right?"

"So I've heard."

"Good."

ACT 4: "RENDEZVOUS AT MAXWELL'S ROCK"

MERCY GENERAL HOSPITAL



"MAN, YOU GUYS ARE EARLY BIRDS. Where's the fire, Inspector?"

"You're funny, Gerty. The usual. Black."

"And you, Mister Kent?"

"Oh. Same. Thanks Gerty."

Inspector Henderson and Clark Kent had run into each other in Mercy General Hospital late the night before, with the Inspector checking in on several of the "zombies" and Clark looking in on Jim Olsen. Clark was going to stage an overnight vigil at the cub reporter's bedside, but doctors indicated that Olsen was stable – though in a near-comatose state. As a result, Kent went home, but not before agreeing to meet up with Henderson in the morning.

The pair sat in the cafeteria of Mercy General, in a booth.

"So, Kent. Did you get a chance catch up with Superman? I mean, all this happened so fast."

"Oh, yes, Inspector, briefly."

"Did he have any theories about his power failure? He had us pretty scared."

"Not much, only something about those red lights at the stadium."

"How on Earth could something as simple as red lights take away Superman's powers?"

"I don't know, Bill. Although I'd love to talk to ... or Superman would love to talk to some scientists about that. Perhaps Professor Roberts at the Observatory."

The coffees came and the men took a couple of sips. Gerty, the waitress, put some menus down on the table and scooted away.

"Not a bad idea. Roberts must know Superman pretty well from that meteor incident."¹²

Clark paused and then said, "I suppose."

¹² *The Adventures of Superman* (Season 2), "Panic in the Sky"

Henderson took another sip. The caffeine was beginning to help him focus. "You know, there are so many questions, but what's really bugging me is *who's* behind all this. We've pretty much figured out *why*."

"Right – you told me why, Bill, last night. Someone wanted something at *Project X*. That's where all those people were going." Clark sipped his coffee, although he did it for the taste alone, as its caffeine had no effect on his extraordinary metabolism. "Sabotage or robbery. What else could it be?"

Henderson paused and then said, "Kent, I'm going to tell you something off the record, but you can't publish it. There's a massive quantity of uranium at *Project X*. Someone wanted to steal it. There's no question in my mind."

"*Uranium*, eh? I guess that's not surprising, given that it's an atomic facility. And presumably they were going to load it into that *Red Star Cola* truck we saw parked nearby."

"*We?*"

Careless again, Clark, Kent thought. "Well, Superman told me about the truck. I'd bet it was some kind of getaway vehicle – to cart off the uranium."

"I was thinking the same thing, and that's why I arranged to bring in the National Guard. They're stationed on the grounds of *Project X*. The stuff's going to be moved to a more secure location, as well."

"Well, that'll be a relief. When's that happening?"

"I'm trying to get the Feds to take it out of there in a week. The stuff was never supposed to be there for long, anyway."

"So, Bill, now there's only one more question."

"I know. I know. *Who...*"

"You know, with what Professor Adams was drugged with and all the zombies, I wouldn't be surprised if everything is somehow tied to our Richard Fleming character. Or the so-called Man in the Shadows. Or maybe they're one and the same."



"You know, I never finished telling you about my man Dithers and his research regarding Fleming."

Just then, a police officer came by. "Inspector, they want you down at the station."

Henderson turned around. "Oh, hey, Doug." Then he looked at Kent. "No rest for the weary, eh, Kent?"

Before Henderson could stand up, the waitress came over. "Well, we havin' a party here? You know I was just goin' to tell you that flapjacks are on special."

At the mention of "flapjacks", Clark had a sudden look of realization. He stood and reached into his pocket for several coins, plunking them on the table. "Sorry, Girty, but you just made me remember something important." He looked at the police officer, nodding, and then at Henderson, "Bill, they're letting us upstairs to see Jim after nine, right?"

Henderson stood, too. "Well, yeah. Why? You going somewhere?"

Kent nodded. "Listen, I'll either be up at Jim's bedside or I'll call you there around nine."

The Inspector teased with a smile. "Perry White got you working the early shift?"

Clark offered a smile back. "No, not quite."

Befuddled, Henderson watched Clark as he headed out of the cafeteria after looking at the change on the table. He shouted, "Thanks for picking up the tab!"

KENT FARM

Sarah Kent had never gotten tired of the tweets of birds waking up in the morning. Nor did she ever mind getting up in the dark at 4AM. In an odd sort of way, it was one of the things that reminded her of Eben. That was his schedule, and it became hers when they married. So it *remained* hers, even after his passing.

Three and a half hours after waking up, with the sun peeking over the horizon, she poured her second cup of coffee, sitting in her kitchen after tending to light chores around the farm. As she sat there, she heard a familiar, characteristic "thump" outside the farmhouse, towards the rear.

Sarah didn't even need to investigate the source of the noise. Before long, a man dressed in a plaid work shirt, blue denims and work boots – walked into the kitchen. In one hand he held a small, gift-wrapped box with the paper having "*Joyeux Anniversaire Maman!*" printed on it. In his other hand, held with his palm underneath, was a slightly crumpled brown paper bag.

"Happy Birthday, Ma." Clark smiled and hugged his mother with his arms and elbows, still holding the gifts that he then placed on the kitchen table. Once he did, he gave her a full embrace. When that was over, he nodded at the gifts. "They're for you." He nodded at the gift-wrapped one. "Open that one first".

"Pshaw. You dint need to get me anythin'. You know that, Clark. You're gift enough as it is."

"Come on, Ma, open it." He pulled a chair out for her to sit. As she sat down, he did, too. Orange light was coming through the plain white kitchen window curtains more strongly at that point.

She unwrapped the present, saying, "Looks like some foreign writing on it."

"The wrapping paper says '*Happy Birthday, Mother*' in French."

"Shucks. I coulda figured that out." When the wrapping was off, her eyes lit up. "Land Sakes! A little Eiffel Tower – with snow around it."

"Go ahead, shake it. You know."

She did, and a blizzard of snow fell around the miniaturized landmark of France. Sarah Kent smiled and stared at it. "Thank you, son. I love it!" She leaned over and pecked Clark on the cheek.



Clark said, "Oh, well, it's not much, but you always said you wished you could go to Paris. And I know you love these things."

"Course. You got me one of the Sphinx. The Coliseum in Rome. The Empire State Buildin' and Statue o' Liberty. Oh n' the Golden Gate Bridge. And Big Ben."

"Don't forget one of the *Daily Planet*."

"How can I forget that one? An' you got every single one from right near to each o'em, makin' em all authentic." She beamed at the comment.

"Like this one, Ma. I just got back from Paris. It's around lunchtime there."

"*Jehoshaphat!*"

Clark then pointed to the paper bag. "Hope you haven't eaten, Ma. Or if you have, I hope you've got some room for dessert."

"*Dessert?* It's still *mornin'!*"

Clark grinned and then picked up the paper bag, again from the bottom. With his other hand he opened the bag.

Sarah sniffed the bag. "Goodness! That smells like ... *chocolate!*"

He nodded. "Go on."

She reached in and pulled out a paper plate.

"Land sakes! A chocolate – what do you call 'em? *Crap-aye?*"

Clark smiled. "They're called *crêpes*, Ma. They come with all different toppings, but I know how much you love chocolate." As Sarah took in the odor, Clark got up to fetch a plate from a cabinet along with a fork. As he transferred the *crêpe* from the paper plate to the china, he said, "Hang on". Clark stared at it for just a moment. Then he pushed the plate over to his mother and handed her a fork. "I tried to keep it warm over the Atlantic, but guess I didn't do a good enough job. Now it should be perfect."

Sarah smiled at her amazing son and then used to fork to carve off a piece, putting it in her mouth. "Oh, son, now this here is pure heaven." She closed her eyes for a moment to savor it and then said, "You get a fork and we'll share it. I can't eat this whole thing myself. But, leave room, 'cause I made you your favorite whole wheat flapjacks."



Before long, Sarah was finishing the last bite of the *crêpe* while Clark was almost done polishing off four servings each of five hearty flapjacks smothered in Log Cabin syrup and butter. The sun was shining powerfully through the front window as their whimsical banter was replaced with something more serious.

Clark had a grim look. He had given his mother an abridged version of recent events. "I'm really worried about Jim Olsen. Not to mention those other people, Ma."

Sarah put a hand on Clark's muscular arm. "But son, it seems like something else is troublin' you."

The Son of Steel paused and then said, "Well, Ma, what if I were to *lose* my powers, for good? I mean, I told you what happened."

"Yeah, but you got 'em back. Just in the nick of time, sounds like."

Clark paused and then said, "I didn't mention to you that I had this strange dream while I was in that truck I told you about. It was like Pa was calling out to me."

Sarah smiled somberly and put both her hands on Clark's, which were clasped together on the table. "Maybe he was, son."

Clark briefly smiled. "I kept hearing something about the red lights. Turned out it was one of those hoods driving the truck complaining about traffic lights, but I can't help but think..."

"Clark, you mentioned the red lights at the ballpark. And how you felt after they went on."

"That *was* strange. I didn't make the connection right away."

"I don't know if this is related, but your Pa and me used to notice somethin' when you was growin' up as a kid."

"You mean, besides the unusual things I could do – my powers?"

"Well, it took awhile for your powers to, to—"

"*Mature?*"

"That's right. I mean, when you was little, you could get hurt. You wasn't strong or nuthin'. You couldn't see behind things like you could later on."

"I sort of remember..."

"Plus you was almost blind. Doc had t'give you strong glasses. Thick, too, almost like the stained glass at church."

"It was kind of a blessing, in a way, because it helped me protect my ... identity."

"That's right. Anyway, we noticed, as you got older, that by noon each day, them powers o' yours started showin' up each day. And then, by about, oh, bedtime, say, ten o'clock, you'd seem tired and not as strong as before."

"Interesting, Ma. You never mentioned that."

"Pa had an idea. He thought that maybe bein' outside in the fresh air had somethin' to do with it."

"Hmmm..."

"But then we both got to thinkin'." And at that moment, Sarah turned towards the kitchen window, not saying anything.

Clark looked at the bright sun coming through the window and said. "The sun?" Then he paused and stared. "The *sun* ... Huh..."

"Well, course we couldn't know, 'xactly what it was. But that's what it seemed like."

"Ma, you're saying you and Pa noticed that I got stronger when I was out in the sun."

"What do the perfessors call it? A *theory*?"

"Yes. A theory."

"Ventually when you got older, you seemed to be strong all the time."

But Clark's mind was racing. "So, now I have to wonder if those red lights at the ballpark *counteracted* what the sun does for me. Maybe *they* make me weak."

"Maybe they took *away* your powers, Clark."

Clark paused and then took deep breath. "I've no doubt that someone was trying to prevent me from stopping them at the nuclear plant. And they almost succeeded." Sarah Kent just listened as her foster son continued. "But—what if whoever it was – or someone or something – was able to take them away permanently? Or one day they just *stopped*? I mean, to be honest, Ma, I don't know much about *why* I have these abilities – sun or no sun - or even much about where I'm from. All I know is that some scientists think I come from a distant planet they called *Krypton*."

"Which ain't there no more – you told me you heard them say that."

"Sadly, yes, although if this - *Krypton* - was still around, I guess I'd have never met you, Ma. Nor Pa." He smiled.

"And your work friends, including that perty Lois Lane gal you've been pining about."

"I have *not*!"

"*Shush*, Clark. Maybe I ain't yer blood relative, but I'm still you're mother. I *know* these things."

"Only mother I've ever known." He hugged her.

The rumble of a pickup came through the kitchen screen window.



Sarah looked out. "Land sakes. I plum forgot. 9 o'clock on the dot. Reckon you can set your watch by Ben Hubbard."

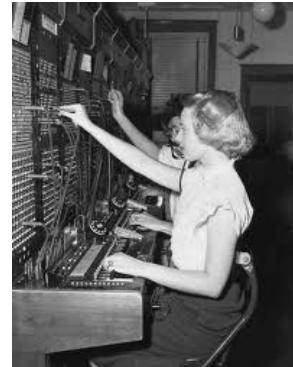
"9 o'clock – I'm supposed to call the hospital."

"You do that while I go talk to Ben. He's fetching me some dry goods in town. Gotta go get m'list to' give him. Then I need to fetch the laundry."

Sarah went out while Clark got on the phone. "Operator. Get me Metropolis. Hickory 4 0854."

"That you Clark? Clark *Kent*?"

"Oh, hey Mary." It was Mary Cantwell, who went to Smallville High with Clark and now had a part-time job as a phone operator. "Listen, Mary, I'm sorry to be in such a rush, but I've got an important call – someone's in the hospital."



"Sure Clark. No time for chitchat. I understand. Hope whoever it is's all right." If she was miffed, Clark couldn't detect it.

"Thanks. And next time I'm in Smallville, I promise I'll buy you a chocolate malt at *Plastino's*."

The operator answered politely, "You'll have to buy one for Kenny, too." Clark thought, *her husband*. "But anyway, let me connect you."

Before long, Clark was talking to Inspector Henderson.



"Kent, where are you calling from? The operator said it was long distance."

It wouldn't do to explain that he was in Smallville, since he had seen Henderson less than two hours ago in Metropolis and would likely need to be back in Metropolis shortly. "Oh, not exactly Metropolis, but it won't take me long to get back."

Henderson didn't quite understand Clark's answer, but had more important things to discuss. "Kent, you'd better get here fast. Olsen's talking."

"*What?*"

"He seems to be slowly coming out of his funk."

"That's great news."

"That's the good news but the bad news is he's still in grave shape. Doctors still need to know what he's got in his bloodstream. That Doctor Fox knows basically what it is—"

"The same stuff he told us about when we saw Adams, right?"

"Exactly. But Fox says that without the exact compounds, they may never be able to *cure* Olsen. Or anyone else for that matter."

"Can I talk to Jim?"

"You can, but one more thing."

"Oh?"

"Well, I wanted to tell Superman, but I suppose I can tell you."

Kent smiled. "I'm sure it'll be all right."

"He wanted me to check out the soda. That *Red Star* drink."

"Oh that's right. What did the lab boys find?"

Henderson did a double take at the phone, since he had had the conversation with Superman, not Clark, about getting the lab boys to check the soft drink.

"No go. It's completely normal. Cola and cherry extract. They tested several bottles of unopened and even half-opened samples."

"I see."

"Hang on, the Doc says I can put the phone next to Olsen. He's still delirious, you know."

Clark heard Henderson say, "Jim, it's Clark Kent on the telephone. He wants to talk to you, kid."

The next thing Kent heard was Jimmy Olsen's voice. It was recognizable, but uncharacteristically monotone. "Mist Kent. You need. Find. Bren Wood. Doc. Doc...tor Bren Wood. Drugged me. Injec. Injection. Bren. Wood. For Gran. Granville."

In the background, Kent heard Henderson's voice, as if he was close to the phone again. He heard, "Get me a *White Pages!*" Then Henderson spoke to Kent again. "Olsen's passed out. He seemed to be *struggling*. It's like he's *fighting* something."

"Jimmy's a strong kid, Bill. If I get my hands on whoever—"

"Hang on. We *both* may have that chance."

"Oh?"

"The only Doctor Brentwood in the Metropolis phone book lives in Fort Granville. 1865 Larson Street."

"He's *got* to be the one who drugged Jim! Maybe the others!"

"I'll take a squad car out there right away."

"Now hold on, Bill." At the same time, Sarah Kent had come through the kitchen carrying a laundry basket – on top it had a clean pair of overalls that Clark had worn recently when he had helped out on the farm. Clark grabbed them, to Sarah's surprise, and continued talking to Henderson. "No offense, but you and your men might scare him away. We've got to know *exactly* which medication he used. You said so yourself."

"I know that, but—"

"I've got an idea. Give me a few hours and—"

"Can't do that, Kent. For all we know, this Brentwood, if that's who it is, could be behind *all* the drugged people who invaded *Project X*."

"But—"

"I've already got the Feds breathing down my neck on this one. Why, the FBI—"

"Bill, listen. It's a little past nine. If Brentwood has a practice, it's probably open by now. Given me until, say, ten. That's less than an hour."

"What can you do in that short a time? It doesn't even sound like you're *in* Metropolis."

"Thanks, Bill. I owe you one. Talk to you soon." And with that, Kent hung up the phone.

Henderson looked at the receiver. "*Kent?* I didn't..."

Mary Cantwell, the Smallville operator, came back on the line. "I'm sorry, sir, but the connection was lost."

At the sound of the young woman's voice, any annoyance in Henderson's voice evaporated. "Oh, that's all right. Hey, just where was that call from?"

Mary didn't know that she was talking to an officer of the law and generally didn't give out information that might be considered private. "Well, I can't say for sure exactly where it was from, but I'm in Smallville."

"*Smallville?* Great guns!" And with that, the bewildered policeman hung up the hospital phone beside the stricken Jim Olsen and shook his head.

FORT GRANVILLE

The day after the failed attack on the *Project X* site by the so-called "zombies", Doctor Brentwood decided to pack up and flee to Mexico. His plans were to take his car down to Laredo, Texas – a five-day drive from Metropolis – and then sell his vehicle. Then he would cross the border into Nuevo Laredo in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas and take a train to the beautiful city of Monterrey. He would settle there under an assumed name, perhaps practice medicine, and live like a king given the exchange rate between the Peso and the U.S. Dollar.

Maybe he'd even find a young Mexican senorita to settle down with. It would be the culmination of his dreams – a far cry from his current existence.

And he would not breathe a word of it to the man pulling the strings.

But when Brentwood came downstairs from his bedroom to the waiting room of his private practice, he found three people seated there, all of whom could delay his plans. One of them was Mrs. Gladsworth, an elderly woman he had seen for many years. She was one of his few legit patients – the rest had been burly longshoremen types – the kind that the boss enlisted – and wanted *zombified* – to support his failed attempt to rob *Project X*.

The second person was someone new but one of the familiar husky types who sat there with his dark scruffy beard and mustache to go with his disgruntled pout which stood guard over a well-fed beer-belly. He was holding a large stuffed brown paper bag on his lap. Brentwood supposed, *a bit too large to be his lunch*, but thought nothing more of it.

The final person seated in the room sent a chill up Brentwood's spine, for it was Elena, sister of the man who had been ordering him around. *What's **she** doing here*, he wondered? Little did he realize that Elena was the last one through the door from the street, and that she had posted a sign on the door saying "*Office closed today due to illness. Please check back tomorrow.*"

As Brentwood alighted from the staircase, Elena called out and said that she could be seen last. That sent another chill down his spine. *She's here to interfere with my plans, no doubt*, he thought. His mind raced.

While dealing with Mrs. Gladsworth, who only needed a prescription refilled, Brentwood hatched a desperate plan, realizing that he could make use of the second person in the waiting room, the husky man with the scowl.

Brentwood opened the door of his examination room, bade goodbye to Mrs. Gladsworth and nodded at the big man with, "Next."

The man grunted, got up, and went into the examination room, looking around. Brentwood nodded at an examining table and the man hoisted himself up to sit. As he did, he tossed his large stuffed paper bag under the table. The doctor saw him do that and asked, "What's in the bag?"



The man responded, "Changa clothes."

With that, the doctor shut the door to the room.

"I don't believe I've ever seen you before, Mister..."

"Vanda Wogg."

"Could you spell that?" Brentwood had a pen out and a blank file, but had no intention of writing anything down, since he was hoping to be on the road before long.

"V-A-N-D-E-R-W-O-G-G. Vanda Wogg. Foist name's Doik."



"D-I-R-K"

"Dat's right."

"OK, Mr. Vanderwogg, what can I do for you?"

"Been feelin' kinda tired lately. A few weeks now. Dunno what it is. Makes it hodd to do my job, y'know?"

"And what do you do?" Brentwood took a tongue depressor out and before the man could respond, asked him to say "ahh" to examine his mouth and beyond.

"I work on da docks. Loadin. Unloadin. Y'know."

"And what brought you here?"

"I gotta friend. Name's Grodd. Told me about ya. Sez ya make people feel betta. Stronga."

Grodd? Another chill. "Is that so?"

"Figgured I need da same ting."

"Hmmm..."

"You cin help me, doc, cantcha?"

Brentwood thought, *it's too good to be true. He's playing into my hands. I'll give him a shot. Can't use the 'machine', but I can drug him and give him verbal orders to take care of Elena.* At the thought, the doctor smiled. "Why yes, of course I can."

He went over to a cabinet and took out a small medicine bottle with an orange-colored milky liquid. The patient asked, "What's dat?"

"Exactly what you requested, Mister Vanderwogg. The same thing your friend Grodd told you about." The doctor removed a syringe from a metallic container and injected it into the bottle. When the syringe was filled with the orange liquid, he aimed the needle up, squirted a little out to insure that any air bubbles were evacuated, and then asked, "Right or left?"



"Huh?"

"Do you prefer an injection in your right or left arm?" While he waited for an answer, Brentwood put the syringe down for a moment and retrieved a cotton ball from a container. He then opened a bottle of rubbing alcohol and dabbed the cotton with it.

"Oh, uh, left." Without being asked, the big man rolled up his left sweater sleeve, revealing a muscular arm.

The doctor cleaned a small area of the upper arm with the cotton ball and then picked up the syringe, aiming it for the newly cleaned spot. The needle pressed against the skin.

And *broke!*

Brentwood raised his eyebrows. "That's *most* unusual."

The patient said nothing. The doctor turned around and went to open the metallic case full of sterilized syringes. As he retrieved one, a powerful arm gripped his left shoulder and he heard, "Don't bother."

It was Brentwood's patient, but his voice had changed. The accent of a longshoreman was replaced by something much more even-keeled.

"*Excuse me?* What's going on?" He tried to spin around, but the steely grip on his shoulder made that impossible. Then two hands gripped the doctor on his arms and turned him around. "Who are you? I *demand* to know what's going on!"

"You're in no position to demand anything." The man held his grip on Brentwood with his left hand while reaching up to his face with his right. Then, in practically the blink of an eye, he removed the beard and mustache, revealing a clean cut – and *familiar* face.

"Oh my goodness – you're *him*!"

"Save your breath." The right arm of Brentwood's patient returned so that now two powerful arms were holding the doctor in place. "Now *talk*! What's in that medicine you tried to give me? Is it the same stuff you gave the others? The ones who tried to break into the nuclear facility? *Tell* me!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"You're *lying*. You gave this to one other person. The *kid* reporter!"

Brentwood tried to be defiant. "Sorry, have no idea what you're talking about."

"Jim Olsen. He works for the *Daily Planet*. We found out that he came here investigating something that happened to a Professor. A man named *Adams*."

"I-I-don't know what you're talking about. *Really*." But Brentwood's patient was listening to the man's heart. It was racing a tad too fast for him to be telling the truth. He lifted the doctor into the air by gripping his clothing by his left hand. With his free right hand, he opened the syringe box and pulled one out. The doctor, barely able to speak, asked, "W-What are you doing?"

"*Talk*, or I'll inject you with your own stuff!"

"You *wouldn't*! Everyone knows you're not like—"

"Like *what*?" Then the man put the doctor down and with two hands, filled the syringe with the orange medicine from the medicine bottle. In that moment, Brentwood made a move towards the door. But it was futile – a steely hand gripped him again, pulling him back.

Then Brentwood realized that his right arm was exposed – the man had torn his sleeve off. He saw the needle heading for his arm. "No – no! *Stop*! I'll give you information – I'll tell you who's behind this. B-but you have to help *me*, too."

"You want to make a deal?"

Brentwood's eyes lit up. "Yeah – yeah! That's it! I'll make it worth your while!"

The man sighed and shook his head, thinking, *when will people learn that I **don't** make deals?* He spat out a definitive "*No.*"

The doctor's heart sunk. "But- but-"

The needle headed towards him again and the doctor said, "OK! OK! I'll talk!"

Outside, in the waiting room, Elena had listened to the whole thing using a glass from the washroom typically used for other purposes. She held it against the wall adjacent to the examining room. As soon as she heard that Brentwood was going to spill the beans, she quietly left the premises and headed down to a corner drug store only two blocks away. There, she called her brother's private number.

"*He's here. At Brentwood's.*"

"Who?"

"*Superman.*"

"I see."

"He's here under some sort of cover. But I *know* it's him. Sounds like him and though he's disguised, it's *him*. I'm *sure* of it. And he forced Brentwood to tell him about the hideout. I'm sure Superman will head there next. Might even be on his way to you – *now.*"

There was a pause at the other end of the line. Then Elena could almost hear her brother smile through the phone. She knew he was thinking about what a good idea it was to have Olsen under their thumb. *Olsen told Kent, Kent told Superman – about Brentwood. And now Brentwood is whetting Superman's appetite.* "I had wanted to feed Olsen data that would have him lead Superman directly here. But this is just as effective." He paused. "We're ready."

"What about Brentwood?"

"I still need him."

"The police will no doubt show up at his place soon."

"When Superman leaves, get Brentwood out of there. I'll slow the authorities."

"Right." She hurried out of the drug store and back to Brentwood's place. Once nearby, she milled around across the street.

Inside the doctor's office, the scene had changed. Brentwood was now bound and gagged quite securely with duct tape that his patient had found in a cabinet. The man then used the doctor's phone to dial a private number.

A woman's voice came on and the man said, "Operator, give me the police. Inspector William Henderson. Headquarters. It's an *emergency*. *Hurry!*"

In moments, he heard, "Henderson. Who's this?"

The man posing as "Vanderwogg" hesitated for a super-split second. *Clark or Superman?* Then, remembering that he was being watched by Brentwood, he lowered his voice slightly. "Inspector, it's Superman."



"What? Where are you?"

"I'll tell you, but there's not much time. I want to catch my quarry by surprise."

"What are you talking about?"

"Listen, Inspector, get out to Fort Granville. 1865 Larson Street. It's a doctor's office."

"I know that address. It's the one I told Kent about. He was going to check out the doctor. And against my better judgment!"

"It was getting too dicey for him and he called me in." *No lie*, Superman thought. "It's almost a certainty that Brentwood's the one who drugged the so-called zombies but I don't think he's the brains behind the whole operation. I scanned his files. He's got some sort of wonder drug that may be the one which put people in a hypnotic state – and – another drug called a *steroid* that makes them strong."

"Holy cow! You mean, as strong as you?"

"No, not exactly. Like that *Grodd* character Kent encountered at the hospital – when you saw Professor Adams."

"How did *you* know about that?"

Superman thought, *one day I'll trip myself up once too often*. "Never mind that, Inspector. Brentwood is waiting here for you and he's not going anywhere." Superman looked back at him again. "I've got a date – hopefully with the mastermind behind this."

"Where?"

"Once I'm certain, you'll be the first one I call."

"Why can't you tell me *now*, Superman?"

"No, Inspector, not yet. I don't want to scare him away. I'm going it alone."

"You know, you had a rough time of it for awhile yesterday. Are you sure you're all right?"

The Man of Steel paused. But he shook off any hesitation or need for assistance – there was work to do. "Now when you get here, you'll have to break in the front door. I'm going to seal it so nobody can rescue the good doctor before you get here."

"I've got a squad car on its way, and I'll be there, too, before long."

"Good. Oh, and Kent told me that there's a Doctor Fox at Mercy Hospital who'd love to analyze the good doctor's medicines that I found. I'm going to fly them there first, then look for the man behind this. Hope to talk to you soon." After hanging up, the man dressed as "Vanderwogg" reached under the examining table for his package. Then he turned around to look at Brentwood, who was slumped on the floor, unable to move. The doctor was staring at his former patient, who smiled. "Guess you were wondering what I had in my bag."

Then "Vanderwogg" ripped open the bag and revealed – a *Superman* costume. Within seconds, he super-speedily replaced his *blue-collar* outfit with a *blue, red and yellow* edition, cape included.

Brentwood, who had earlier realized that "Vanderwogg" was Superman, was nonetheless amazed at the transformation. Superman crouched in front of the slimy physician and seethed, "If I find out that you've been lying to me in *any* way, I'll be back for you *before* the police get here."

Then Superman scooped up the medication of interest into one of Brentwood's medical bags, left the office, closed the door and exited the home. With a burst of heat vision, he fused the front door latch and strike plate, making the knob useless. Superman noticed a handwritten "closed" sign on the door and wondered who put it up. *Strange*, he thought. He briefly recalled the third person, a woman, who was in the waiting room, and was gone when he left. But Superman shrugged it off for the moment and leaped into the air over Fort Granville.

Once Superman was out of sight, Elena briskly walked across the street and through a narrow driveway alongside Brentwood's place, into the backyard. A cement ramp led down to a basement door that was padlocked. She had the key, though, and soon was inside. Before long Elena was freeing Brentwood. The doctor had a mix of emotions – he didn't know which was worse: being rescued by the people controlling his life – or being captured by the police.

Elena turned to Brentwood. "We've got to move fast – the police will be here any minute."

"I know."

"But before we go – do you have a duffle bag or a suitcase?"

"What?"

"Your brain wave equipment. The drugs. We can't let them be found."

Brentwood nodded and reached into a floor-level cabinet. There he had a duffle bag from his days in the U.S. Navy. While he was getting that, Elena was frantically searching his other cabinets. She stopped when she saw several wood alcohol containers marked "FLAMMABLE" as well as other similarly marked canisters of other compounds.

Soon Brentwood and Elena left via the rear of the house, vaulting a fence into a neighbor's backyard, duffle bag and all, heading to the relative freedom of another street. Behind them a roaring fire was building and crackling in Brentwood's office, reducing the room – and his papers – to rubble and ashes.



At the same time, the squad car called by Henderson that had been stymied by an abandoned car blocking access to Larson Street finally made it through. Seeing smoke coming from a home down the block, the passenger-side officer quickly called the Fire Department over his mobile radio.

MAXWELL'S ROCK



Meanwhile, within seconds after leaving Brentwood's office, Superman arrived at Mercy Hospital. He quickly found Doctor Fox and placed Brentwood's "medicines" in his care. Soon after a short flight from the hospital, Superman was standing atop Maxwell's Rock. Brentwood had told Superman that a man named Victor Frederick was behind it all, and that Frederick a lab where the medicine was made within Maxwell's Rock. Superman wasn't so sure about the name of the person, but could see, via his x-ray eyes that beneath the surface upon which he stood was something seemingly man-made. Unfortunately that something was shielded by *lead*.

Wonder if the shielding was deliberate – to stop me from looking inside, he thought.

Superman saw a long and winding rocky dirt trail leading down into the bowels of Maxwell's Rock. He could see it end at a door and raced along the trail to it. He tore the door off its hinges only to find a corridor that ended in yet another door. Again, in a blur, he went to that door, and ripped it open.

He found himself inside a large chamber of sorts. Superman walked in, looking around. The walls were lead-lined and immediately a sixth sense told him it was a trap. His concerns were well founded as suddenly the ceiling lit up – in *red*. They were intense, hot and even near *blinding*.

And then a loudspeaker boomed. "*Welcome Superman.*"

Superman looked up. "Who is this? Who are you? *Show yourself!*"

"In good time."

Just then, several muscular men came barreling through the doorway that no longer had a door, thanks to Superman. Each was carrying a baseball bat. He recognized one of them from Mercy General – **Grodd**.

The voice boomed again. "I recall that you enjoy the sport of baseball, Superman. Well, meet my *bat-men*." For a moment, Superman thought he recognized the voice, but he couldn't immediately place it.

As they approached, a wave of realization hit The Man of Steel. *The red lights at the stadium. My loss of powers. Here, too?* He saw another doorway on the other side of the room and raced over to it. It seemed to be a sliding door with no handle. He pounded against it, expecting it to fall, but nothing happened. He realized that his super-strength had already been sapped.



Within seconds his attackers were behind him. *Whack!* A bat hit Superman in the back, sending him to the floor. Another goon caught him and spun him around, allowing yet another to send the barrel of his bat into Superman's gut.

Superman lashed out, but his strength was gone – he was all but an ordinary guy now, once again. Still, he wouldn't give up without a fight. He kicked the gut of the man in front of him, sending him backwards. But the man was not repelled all that far.

The *former* Man of Steel lashed out with his fists, but then blackness came when one of the bats came crashing down on his head, from Grodd.

The voice from the loudspeaker boomed one last time. "Put him on the table in the room next to me. Time to ramp-up '*Operation X-3*'".

And the man laughed, maniacally.

To be continued in

MASTER MIND
Episode 2 of 3
“Man in the Shadows”

"ATTACK OF THE ZOMBIES"***Cast***

George Reeves
Noel Neill
John Hamilton
Jack Larson
Robert Shayne

Barbara Bel Geddes.....*Elena*
Broderick Crawford.....*Warden Stan Raines*
Casey Stengel.....*Mac McDermott*
Dan Topping.....*Rock Blanchard*
Ernest Borgnine.....*Bo "Bibbo" Bibbowski*
Huntz Hall.....*Billy*
Joe Garagiola.....*Dick Clancy*
Leo Gorcey.....*Mitch*
Mel Allen.....*Bart Howell*
Robert Mitchum.....*Doctor Fox*
Whitey Ford.....*Andy Frazier*
Gloria Pall.....*"Cookie" Dough Warner*
Joseph Forte.....*Professor Milton Adams*
Ralph Clanton.....*Doctor Brentwood*
Larry Zbyszko.....*Grodd*
Frances Morris.....*Sarah Kent*
Richard Benedict.....*Baby Face Stevens*
Harry Arnie.....*Nummy*
John Bennes.....*Moxie*
Connie Cezon.....*Gerty*
George Reeves.....*John "Boulder" Crane*
Yvette Dugay.....*Elaine Tomasso*
? *The Master Mind*

MASTER MIND

“ATTACK OF THE ZOMBIES”

