

SUPERMAN FIRESTORM

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Based on characters appearing in
DC Comics

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S U P E R M A N F I R E S T O R M

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

Stars illuminate the inky blackness. For a moment - nothing. Then...

A huge cloud of METEORS - mostly grey but covered in oddly-coloured GREEN FRAGMENTS - shoot past the camera.

After a few moments we see something hidden within the crowd of meteors - a small spaceship.

The meteors and the small spaceship move in towards Earth and the barely visible continent of North America below.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

It is the middle of the night, snow is falling heavily all around us and the air is thick with the blizzard.

On the road below we see a single truck making its way carefully through the snow, away from a small town that is barely visible in the distance.

SUPER: Smallville, Kansas - November 15th, 1980

We PAN DOWN to reveal the driver and passenger of the car - JONATHAN and MARTHA KENT.

INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Jonathan drives slowly, unable to see hand in front of face the snow is so thick. He is in his late thirties, rugged and good looking, and a genuinely nice guy.

MARTHA

Jonathan, be careful.

Jonathan's face contorts into an 'I don't need this' smirk. Martha (also late thirties) scowls, looking more than a little apprehensive.

JONATHAN

Where did all this come from?

MARTHA

I don't know - what the...!

Ahead of them the SKY LIGHTS UP GREEN for just a fraction of a second. Jonathan sees it too.

JONATHAN

What in the world...?

And then an EXPLOSION RIPS through the eerie silence.

Martha SCREAMS and Jonathan slams on the brakes of the truck.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Jonathan and Martha get out of the truck. Across the other side of the road the fields are burning.

MARTHA

(panicked)

What's happening Jonathan?

Jonathan can't answer. GREEN FLAMES reflect off their faces--

And then the meteors begin to rain down from the night sky.

EXT. SMALLVILLE -- NIGHT (VARIOUS)

The meteors strike across the small town. It is a scene of complete devastation.

People are screaming, trying their best to escape something that cannot be fought.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Jonathan bundles Martha back into the as the meteors rain down all around them--

MARTHA

What's happening?

JONATHAN

We have to get out of here!

He revs the engine and drives off as--

SMASH! A METEOR hits the road just in front of them--!

Jonathan slams the brakes on--

The truck vanishes into the cloud of dense black smoke.

EXT. SMALLVILLE -- NIGHT

From a high angle we see the damage the meteors have done.

Much of the town is on fire, eerie green light mixing with the flames and the snow.

EXT. DITCH -- NIGHT

The Kent's truck has been knocked clear off the road and is lying upside down in the middle of a large crater.

A long beat ... then Jonathan - bruised and bloody but otherwise unharmed - emerges from the crater, helping Martha up behind him.

JONATHAN

I think that's the worst of it.

MARTHA

What was it?

JONATHAN

I don't know. We should--

But at that moment he stops dead, grabbing his wife by the coat to stop them both falling into a deep crater.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Are you alright, Martha?

MARTHA

I think so.

JONATHAN

Good. We need to...

His words trail off as he looks into the crater ... and sees the wreckage of the small spaceship lying in the bottom of the crater.

Martha looks to see what Jonathan has seen and her mouth drops open.

In the distance we hear the CRY OF A BABY.

Jonathan and Martha exchange glances...

The camera PANS UPWARD and keeps going until there is nothing but space...

DISSOLVE TO:

BRIGHT BLUE EYES snap open in the darkness ... and we are...

INT. HOSTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

A youngish man wakes up in the darkness, his blue eyes seeming perhaps a little too bright. CLARK KENT, age 25.

He sits up in bed, reaches down to the floor and picks up a pair of black-rimmed glasses. He puts them on - immediately the blue of his eyes is dulled, appearing normal.

He looks at his watch - 0528.

He picks up his wallet, opens it to reveal a picture of himself, arm in arm with Jonathan and Martha, all smiles. He smiles at the image before closing the wallet.

EXT. LONDON -- MORNING

A wide, panoramic establishing shot taking in all the landmarks - Big Ben, the London Eye, the Houses of Parliament.

CAPTION: London. Twenty-five years later.

EXT. LONDON STREETS -- MORNING

Among the crowds we easily pick out Clark, his tall figure standing out. Walking beside him is JOANNA PALMER (23, English, blonde and pretty) talking none-stop.

JOANNA

Just remember, we're going to have to play this damn carefully or we're going to lose this gig, you understand me Kent?

CLARK

Check.

JOANNA

Good. And don't irritate him--
(off look)

I know, I'm more likely to irritate him than you are but I'm just covering all bases - I hate that term by the way, it's baseball, I never got my head around--

CLARK

Jo...

He grabs her by the shoulders with a playful grin.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Breathe.

Joanna grins apologetically.

JOANNA

Sorry.

CLARK

Forgiven.

(grins)

You never cease to amaze me, Joanna. How is it you can navigate your way through the Australian outback and yet you can get yourself into a state like that at the thought of an interview.

JOANNA

That's because a map is easy to find your way around...

They have reached their destination - a building on Fleet Street, 'The Herald'.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Editors, on the other hand...

Clark laughs and the two of them walk in.

FOSTER

This has got to be a joke.

INT. FOSTER'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Clark and Joanna stand facing FOSTER (50s, intense) the editor, who flashes them a scornful look.

FOSTER

Peter Lynch. You honestly think you can bring me an interview with Peter Lynch?

He laughs and sits back in his chair.

CLARK

You said that when we went into Zimbabwe too--

FOSTER

Kobe Asuru was not Peter Lynch. The man does not give interviews - he makes grandstanding speeches and generally annoys the hell out of journalists.

Clark and Joanna exchange looks.

CLARK

Fine. You wouldn't be interested then.

JOANNA

Sorry for wasting your time - Clark, we need to get going, that man at The Times is waiting for us--

They're heading for the door when:

FOSTER

Wait!

Clark and Joanna exchange a grin.

JOANNA

(muttered)
Well played...

They turn back to face Foster.

FOSTER

I never said I wasn't interested.

INT. HERALD LOBBY -- MORNING

Clark and Joanna stand in the lobby. Joanna is working her phone in frustration.

JOANNA

No bloody signal...

After a moment she gives up.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I'll be back once I've got through.

She turns and exits, leaving Clark alone in the hustle and bustle of the lobby. Clark lets his attention wander.

We HEAR what he hears, a BLUR OF VOICES coming in and out of focus until he focuses on one conversation:

MAN (O.S.)

...see what you're making such a fuss about...

WOMAN (O.S.)

I've already told you, now get out of my way...

Clark snaps out of it. Across the room a MAN is arguing with an irate WOMAN with dark hair, and just from the body language it looks as though it is about to get nasty.

He politely but firmly makes his way across the room as the man grabs the woman's arm.

MAN

Okay, that's enough!

WOMAN

Bad move pal...

Clark speeds up - but the woman grabs the man's arm, spins around and drops the man to the ground in a martial arts combo that appears to be one fluid movement.

Clark stops, impressed, as two SECURITY GUARDS come over.

GUARD #1

Problem, Miss Lane?

The woman - LOIS LANE - shrugs it off and shakes her head.

LOIS

Nothing I couldn't handle.

GUARD #2

So I can see.

As the guards pick the man up and cart him off, Lois (28, demure, stunning) glares around at the crowd, looking mad as hell.

LOIS

Can I help you?

Everyone gets back to their business - everyone except Clark. Lois notices Clark staring at her and scowls.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Something on your mind?

CLARK

Nice move.

LOIS

Well, who else was going to put
him down - you?

At that moment she notices the press pass on his shirt
with his name on it.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Waitaminit - Clark Kent?

Clark had started to walk off, but he stops, completely
wrong-footed.

LOIS (CONT'D)

The Clark Kent who wrote that piece
on the farmers in Zimbabwe?

CLARK

Uh, yeah - why?

Lois suddenly looks intrigued. She walks up close to him
and lowers her voice so only they can hear.

LOIS

How did you even manage to get
into Zimbabwe? They won't let
foreign journalists in.

CLARK

Forgetfulness.

LOIS

Excuse me?

CLARK

I forgot to tell them I was a
journalist. The rest of it was
just persistence.

LOIS

Well, that was some story. A bit
naive and sentimental perhaps, but
some story all the same.

Clark looks professionally insulted.

CLARK

Excuse me?

LOIS

What are you working on now?

Clark looks up to see Joanna making her way over to him.

CLARK

Off to Belfast to interview Peter
Lynch.

Lois snorts in derision.

LOIS
Peter Lynch? You think you can
get an interview with Peter Lynch?

CLARK
Yeah, that was pretty much how Mr
Foster took it.

LOIS
(grins)
I can imagine.

She checks her watch.

LOIS (CONT'D)
I gotta go or I'm gonna miss my
flight.

She stuffs a business card into his hand.

LOIS (CONT'D)
If you ever get back to the states,
give me a call.

And with that she's gone, vanishing into the crowd. Clark
stares after her for a few seconds before looking down at
the card, which reads:

"Lois Lane, Daily Planet, Metropolis"

Clark looks impressed.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

A bus makes it's way down the night-time road.

INT. BUS -- NIGHT

Clark and Joanna are sat near the back. Joanna is asleep
in her chair. Clark is lost in his own thoughts.

After a moment he pulls out his wallet and opens it, looking
at the picture of his parents. He pulls it back to reveal
a second image - Clark with his arm around a younger Lana
Lang. He smiles wistfully.

Joanna opens her eyes, glances over to see Clark gazing at
the picture.

JOANNA
You miss them, don't you?

CLARK
Every day.

JOANNA
Guess it's true when they say you
can take the boy out of the farm
but not the farm out of the boy.

CLARK
 (grins)
 Something like that.

Clark pulls a paper out of his bag.

JOANNA
 How far off Belfast?

CLARK
 About an hour now. We'll be there
 by six.

As Clark unfolds the paper Joanna turns to look at him.

JOANNA
 This is going to be the big one,
 Clark. The really big one.

CLARK
 You really think we're doing the
 right thing?

JOANNA
 Persistence worked in Zimbabwe.
 And Cambodia. And Sydney.

CLARK
 Sydney wasn't as much trouble as
 this one.

He unfolds the paper, which we see is the IRISH TIMES.
 The front cover shows the image of a powerful-looking man
 in his forties giving a speech. The headline reads:

"More Violence As Protestors Clash With Peace Campaigners."

Clark and Joanna exchange ominous looks.

JOANNA
 Are we doing the right thing?

CLARK
 Let's hope so.

Clark looks into the eyes of the man on the front cover.

*ON THE SOUNDTRACK: We HEAR the sound of shouting, police
 sirens and the clashing of weapons.*

MONTAGE OF SHOTS:

We see images, fast and hazy...

Clashes between police and protestors - guns being fired -
 wounded being carried out of battle scenes on stretchers -
 children caught in the middle--

The images are broken up by the disjointed voices of TV
 news anchors...

ANCHORS (O.S.)

(various)

...further clashes between police and protestors today ... Peter Lynch's group is at the centre of yet another storm tonight ... controversial movement that is dividing both communities ... the Prime Minister commented ... religious leaders from both sides decry Lynch's group despite the messages of peace coming from Lynch...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- DAY

SUPER: Belfast

We are stood outside a community hall that looks as though it has seen some violence in recent days (smashed glass, graffiti etc).

The man from the front page of the newspaper - PETER LYNCH - gets out of the back of a car only to be barraged by flashes from cameras and shouts from journalists.

When Lynch finally reaches the door he turns to face the mob.

LYNCH

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a brief statement to make.

The mob quietens down slightly

LYNCH (CONT'D)

My supporters and I stand for peace, and we abhor the acts of violence committed against us and what we stand for. It is only through working together that we can truly achieve a lasting piece in Northern Ireland. And now if you'll excuse me, I'm sure we've all got better things to do than stand out here in the cold. No further comment.

The journalists begin shouting again as Lynch and his group enter the hall. The crowd begins to disperse, aided by the small but significant contribution of the police.

Near the back of the crowd we see Clark and Joanna. They turn and walk away.

JOANNA

We're screwed.

CLARK

So we try another method.

JOANNA

Like what?

Clark stops, taps the community centre notice board. The words '*Prayer Meeting tonight*' are clearly visible.

Clark grins and a big smile crosses Joanna's face.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

You can be one sneaky so-and-so at times, farm boy.

Clark grins. They laugh and walk off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

A crowd has gathered outside the community centre - mostly protestors with banners, police on hand.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Clark and Joanna sit on chairs near the back of the crowded hall, Joanna looking a little out of place.

CLARK

Something wrong?

JOANNA

I haven't been in a church since I was five years old.

CLARK

Why not?

JOANNA

I don't know. I guess I'm just not much of a religious person.

CLARK

Ever with the surprises.

JOANNA

Shame I'm not the only one.

Clark gives her a curious look.

CLARK

What do you mean?

JOANNA

I know you keep secrets from me, Clark.

This takes Clark completely by surprise. He tries to say something but Joanna cuts him off by raising a hand.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Don't say anything. You're a very private person, I get that.

(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

But you do keep secrets. I've been travelling the world with you for the last year, but there's times I feel like I hardly know you.

CLARK

(sighs)

There are very few people who really do.

And suddenly Clark looks as though he has the weight of the world on his shoulders. Joanna looks pained.

JOANNA

Oh, Clark, I'm sorry...

CLARK

No, don't be. It's fine.

(beat)

I think I'm going to go outside, get some fresh air.

JOANNA

Clark...

But he is already leaving. Joanna looks mortified.

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Clark emerges from the community centre to see the protestors stood outside. He turns away and walks around the building, his attention wandering again--

Until a sound cuts through the night air.

THE SHARP, CLEAR CLICK of A GUN BEING LOADED!

INT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Joanna is looking agitated.

JOANNA

Dammit, Clark...

She gets up and heads out of the hall in search of Clark.

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Clark looks around urgently for the source of the sound. He tips his glasses onto the bridge of his nose - eyes glowing slightly blue in the dimness.

ANGLE - MAIN ENTRANCE

Lynch's and his entourage emerge from their car. Immediately the scene turns to chaos - journalists yelling questions, protestors shrieking.

Clark is urgently scanning the crowd, looking for the gunman.

For a few fleeting seconds we see what Clark sees - TELESCOPIC SHOTS as he scans FACES and HANDS and moves on to the next person.

Lynch stops at the top of the steps by the door and turns to face the journalists.

LYNCH

Tonight's exercise is a simple prayer meeting, ladies and gentleman...

As his speech continues, Clark looks up and finally sees it - a BLACKED OUT CAR is moving down the street towards the community centre. Clark squints and...

X-RAY

Inside the car we see the four men crammed in the back, holding shotguns.

BACK TO SCENE

Clark snaps back to reality--

The car SCREECHES to a halt and five GUNMEN climb out, wearing balaclava masks and carrying shotguns.

GUNMAN #1

LYNCH!

Everyone SCREAMS at the sight of the guns--

The gunmen FIRE--

Clark rushes forward AT HIGH SPEED and batters Lynch and his group to the ground -

The bullets miss them by inches--!

Clark looks up to see one of the gunmen rushing up the stairs towards Lynch. He takes aim--

And Clark leaps up, wrenching the gun out of the gunman's hands in one movement. He grabs the gunman by the shirt-front and WITH ONE HAND BODILY HURLS HIM ACROSS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET, WHERE HE CRASHES INTO A CAR IN A BURST OF BREAKING GLASS!

Clark turns to attack the second gunman just as Lynch gets to his feet--

And at that moment Joanna comes running out of the church. She stops dead at the sight of the carnage and she and Clark lock eyes.

CLARK

Jo!

And the gunman fires--!

Bullets splatter the wall--

Clark is caught in the hail of death - his shirt rips and the bullets strike home, but he acts as though nothing happened. He looks up--

Lynch and Joanna are both hit! They hit the deck as--

GUNMAN #2
Shit man, let's go!

The gunmen run back to the car, which SQUEALS off into the distance .

Lynch's entourage crowd around the fallen body of their leader as Clark rushes over to Joanna.

CLARK
Oh my god ... Jo! Jo, can you hear me?

Joanna's eyes flutter open and she forces a weak smile.

JOANNA
You can't get rid of me that easily ... farm boy...

CLARK
Are you...?

JOANNA
Shoulder ... I'll live...

She notices the bullet holes in his shirt and looks horrified.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Clark, are you okay?

CLARK
(distracted)
What? Oh, I'm fine. You just be quiet, okay? The ambulance is on its way.

She nods and hisses in pain. Clark looks around in the direction the gunman vanished.

CLARK (CONT'D)
The cops will never catch them.

JOANNA
Yeah, well, it wasn't your fault Clark - there's nothing you can do now.

And it is in this moment that we can visibly see Clark make a decision. His face sets with new resolve.

CLARK
No ... there is something I can do.

He stands up. The camera STAYS ON JOANNA as she watches him walk out of frame.

JOANNA

Clark, what're you going to...?

And at that moment her face contorts in an expression of awe and disbelief as the camera suddenly CRANES SHARPLY UPWARD--

JOANNA (CONT'D)

God...

EXT. SKIES ABOVE BELFAST -- NIGHT

We are in the P.O.V. of something flying very fast above the streets of Belfast. The air rushes past us and the roar of a sonic boom can be heard behind us.

EXT. BELFAST STREETS -- NIGHT

The car carrying the gunmen winds its way at speed through the suburban streets.

INSIDE THE CAR the gunmen hang on tight as the car careens around a corner.

GUNMAN #3

No cops man, this is going to work!

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Paramedics rush over to help Joanna.

MEDIC #1

Are you alright miss? Can you hear me?

EXT. BELFAST STREETS -- NIGHT

ABOVE THE STREETS we have the fleeting impression of a human body flying high above the streets, tracking the movements of the car.

ON THE STREETS the car CAREENS around another corner, SCRAPING it's side against a low wall...

And something FLASHES DOWN out of the night sky at speed, like a bullet!

ON THE STREETS the car SLAMS TO A HALT!

GUNMAN #2

What the f--?

They look up ... and we PULL BACK to see Clark stood in front of the car, his hands wrist deep in the mangled metal of the hood.

His face is stony, resolute, his blue eyes blazing with a cold fire.

CLARK

You really thought you could outrun me in a car!

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Joanna is loaded onto a stretcher and taken towards an ambulance--

Suddenly her eyes SNAP OPEN and she goes into convulsions--

MEDIC #1

Oh no--!

EXT. BELFAST STREETS -- NIGHT

The gunman in the front seat draws his weapon and fires. The shot BOUNCES HARMLESSLY off Clark.

He walks around, RIPS THE DOOR OFF and pulls the gunman out, THROWING HIM HARD against a nearby wall and knocking him out.

Another gunman goes for his weapon. Clark's irises turn red and a THIN HAZE OF HEAT BLASTS FROM HIS RETINAS. The gun SUPERHEATS in a second, making the gunman SCREAM out and drop it.

The fourth gunman, sat in the back seat, gets out and tries to run for it. Clark looks up and sees this.

We see the gunman running away over Clark's shoulder ... and then Clark's body rises out of frame.

The gunman runs down the street ... and stops dead. Clark is HOVERING FIVE FEET ABOVE THE GROUND RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.

CLARK

You think you can run now?

He grabs the man by the collar and flies STRAIGHT UP into the sky.

The gunman SCREAMS - they're hovering a mile over the city!

GUNMAN #3

No, please, no...

And Clark lets go! The gunman plummets towards the ground, SCREAMING all the way down--

And STOPS two feet above the pavement. Clark is holding him by his angle. He lets go - the man drops hard to the ground.

CLARK

You don't get off that easily.

Clark grabs a piece of metal from the car, twists it around and uses it to bind up the four gunmen in seconds. Clark regards them coldly - the gunmen are terrified.

EXT. COMMUNITY HALL -- NIGHT

Clark rushes back onto the scene--

Lynch is loaded onto the back of an ambulance. He's still alive. Clark smiles--

Then his eye is drawn to something else--

A body bag being zipped up.

And the look of horror on Clark's face tells us everything we need to know.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Rain hammers down on a gravestone:

'In Loving Memory of Joanna Alice Palmer, 1982-2005'

A hand reaches into frame, places a bunch of flowers on the grave - we pull back to reveal Clark, getting soaked by the rain, tears in his eyes.

CLARK

I'm sorry, Jo ... God, I'm so sorry...

Camera PULLS BACK, leaving Clark alone at the gravestone with his sorrow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMALLVILLE (AERIAL) -- DAY

We PAN ACROSS the brightly lit corn fields and farms that surround the small town.

EXT. KENT FARM -- DAY

Martha Kent, older than when we last saw her, is sat on the porch of the small farmhouse reading a book.

At the sound of wheezing footsteps she looks up to see Jonathan dumping sacks of feed into the back of the truck.

MARTHA

Don't carry too many Jonathan,
you'll hurt yourself.

JONATHAN

(grins)
Since when did you switch sides?

AT THE GATE

Clark is stood watching his parents talk with a wistful smile. For a moment it looks as though he's considering heading off - then he makes up his mind and walks up the path.

UP AT THE HOUSE

Jonathan and Martha are still talking.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

I don't know, maybe you're right.
Maybe I should get some extra help
in. It was always so much easier
when the boy was here..

CLARK (O.S.)

What was?

They both turn in surprise to see Clark walking up the path towards the house. Martha's face breaks into a huge smile.

MARTHA

Clark!

She practically leaps out of the chair and runs down the path to embrace her son. Jonathan rushes over to join them in hugs and back slaps. The Kents are reunited.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Well, I must say this is a surprise.

JONATHAN

When did you get in?

CLARK

Just now.

JONATHAN

Where from?

CLARK

Belfast.

His frustrated tone is not lost on them - both look worried.

JONATHAN

What's happened, son?

INT. KENT FARM -- DAY

Clark, Jonathan and Martha are sat around the table, the remains of dinner arrayed before them.

CLARK

...so Lynch was alright, but
Joanna...

He trails off, the anger and regret still very close to the surface.

JONATHAN

Clark, what happened to Joanna was
not your fault.

CLARK

No, but I could have prevented it.
I could have caught those bullets
right out of the air. But-

At that moment there is a bang on the door. A girl we recognise from the photo in Clark's wallet - LANA LANG (25) - walks in.

LANA
Knock-knock.

CLARK
Lana!

He stands up and the two of them embrace, Clark smiling in genuine relief. Jonathan and Martha exchange a knowing look. Clark and Lana have an easy rapport between them, almost like a brother and sister.

LANA
The wanderer returns, I see.

CLARK
How did you know I was back?

LANA
Clark, this is Smallville - everyone knows everything, I thought you knew that.

CLARK
Been away too long, obviously.

He shoots a questioning look at his parents. Jonathan rolls his eyes and looks at Martha, who shrugs innocently.

MARTHA
What with everything that's going on, I figured you might want to see a friendly face.

Lana abruptly looks concerned.

LANA
Why? What's going on, Clark?

EXT. FIELDS -- EVENING

Clark and Lana are walking slowly as the sun goes down.

LANA
There was nothing you could have done, Clark.

CLARK
There was. I hesitated.

Lana's head comes up in surprise. The two of them stop walking and lean against a fence.

CLARK (CONT'D)
I could have caught those bullets with one hand. I could have knocked Joanna out of the way.
(MORE)

CLARK (CONT'D)

I could have swept the gunmen up
and dropped them all in the river.
But when I saw her ... I froze.
Just for a split second, I froze,
and I thought 'what is she going
to think when she finds out I'm...'

LANA

Different?

Clark gives her a completely honest look.

CLARK

I've been fighting this ever since
I found out what I could do.
Keeping this secret has been a
problem, but I thought I had it
under control. And then something
like this happens.

(beat)

I was so afraid of being found out
that I didn't act in time and she...

For a moment he just stands against the fence, looking
frustrated.

LANA

Still wearing the glasses, I see.

CLARK

Hmm? Oh yes. Just another part
of trying to fit in - so many people
asked me about my eyes that Pa
thought it was only a matter of
time before someone put two and
two together.

Lana reaches up and pulls his glasses off his face.

LANA

I always liked your eyes.

(beat)

This is part of the problem, isn't
it? You're always having to hide,
even if it's only in little ways
like this.

CLARK

Lana, can I ask you a question?

LANA

Anything.

CLARK

You remember how you reacted when
you found out what I ... what I could
do?

Lana gives him an ironic look.

LANA

Before or after I'd finished
screaming?

CLARK

(grins)
After.

LANA

Truthfully? I was scared. I was
upset that someone I'd known as
long as you ... someone as close to
me as you were ... was keeping secrets
from me, particularly secrets like
this.

(beat)

But then you told me about how
hard it was to constantly lie to
people. And I realised the truth
... beneath the amazing things you
could do, you were still you. You
were still the same old Clark Kent.
The person hadn't changed, just
what he could do. And then I was
ashamed I'd ever been afraid of
you.

She moves in closer to Clark.

LANA (CONT'D)

Clark, your powers are part of who
you are. Your real friends won't
be frightened if they find out
you're a little stronger or a little
faster...

CLARK

Or that I can fly and shoot fire
from my eyes?

LANA

Even that, eventually. You have
the ability to make a difference -
there is nothing wrong with wanting
to use it.

Clark looks up sharply - the words are familiar. Lana
doesn't see - she points at something.

LANA (CONT'D)

Look at that.

Across the field, the sun is just setting. Lana wraps her
arms around him and rests her head on his chest. After a
moment Clark puts his arms around her, accepting the comfort
she offers.

For this short time, it is a perfect moment.

INT. CLARK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Clark is lying asleep in his bed. The room ECHOES with sounds and voices from his dream...

VOICES (O.S.)

... your real friends won't be
frightened if they find out ... that
is something worth fighting for ...
what's the matter, son ... can we
really send him out there ... it's
the only hope he has ... he'll be
that world's man of tomorrow...

And Clark's eyes snap open. In the dimness the blue of his eyes is very bright. He gets out of bed, quickly pulls some clothes on.

INT. BARN -- NIGHT

Holding a flashlight, Clark enters the barn, walking with intent. With one hand he reaches out and pushes a huge generator to one side, revealing a trap door underneath.

He walks down the steps into the cellar below, which is filled with EERIE GREEN LIGHT.

INT. CELLAR -- NIGHT

The light is coming from beneath a heavy tarpaulin covering something big in the corner. After a moment of indecision Clark HAULS the tarpaulin back.

Beneath we see the spaceship that brought Clark to Earth, radiating green light from various ports and symbols, alien writing. On the nose cone of the ship - a green glowing symbol in the familiar 'S' shield.

Clark is entranced - he reaches down and presses the symbol with his fingers. The green light FLARES - Clark steps back--

A shaft of light erupts from the 'S' shield which turns into a swirling vortex of light, energy and colour...

Which finally resolves itself into the image of a powerfully built man with dark hair and the same piercing blue eyes as Clark - JOR-EL.

JOR-EL

My son.

Clark doesn't look at all surprised to see the image - as though he expected this to happen.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

In Earth time, it has been twenty
five years since I last saw you.
You have come here tonight because
the time is right for you now - it
is time you knew the truth.

(MORE)

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

You feel uncertain about your place in the world, unsure of who you really are and where you fit on this world. I am here to attempt to provide you with these answers.

CLARK

Who are you?

JOR-EL

My name is Jor-El, of the planet Krypton. Your name - your true name - is Kal-El, and you are my only son.

CLARK

Why am I here?

JOR-EL

Because the time has come for you to know the truth. I will show you.

The hologram extends it's arm.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

Take my hand.

Clark reaches out and takes the hand - which he is surprised to find is completely solid and corporeal.

Without warning the spaceship, the cellar and everything around them VANISHES, replaced by the green light. Clark looks frightened. Jor-El no longer looks like a hologram - he appears to be solid, real.

CLARK

What's happening?

JOR-EL

We are going back, Kal-El.

CLARK

Back to what?

JOR-EL

The end ... and the beginning. The end of my world ... and the beginning of yours.

The green vortex surrounding Clark and Jor-El becomes brighter, more intense. Clark throws his hands up to protect his eyes ... and...

EXT. BALCONY -- DAY

The light clears and Clark brings his hands down ... and his mouth drops open as he surveys his surroundings.

CLARK

Oh my...

Clark and Jor-El are stood on a balcony overlooking a gigantic city. The city appears to have been carved out of the huge crystal shards that emerge from the ground. The effect is one of the ancient crossed with the futuristic.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Where are we?

JOR-EL

This is Kandor - capital city of what was once the planet Krypton.

As Jor-El speaks we pull back and the camera moves through the city, showing plazas full of hundreds of Kryptonians, taking in the vastness of Kryptonian civilisation.

Back on the balcony, Jor-El turns to face Clark.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

This is your legacy, Kal-El. This is the world you would have known as your own, had we but acted sooner.

CLARK

Why? What happened?

And at that moment the ground begins to shake violently. Clark grabs hold of the balcony - at some point realising that this place is solid, not a hologram, and that it is very real.

CLARK (CONT'D)

What is all of this? A projection?

JOR-EL

A memory. My memory of Krypton as it was.

He puts his hand on Clark's shoulder and leads him inside the building.

INT. JOR-EL'S LAB -- DAY

Jor-El leads Clark into the building, a seemingly endless space full of highly advanced yet ancient-looking equipment.

CLARK

How is it that I'm even here?

JOR-EL

When your mother and I sent you away, I programmed my memories into your capsule. Though Krypton has been a dead world for many years now, I wanted you to know where you truly came from. And why.

He nods his head at something across the room. Clark looks ... and sees ANOTHER JOR-EL working at a computer.

After a moment he lowers his head in frustration.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

It's hopeless ... hopeless.

A woman's hand comes into frame, resting sportively on Jor-El's arm.

LARA (O.S.)

Never give up hope, my husband.

Jor-El's wife, LARA, moves into frame, holding in her arms a baby. Across the room, with a jolt Clark realises that the baby is him.

JOR-EL

I tried to warn them.

LARA

The council...

JOR-EL

Is afraid. Afraid of me, and afraid of the truth. They know it, but they do not want to believe it - Krypton is dying all around us.

Clark shoots at look at Jor-El stood beside him.

CLARK

Dying?

JOR-EL

The molten inner core of Krypton is toxic. For centuries we believed we were safe ... but we were wrong. Now Krypton is certain to die. I discovered this, but when I tried to present my findings to the council I was dismissed out of hand, ordered not to say anything to the population. They told me to be reasonable.

A sad smile crosses his face.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

The irony was that they knew what was happening as well as I did.

CLARK

But they didn't do anything? Why?

JOR-EL

Because they were afraid. Fear makes wise men foolish. In this case I had hoped it would make fools wise, but it was not to be. I have been unable to leave Krypton ... but I would not condemn my son to this fate.

Clark looks around, struggling to make sense of all of this.

He looks back across the room to where Jor-El is looking sadly out of the window at Krypton below. Lara, still carrying the baby Kal-El, moves over to join him.

LARA
There isn't much time left, is there?

JOR-EL
(shakes his head)
Days ... possibly only hours.

At that moment the ground begins to shake again. Jor-El grabs Lara to keep his wife and son steady.

EXT. KRYPTON -- DAY

We pan through the streets of the Kryptonian city, to find the inhabitants going about their business as though nothing was wrong...

Shop keepers open up their stores...

Construction workers set up their equipment...

Children play boisterously on the streets...

And we watch how they react as the ground begins SHUDDERING UNCONTROLLABLY. Cracks appear in the pavements and vast green crystals shoot straight up.

The devastation has begun.

INT. JOR-EL'S LAB -- DAY

Clark and the avatar of Jor-El watch in silence as the other Jor-El and Lara gently place their son inside the small spaceship.

JOR-EL
You will travel far, my son, but you will never be alone. You carry all our hopes and dreams with you, as well as the hopes and dreams of all the planet Krypton. Look to our faces now, so that one day you might remember us.

Lara is stifling tears as the quakes abruptly get worse.

Suddenly Jor-El seems to have an idea and he strides briskly over to the console and begins entering commands at speed.

LARA
What are you doing?

JOR-EL
Increasing his chances of survival.
(MORE)

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

My father once told me of a world far away from here, a world visited during our quest for intelligent life. A world powered by the glow of a yellow sun...

Suddenly a holographic image of a world - out of focus and blurred but unmistakably Earth - appears over the console.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

This is it. The explorer divisions found it centuries ago, marked it as a place of possible retreat in the event of a disaster.

He begins entering commands into the spaceship.

LARA

Will he survive in that environment?

JOR-EL

Survive? Under the light of a star that young, his body will drink in the energy, become hardened, stronger ... he'll be that world's man of tomorrow!

They move to stand by the pod, regarding the sleeping baby Kal-El within. Jor-El quickly lowers his face and kisses his son on the forehead.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

Goodbye, my son.

And he steps back to allow the small capsule to close. He takes Lara into his arms as the ship rises, turns and takes flight out through the open window.

They watch it go until the small ship is right out of sight.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

LARA

You have given him all that a father can - a chance for life.

JOR-EL

But will that be enough?

LARA

We will never know.

The two of them embrace ... and at that moment GREEN LIGHT FILLS THE AIR again ... and we are...

INT. THE VORTEX -- TIMELESS

Clark and Jor-El are again stood in the swirling green vortex. Jor-El regards his son sadly.

JOR-EL

I did all that I could for you, my son - I gave you a chance for a new life, in a world where you stood the best chance of survival. What you do next is entirely your decision - I cannot interfere. These are a good people, Kal-El - primitive by the standards of Krypton, but with much potential. You have a great power at your disposal, and I would have you use it to be a force for good. In that way, you will keep my legacy alive, and keep alive the memory of the people of Krypton.

He walks forward and takes Clark's hands.

JOR-EL (CONT'D)

Goodbye, my son. Whatever life you have created on this world, use it. Live it. And keep our memories alive.

As the light intensifies again, Clark stares into the eyes of his father as the light gets brighter and...

INT. CELLAR -- NIGHT

Clark is stood back in the cellar, facing the now dormant spaceship. Clark just stands there for a moment, trying to take it all in.

He reaches forward and lays a hand on the spaceship ... and without warning the hatch retracts. For the first time, Clark sees something new inside - a SMALL BUNDLE OF CLOTH.

JOR-EL (V.O.)

These are a good people, Kal-El - primitive by the standards of Krypton, but with much potential. You have a great power at your disposal, and I would have you use it to be a force for good.

And Clark sees that the bundle of cloth is a dark blue and red suit, adorned with the familiar red-and-yellow 'S' shield.

As Clark looks at the symbol, new purpose fills his eyes ... and he knows what he must do.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KENT FARM -- DAY

An establishing shot of the farm as the sun rises above the seemingly endless fields.

INT. CLARK'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Inside the room Clark is tearing through his pack, looking for something. After a moment Martha appears at the open door.

MARTHA

Clark?

CLARK

(muttered)

Gotta be in here somewhere...

Martha looks up as Jonathan appears in the doorway beside her. He grins

JONATHAN

He's got a plan. He's never this focused unless he's got a plan.

At that moment Clark pulls something out of the backpack - the business card he got from Lois Lane back in London.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Care to share the secret, son?

CLARK

You could say I've had a revelation.

INT. LANA'S HOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE on a hand rummaging through a drawer. After a moment it finds something.

LANA (O.S.)

Found them.

We PULL BACK to see we are in the kitchen of Lana's house.

Lana walks over to Clark and drops a bunch of keys into his hand. Clark shoots her a big grin.

CLARK

You are a live-saver, Lana.

LANA

I thought that was your job.

CLARK

If this is an imposition...

LANA

Clark, forget about it - what are friends for? That apartment in Metropolis has been gathering dust for months; I could do with a tenant. Besides...

(grins)

...I think I'm going to enjoy being your landlady. It's weird thinking of you having a proper address where we can find you.

CLARK
Yeah, for you and me both.

LANA
So, you're set on this plan?

CLARK
Set and ready.

LANA
Why the Daily Planet, though? Not that I don't think you'll get the job, but why that one paper?

Clark ticks points on his fingers.

CLARK
It's a paper I've not published with yet. It's got a good reputation. The Planet has one of the most reliable information networks in the world. When a story breaks, the Planet is the one that hears about it first. If I'm going to help people, that's where I need to start.

LANA
Makes sense, I suppose.

She looks a little preoccupied, something that Clark clues in on immediately.

CLARK
What is it?

LANA
It's just ... this time I was hoping you were back to stay.

CLARK
Hey, at least I'm only in Metropolis this time, not Australia or Africa or England...

LANA
I know that, but ... I guess I've missed having you as a part of my life.

CLARK
Don't worry about it. This time, at least, you'll know exactly where I am.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. METROPOLIS -- DAY

Our first sight of the great city...

Metropolis is a beautiful city on the waterfront, looking like a cross between Sydney and the postcards of New York.

The camera FLIES THROUGH the city, eventually closing in on the gigantic monorail system that traverses the entire city.

We PUSH IN on one of the trains, and eventually we see Clark sat inside.

INT. MONORAIL -- DAY

Clark, attired in a suit and tie plus his glasses, looks out across the expansive city as the monorail cruises through it.

After a few moments Clark looks up as we pass by a gigantic 'L' shaped building that dwarfs everything around it.

Clark looks over the top of his glasses and we ZOOM IN on the huge plaque outside the building, which reads:

"LexCorp: Bringing Tomorrow To You Today."

And for some reason we can only guess at right now, Clark looks the other way in disgust, as though even the name of LexCorp is repugnant to him.

EXT. DAILY PLANET -- DAY

Clark is stood on the pavement outside the Planet, looking up at the massive building and the imposing globe on the top.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Clark steps off the lift into the City Room and the semi-organised chaos of any newspaper office.

Clark steps smartly out of the way as the conference room door opens and PERRY WHITE storms in with several others trailing in his wake.

PERRY

No - forget it! This conversation ended three minutes ago!

Perry White is the Planet's editor, a foreboding pit-bull of a man with an unbuttoned collar that suggests this has been a bad day when, in fact, this is every day. He accents all his gestures with an unlit cigar and has two tones - LOUD and LOUDER.

Following behind Perry are RON TROUPE (forties, African-American, a nice guy) and JIMMY OLSEN (the intern, eighteen, boyishly handsome).

RON

Perry...

PERRY

Ron, whatever it is you have to say, I don't want to hear it. Olsen, didn't you hear me say all this before?

JIMMY

Sure, Chief.

PERRY

DON'T CALL ME CHIEF!

He makes a threatening gesture with the cigar that Jimmy has to physically duck to get out of the way of.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Ron, be honest with me. Is the average Joe who buys this paper first thing on the morning really going to want to read about some billionaire playboy from Gotham who put his money behind renovating the Metropolis Library?

RON

(honest)
Yes.

This halts Perry in his tracks. He runs his hand through his hair, making it stand on end, and deflates a bit.

PERRY

Well, okay, you've got a point there. But I've already told you no, and I want you back on that LexCorp story. Lex is our OJ, Got that?

RON

Got it.

JIMMY

Sure, chief.

He realises his mistake too late and winces, eyes screwed shut against the expected blast. Perry opens his mouth to bellow, but then thinks better of it and storms off.

Jimmy opens one eye cautiously to check that the coast is clear. Ron grins.

RON

He REALLY doesn't like it when you call him chief.

He walks off.

JIMMY

You think?

At that moment he notices Clark, who has been stood out of the way, unsure whether to laugh.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

CLARK

Uh, yeah, I'm Clark Kent, I'm here for an interview.

JIMMY

Oh yeah, hi. I'm Jimmy Olsen - general spare part around here.

They shake hands. Clark casts a wary eye in the direction that Perry made off in.

CLARK

So was that...?

JIMMY

Perry White, Editor-in-Chief, as big as life and twice as loud. And he really doesn't like it if you call him Chief.

Clark grins slightly.

CLARK

You're not wrong.

INT. PERRY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Clark is sat in a chair as Perry paces up and down reading Clark's resume.

PERRY

Kansas State, UCLA, Metropolis State, Sheffield Hallam in the UK, Oxford, UCLA again ... you certainly get around, Kent.

CLARK

It's been a turbulent few years.

PERRY

So I can see. Wonder how many frequent flier miles you've notched up.

Clark coughs into his hand to hide a laugh. Perry gives him a look, sits down behind his desk and regards Clark frankly.

PERRY (CONT'D)

I'll be blunt with you, Mr Kent. Travelling the world is one thing, I respect people who want to broaden their surroundings, but its seven years after you graduated high school you still haven't had a steady professional gig your whole life.

CLARK

I've filed stories with papers
across Europe, Africa, Australia...

PERRY

For small newspapers. It's not
exactly anything to write home
about.

He opens Clark's portfolio and begins to skim through the
cut-outs of his stories from across the world.

PERRY (CONT'D)

I mean, don't get me wrong, it's a
great achievement, but...

He stops dead on one article and looks up at Clark in
disbelief.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Zimbabwe? That was you?

CLARK

Uh, yeah.

PERRY

A commendable achievement, but...

He keeps flipping through the stories.

PERRY (CONT'D)

It's not exactly...

His eyes go wide.

PERRY (CONT'D)

All of this stuff is yours? You
wrote all of this?

CLARK

Yes I did.

PERRY

You filed that piece for the Herald
about Peter Lynch?

A sore point - but:

CLARK

I did.

Perry looks thunderstruck. Clark dares to look hopeful ...
and at that moment the door slams open and Lois Lane storms
in.

LOIS

Perry, hold the front page, you're
gonna love this. Guess who just
got herself an invite to General
Kramer's exclusive demonstration
of the new Hermes-44--

She stops dead at the sight of Clark.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Kent?

Perry looks between the two of them.

PERRY

You two know each other?

LOIS

We've met.

CLARK

(grins)

Head on.

As though a light has been switched on, Perry suddenly makes his mind up and jumps to his feet.

PERRY

Well Lois Lane, say hello to Clark Kent, he just started here.

Clark's face breaks into a grin and he shakes Perry's hand. Lois looks from one to the other, completely confused.

LOIS

What the--?

PERRY

Lois, I'm putting Kent on the city beat with you, so I want you to take him out there, show him the ropes - OLSEN, get in here!

As Perry sticks his head out of the door and bellows out into the city room, Lois shoots Clark a look.

LOIS

You're working here?

CLARK

Looks like it.

LOIS

I don't think Perry's ever hired someone on the spot like that before, how'd you do that?

Clark just shrugs. Lois doesn't look very happy about this and turns to Perry to complain.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Perry, the city beat is my beat - I work alone, I don't need some new guy...

PERRY

No arguments, Lois.

At that moment the door opens and Jimmy scuttles in.

JIMMY

Yes, chi--

He catches himself just in time.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

--Mr. White?

PERRY

Get Mr Kent a desk, he just started here today.

Jimmy gives Clark an awed look.

JIMMY

How'd you do that?

PERRY

Excuse me? My office, not a social club - OUT, we've got a paper to run!

Jimmy practically runs out. Lois storms out, not looking happy. Clark mouths 'thanks' back at Perry before following them.

Perry looks back to Clark's resume in awe.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Son of a gun...

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Lois storms back to her desk, looking furious. Clark cautiously makes his way over.

CLARK

Something wrong?

LOIS

You could say that.

There's a hard edge to her tone. Clark goes for it anyway.

CLARK

Have I done something?

A moment ... then Lois sighs and shakes her head.

LOIS

It's not you, Kent. Perry's been itching for an excuse to give me a partner for months now. You've just given him a legitimate reason for doing it.

CLARK

Ah. I see.

There is a brief silence between the two of them. Then Lois looks up and her hard edge has disintegrated.

LOIS
I read about what happened in
Belfast. I'm so sorry about your
friend.

Clark looks pained.

CLARK
Yeah, well...

The awkward silence is back, but it is broken when Jimmy comes running back up with his jacket on and a camera slung around his neck.

JIMMY
Ready, Miss Lane.

LOIS
Right, come on.

She gets up and the two of them head off; after a moment she stops and looks expectantly back at Clark.

LOIS (CONT'D)
Well, are you coming or not?

As Lois and Jimmy hurry off Clark rushes to catch up with them.

EXT. LEXCORP TOWER -- DAY

We PAN UP the side of the imposing 'L'-shaped building seen earlier.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Clark, Lois and Jimmy are waiting. As before, Clark looks a little disgusted and is only partially successful in keeping it off his face - Lois notices.

LOIS
Something wrong?

CLARK
What? Oh, nothing.

LOIS
Please, Kent, if you're going to deny it at least come up with one I haven't heard a million times before--

At that moment the doors open - the three of them get to their feet as LEX LUTHOR (40, handsome, bald, commanding) sweeps in.

Hovering just behind him is MERCY GRAVES, his deceptively sweet female bodyguard.

LUTHOR
Lois...

Clark's face goes stony as Luthor smiles and shakes Lois' hand.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Forgive me for making you wait,
we've had something of a minor
crisis.

LOIS

There's always something with you,
isn't there Lex?

LUTHOR

(grins)
I keep busy.

LOIS

You've already met Jimmy, I think,
and this is--

Luthor shakes Jimmy's hand and turns to Clark, but when he looks into his face his eyes go wide in surprise.

LUTHOR

It can't be...

Lois looks from one to the other, completely confused, as Luthor smiles broadly and extends his hand again.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Clark Kent ... it's been a long
time, but I never forget a face.

But Clark has gone stony and shakes Luthor's hand very quickly.

CLARK

Hello Lex. Long time no see.

Luthor's face goes hard at the same time as Clark's. The air has gone noticeably frosty.

LOIS

Well, I'm sure you're a very busy
man and have a lot to do.

LUTHOR

Yes, of course, forgive my manners.
We've got a lot to get through.

INT. LEXCORP SHOWROOM -- DAY

The room is dark as the door opens and Luthor leads Lois, Clark and Jimmy inside.

LOIS

And now perhaps you'd like to tell
us what this is all about and why
you demanded an audience on such
short notice.

LUTHOR

(laughs)

But of course. Mercy?

MERCY

Yes Mr Luthor.

Mercy hits a switch ... the lights come up and--

JIMMY

Oh my...

Spread out before they we see eight LEXFLIGHT ATTACK CHOPPERS, long and mean and deadly-looking.

Luthor smiles at the stunned reactions.

INT. SAME -- LATER

Luthor leads the small group around the choppers, in the middle of his sales spiel.

LUTHOR

...faster and far superior to the Hermes-44 in almost every respect - plus these have the added advantage of being remote controlled. Now we no longer need to send our pilots into the most dangerous battle scenarios - same results with zero loss of life for our military.

LOIS

(not believing a word of it)

And yet the government chose to give the contract to Hermes and not LexCorp. Why would that be?

LUTHOR

Simple economics.

LOIS

Meaning...

LUTHOR

Meaning that in this country, everything is made by the lowest bidder despite the fact that doing so will almost certainly put the lives of United States military personnel on the line.

Jimmy snaps pictures of the choppers while Clark watches, grim-faced.

LOIS

So the Hermes model was, what...?

LUTHOR

Cheaper.

LOIS
 (digging)
 They beat you to it?

Luthor offers a serene smile.

LUTHOR
 The contracts aren't finalised yet. And walking away without a fight isn't something I'm known for.

Lois steps in, looking intrigued.

LOIS
 Are you saying you know something that Hermes doesn't?

LUTHOR
 (smiles)
 Lois, I probably know many things that Hermes doesn't.
 (beat)
 Well, I think we're about done here, unless there are any further questions...

CLARK
 Actually, there is one thing.

Everyone looks up in surprise - Clark has clearly broken a long silence. Luthor smiles, affecting his 'old friend' persona.

LUTHOR
 Certainly, Clark - anything.

CLARK
 If you're not doing this for the money ... then what do you stand to gain out of the creation of these helicopters?

Luthor seems a bit taken aback by this - but he recovers smoothly.

LUTHOR
 Only the knowledge that I've done my part to keep the fine personnel of our armed forces alive and well.

CLARK
 Very commendable.

Something in his tone suggests he doesn't believe it. Mercy nudges Luthor and taps her watch.

LOIS
 Time up?

LUTHOR

I'm afraid so. But thank you all for coming. Lois, could I see you for a moment please?

LOIS

Sure.

Hope leads Clark and Jimmy out. After a moment:

LUTHOR

(calling after)
Clark?

Clark turns.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

It was good to see you again.

Clark says nothing - he just nods, turns and walks away. Jimmy gives him a look.

JIMMY

What was that all about?

CLARK

Long story.

But he throws a look over his shoulder, back to where Lois and Luthor are stood talking.

ANGLE - LOIS AND LUTHOR

who are close together beneath the blades of one of the choppers. Lois sidles in closer, a mischievous smile on her face.

LOIS

Okay Lex, what's going on?

LUTHOR

I have something for you.

He reaches into his pocket and produces an envelope. He hands it to her. She takes it curiously.

LOIS

What's this?

LUTHOR

LexCorp's annual charity ball is coming up in a couple of months...

Lois looks up in surprise - Luthor grins.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

So I figured I'd better ask you now so you can make room in your schedule.

They both laugh.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

I hope you'll do me the honour of
joining me as my guest.

Lois looks from Luthor to the invitation and back again,
smiling coyly.

LOIS

I'll think about it.

She turns to go. Luthor smiles and calls after her.

LUTHOR

Is that a yes?

LOIS

That's an I'll think about it.

But she has a big smile on her face. Luthor looks
triumphant as he walks off in the opposite direction.

EXT. METROPOLIS -- NIGHT

From a beautiful panoramic shot of Metropolis at night, we
PAN UP the side of the building and see the one light still
on - Clark is pacing around inside.

INT. CLARK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Clark's apartment has clearly only just been moved into -
a couple of bags holding his clothes and gear remain
unpacked on the floor and the apartment, while furnished,
feels cold, as though it hasn't been lived in for some
time.

Clark is in his shirt-sleeves, pacing and talking into his
phone.

MARTHA (O.S.)

So how did your first day go?

CLARK

Tricky, really.

As they speak we INTERCUT this scene with:

INT. KENT FARM -- NIGHT

Jonathan and Martha are stood in the kitchen, talking to
their son on the speaker phone.

JONATHAN

Tricky how?

CLARK

I ran into Lex today.

Martha and Jonathan exchange a dark look.

JONATHAN

What happened?

CLARK
Nothing really. But...

MARTHA
Yes?

CLARK
I don't know ... he's changed.
(beat)
No, actually, he hasn't - he's the
same person he always was, only
this time he's showing it.

EXT. LEXCORP TOWER - LOADING DOCKS -- DAY

Three trucks marked 'Cadmus Labs' pull into the loading
docks.

LexCorp DOCKERS rush out to meet the trucks and begin
unloading them, removing big industrial chemical barrels.

One DOCKER slips with his barrel and drops it to the ground
with a horrible CLANG. He reaches down to pick it up--

A hand moves INTO FRAME, GRABS his wrist...

CORBEN (O.S.)
Careful--

JOHN CORBEN (30s, a brick shit-house of a Cockney thug)
appears and gives him a reproachful look. Corben is
Luthor's head of security and definitely not someone to
cross.

CORBEN (CONT'D)
--careful, it's not a bloody sofa!

As the man picks the barrel up, we can see an ominous GREEN
GLOW coming from within.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Luthor is sat alone at his desk.

LUTHOR
(into phone)
Everything proceeding on schedule?

CORBEN (O.S.)
One or two problems, but I'm working
on it.

LUTHOR
Good. Spread the word, Mr Corben.
We are good to go.

He hangs up the phone, picks up his drink and leans back
in his chair, a small smile on his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. METROPOLIS -- DAY

The sun rises over the city ... and the serenity is broken as a group of MILITARY ATTACK HELICOPTERS shoot PAST CAMERA and over the city.

ON THE STREETS BELOW everyone looks and points, marvelling at the display.

On the roof of a nearby building we can see a small party watching the display.

KRAMER

Ladies and gentlemen of the Press...

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

Jimmy snaps photos as two choppers shoot past him at great speed.

A reception of military top brass, scientists, dignitaries and press are gathered to watch the display. Lois is stood beside GENERAL KRAMER (40s), in charge of the proceedings.

KRAMER

...I give you the Hermes-44 Attack helicopter.

Applause from the assembled crowd. Kramer smiles as he continues.

KRAMER (CONT'D)

As I've said before, these helicopters will soon become standard issue throughout the United States Marine Corps and eventually throughout the Air Force. Developed exclusively for us by Hermes Aerospace with assistance from Wayne Industries, the 44 has set a new standard in aerial warfare.

Lois speaks up from beside Kramer.

LOIS

General, I understand Hermes fought off some tough competition from LexCorp to get this contract?

KRAMER

They did - but the best design won in the end.

LOIS

Perhaps you could tell us how the Hermes 44 differs from previous models?

KRAMER

Well, better than that, Miss Lane, I can show you.

He turns to a SERGEANT.

KRAMER (CONT'D)
Initiate the Double Helix.

SERGEANT
Yes sir.
(into radio)
This is command, we are initiating
the Double Helix...

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

Clark twists and turns his way through the masses, checking his watch in annoyance.

CLARK
Late on your second day, way to
impress the boss, Kent...

Above him, two choppers shoot past.

At that moment a HIGH PITCHED WHISTLE rips through the city

INT. HELICOPTER #1 -- DAY

The PILOT and GUNNER control the aircraft.

PILOT #1
Acknowledged command, we are
requesting permission to--

But he breaks off as suddenly all his monitors go dark.

GUNNER #1
What's going on?

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

Clark stops dead at the sound. He looks around to identify the source but realises he's the only one who can hear it.

INT. HELICOPTER #1 -- DAY

The Gunner looks very worried.

GUNNER #1
Charlie, what're you doing?

PILOT #1
It's not me? It's like it's gotta
mind of it's own--

And the helicopter suddenly goes into a nosedive!

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

An EXPLOSION rips through the silence.

Everyone on the rooftop runs over to the edge to take a look - the helicopter has crash landed in the middle of the street below.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Everyone has rushed to the window to see the carnage.

RON

Oh no...

Perry forces his way to the front.

PERRY

What's happening, what's going--?

He looks down and sees the crashed chopper.

PERRY (CONT'D)

My God...

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

The crowd have stopped, looking stunned. Clark is in among them -- and at that moment he hears the WHISTLING SOUND again.

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

Jimmy is stood looking right over the edge, snapping photos of the crashed chopper. Lois looks up and sees him.

LOIS

Jimmy!

JIMMY

It's okay, I got it--

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

Clark looks up to see another pair of helicopters overhead ... and one of them suddenly goes OUT OF CONTROL!

Clark focuses and we HEAR what he hears.

PILOT #2 (O.S.)

I can't control it - mind of it's own...!

And it goes into a nosedive! Clark looks up--

And it's heading straight for Lois and Jimmy!

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

A shadow falls over them; Lois looks up - her jaw drops--

LOIS

No...

The chopper is bearing down right on top of them--

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

As everyone starts to panic, new resolve fills Clark's face. He vanishes down an alley.

Everyone hurrying past is too panicked to notice him slip off his glasses and run down the alley at speed, grabbing the seams of his shirt and RIPPING IT OPEN TO REVEAL THE 'S' SHIELD COVERING HIS CHEST!

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

Lois charges forward, TACKLES Jimmy to the ground - the helicopter MISSES THEM BY CENTIMETRES--

And crashes HARD into the roof - the explosion blows Lois and Jimmy back--

LOIS

JIMMY!

Lois goes OVER THE EDGE--!

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

The chopper BOUNCES, coming off the roof and DROPPING TOWARDS THE GROUND like a sycamore seed--

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

Jimmy scrambles over to the edge - Lois has grabbed on to a stone gargoyle and is holding on for dear life!

JIMMY

Oh my God!

LOIS

Jimmy! Help me!

He grabs her by the arm and hauls her up onto the roof--

Unseen by them, cracks are forming all around them--

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

The helicopter is in free-fall, spinning slightly--

From the alley a red-and-blue flash emerges and rockets skyward at high speed--

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

Jimmy's face contorts in horror!

JIMMY

It's gonna hit!

INT. HELICOPTER #2 -- DAY

The Pilot gives up.

PILOT #2

Sorry Mike!

They see the ground rushing up to hit them ... they both brace themselves...

And suddenly they STOP DEAD!

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

ON THE STREET everyone looks up in amazement...

Lois jaw drops...

Holding the helicopter, hovering high above the streets--

SUPERMAN.

Clad in the distinctive red-and-blue uniform with the red 'S' shield covering his chest.

JIMMY

What is that?

Lois cannot reply - she is pole-axed--

And at that moment the corner of the roof BREAKS OFF and TILTS - Lois and Jimmy are THROWN BACKWARDS, grabbing for a hand-hold--

Superman descends to earth, settling the chopper down as though it weighs nothing--

Lois's SCREAM rips through the silence - Superman looks up and sees it--

The roof finally gives way - Jimmy and Lois go into free-fall--

Superman TAKES FLIGHT, rocketing straight upward and catching Jimmy in one hand--!

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What the?

SUPERMAN

Easy son, I've got you.

He turns - sees Lois, still holding on to a chunk of rooftop, falling straight down. Superman rolls and dives--

JIMMY

Oh no!

Lois sees the ground rushing up to strike her--

And STOPS, twenty feet from the ground. She turns and looks--

Superman is hovering just above ground level, Jimmy in one hand, holding the fallen masonry to which Lois still clings in the other.

Lois looks into Superman's eyes, dumbstruck.

LOIS

Hi.

SUPERMAN

Hi.

In spite of the situation Superman grins.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Don't let go.

Lois nods dumbly, unable to take it in.

They descend to Earth, gently settling Lois and Jimmy to the ground. Everyone applauds. Superman helps Lois to her feet.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

LOIS

I think so. You ... how did ...
who are...?

But at that moment we hear the WHISTLING SOUND again. Superman looks up to see the other helicopter careening out of control. He turns back to Lois and Jimmy.

SUPERMAN

If you'll excuse me, Miss Lane.

And with that he's gone, rocketing up into the air. For a moment Lois just watches him go, awestruck - and then she rounds on Jimmy.

LOIS

Did you get that? If you don't
tell me you got that you're a dead
man!

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor is stood in front of a wall of video monitors in his office, all of which show various scenes of the disaster unfolding.

ANCHOR

...complete carnage as the military
helicopter crashed in downtown
Metropolis just minutes ago...

Luthor permits himself a small smile.

LUTHOR

Timing is everything.

ANCHOR

Wait ... are you sure?

(MORE)

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

... ladies and gentlemen, we are going to a live feed, I repeat this is happening live...

And all the monitors show various images of Superman rescuing the helicopter in mid-air and setting it down.

The grin vanishes immediately from Luthor's face.

EXT. METROPOLIS -- DAY

In our first good look at him flying, Superman flies at high speed across the city, chasing after the second helicopter.

He reaches the helicopter and goes to grab the runners as before ... but then looks up to see that it is in fact ARMING A MISSILE. After a moment it FIRES and PEELS OFF--

SMASHING into a section of the Metropolis Monorail, completely destroying a huge section of track.

Superman looks up - and there's a train bearing right down on the broken section.

SUPERMAN

Oh no...

And he rolls and dives, flashing down towards the train.

INT. MONORAIL -- DAY

Everything is quite obscenely normal - then the TRAIN DRIVER looks up and sees the huge gap in front of him.

TRAIN DRIVER

Sweet mother of Jesus--!

He jams the breaks on--

EXT. MONORAIL -- DAY

Superman flashes down to the front carriage, grabs hold of the train and PULLS--

INT. MONORAIL -- DAY

The train is slowing down, but it's still going to hit - the Driver can only stare in horror--

EXT. MONORAIL -- DAY

And Superman flashes down to the front and charges, jamming his body into the front of the train--

INT. MONORAIL -- DAY

The Driver's eyes go wide as--

EXT. MONORAIL -- DAY

The train SQUEALS TO A STOP, just inches from a massive drop.

Superman straightens up and looks down at the ground far below.

INT. MONORAIL -- DAY

The Driver stares, dumbfounded, as Superman straightens up with not a scratch on him.

SUPERMAN

Are you alright?

TRAIN DRIVER

I think so. How ... what the hell...

SUPERMAN

I'll explain later.

EXT. MONORAIL TRACK -- DAY

Superman looks down at the broken bit of monorail, then up at the helicopters ... and then something clicks.

SUPERMAN

Lex...?

And if there was any doubt he turns to look.

TELESCOPIC

We shoot through the city and CRASH IN ON Luthor stood in his window, watching everything.

BACK TO SCENE

Disgusted, Superman turns--

To find A THIRD HELICOPTER has gone out of control and is dropping like a stone over a crowded shopping plaza.

Superman takes flight.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE METROPOLIS -- DAY

Superman flashes up towards the helicopter - and just as he gets in range the helicopter OPENS FIRE! BULLETS FLASH OUT--

INT. HELICOPTER #3 -- DAY

The Pilot turns back to the Gunner.

PILOT #3

What the hell are you doing!?

GUNNER #3

It's not me!

EXT. SKIES ABOVE METROPOLIS -- DAY

The bullets bounce harmlessly off Superman - he flies forward, closing in--

His irises turn red - a thin beam of heat welds the gun ports shut--

INT. HELICOPTER #3 -- DAY

The Pilot's jaw is on the floor.

PILOT #3
You see what I see?

The Gunner nods and grins.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE METROPOLIS -- DAY

Superman rolls and spins beneath the chopper., CATCHING IT IN MID-AIR as before with no apparent effort.

EXT. SHOPPING PLAZA -- DAY

Amongst the crowds, SMALL BOY AND GIRL spot Superman and point up excitedly.

GIRL
Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird!

BOY
It's a plane!

Their FATHER looks up, sees it too--

FATHER
What the hell is that?

Superman sets the chopper down in the middle of the plaza and opens the door to address the pilot.

SUPERMAN
You gentlemen alright?

PILOT #3
Yeah ... how did you...

SUPERMAN
That doesn't matter. What happened?

PILOT #3
Well the controls just went berserk,
it was like the thing had a mind
of it's own!

SUPERMAN
I might have known.

He looks up to see a crowd approaching - paramedics, fire officers, a few cops and a load of civilians.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

I have to go. You'll be safe now.

And he takes off and vanishes into the sky. The gunner nudges the pilot.

GUNNER #3

We got valet parking, now that's STYLE.

PILOT #3

I think I need to get drunk.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor is FURIOUS, storming up and down and yelling down the phone.

LUTHOR

HOW COULD YOU LET THIS HAPPEN? We spent EIGHT MONTHS planning this, how the hell did--?

At that moment there is a tap on the window. Luthor whirls to see Superman hovering outside, and he doesn't look happy.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

I'll call you back.

He hangs up just as Superman walks in, SHATTERING the window into a million pieces in the process.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

(shrugs)

Come on in, it's open.

Superman strides in and from the look on his face it looks like he's really holding back from ripping Luthor in half.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Impressive entrance.

SUPERMAN

Eight dead. Countless more injured. And it's all down to you.

LUTHOR

A very interesting accusation. You have proof?

SUPERMAN

The signal. Every time one of those helicopters malfunctioned that signal went off - too high for the human ear to register, but there. And it came from this tower.

LUTHOR

And if it's too high for the human ear to hear ... how did you hear it?

He grins sardonically.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Nice try. Let's see how that one holds up in court. You know what court is? That's where I bankrupt you and sue that fancy technology right off your back.

SUPERMAN

Is this what you've become?

And Luthor gives Superman a hard look, as though seeing him for the first time.

LUTHOR

Do I know you?

Superman gives Luthor a look of abject disgust.

SUPERMAN

I've never met anyone like you.

And just for a moment both we and Superman believe Luthor has seen through him - but then Luthor's face goes stony.

LUTHOR

Very well. As enlightening as this has been, this is the end of the line.

At that moment the door BANGS OPEN and Mercy steps in, armed to the teeth. She raises her gun and FIRES--

CLOSE on Luthor as he smiles - a smile that becomes frozen on his face and then turns into a look of horror--

Superman stands holding a small pile of bullets in his palm. He gives Luthor a hard look and mirror's Luthor's tone.

SUPERMAN

Nice try.

He drops the bullets on the floor, still smoking, and turns to face Luthor.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

I'm watching you, Luthor. I might not have been able to prove it this time, but every dog has its day.

And with that he turns and flies off through the broken window. Luthor watches him vanish into the distance.

LUTHOR

Well well well. Wasn't that ... interesting?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

This is all one long take:

EXTREME CLOSE on a copy of the afternoon edition of the Daily Planet. The main picture is an inspiring shot of the rescue of the helicopter, and the headline simply reads...

"SUPERMAN"

RON (O.S.)

Superman?

Lois, wearing a big grin on her face, makes her way through the city room with Ron trailing in her wake. Ron can't stop himself smiling.

RON (CONT'D)

Superman?

LOIS

The guy had a big red 'S' on his chest. Jimmy held out for 'The Metropolis Marvel', but it sounded too much like a hockey player or something, so ... Superman.

RON

Lois--

LOIS

I know what you mean ... it's got Pulitzer written all over it--

They pass by Jimmy, who is sat with his feet on the desk in the company of A BUNCH OF COPY GIRLS who are all looking at the photo in awe.

COPY GIRL

Say what you want, but that is one hell of a photo...

Jimmy can't get enough of this.

JIMMY

I know - and considering this was taken after I'd nearly fallen to my death you really have to give credit...

Another group of reporters, including CAT GRANT, go past in the other direction.

CAT

So I want to know all the correct details - girlfriend, boyfriend, wife, single, kids, where he got that Hallowe'en costume...

They pass by Lois and Ron, who are sat down at Ron's desk and looking at the photo of Superman in action.

RON

I still can't believe it.

LOIS

You can't? I can't and I was there, I was in the middle of it - we need to know more about this. I think saying 'story of the century' might be a little premature - nah, forget it, this IS the story of the century..

Behind them the doors open and Clark steps inside. He makes his way across to his desk - sat by his computer is a copy of the paper.

CLARK

(smiles)

Superman...?

At that moment the phone rings. He puts down the paper and picks it up.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Daily Planet, Kent speaking.

JONATHAN (O.S.)

Superman?

As the phone conversation continues we INTERCUT:

INT. KENT FARM -- DAY

Jonathan and Martha are stood by the speaker phone, Martha holding a copy of the Planet. Jonathan is looking at the photo with a distinct 'that's my boy' look of pride.

JONATHAN

Superman?

CLARK

Yeah, I know. Seems to have stuck though.

MARTHA

I'm sure it has. Clark, I'm so proud of you ... WE'RE so proud of you.

CLARK

Thanks guys. Look, I can't really talk about this right now, I'm at work and...

JONATHAN

It's completely okay, we understand.

Clark looks up to see Lois approaching, BEAMING.

CLARK

Gotta go now. Love you.

MARTHA

You too, son.

JONATHAN

Take care, son.

We CUT BACK to the Planet as Clark hangs the phone up.

He looks up to see Lois park herself down at her desk which is just across the way from his.

CLARK

Nice work.

LOIS

Really? Thanks.

CLARK

One question though ... Superman?

LOIS

Well what else were we going to call him? 'Mysterious flying man' might work for a while but it's never gonna stick. This guy needs a name, everyone needs a name.

As she looks back to her desk, Clark shrugs slightly.

CLARK

(to himself)

Yeah ... yeah, I guess we do at that.

At that moment the office door crashes open and Perry sticks his head out into the city room.

PERRY

Lane, Kent, in here NOW!

INT. PERRY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Clark and Lois enter to find Perry holding a copy of the paper. He turns to Lois with a grin, slaps the front page.

PERRY

This is great stuff, Lois. Thanks to you the Planet had this one out before anyone else.

LOIS

Thanks Perry.

PERRY

This is what I'm talking about. Making sure that our people are in the right place at the right time to get this kind of stuff. Kent, where were you all day yesterday?

CLARK

Tracking down a lead.

PERRY

What kind of a lead?

CLARK

Trying to find out why those helicopters went off in the first place. I think they might have been hit by some kind of remote signal.

PERRY

Interesting. Any evidence?

CLARK

Just before each helicopter malfunctioned every dog in the area started barking.

PERRY

Barking dogs? What, you're talking about some kind of ultrasonic signal?

CLARK

Possibly.

Perry considers for a moment, then nods.

PERRY

Fine, follow it up. This is now our number one priority. We were the first out with the story, now we need to get the rest of the tale. As of right now--

The door opens and Jimmy rushes in, out of breath--

JIMMY

Sorry to interrupt, Chief--

PERRY

(yelling)
WHAT IS IT!?

Jimmy physically recoils from the shout.

LOIS

Jimmy?

JIMMY

Heard ... roaring...

PERRY

Olsen, are you going to tell me what this is all about?

JIMMY

(small voice)
Um ... first bank of Metropolis, hostage situation--

LOIS

On it. Come on.

She grabs Clark's arm and physically hauls him out of the office.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRST BANK OF METROPOLIS -- DAY

The whole area surrounding the bank is a disaster area - armed cops have the place staked out, civilians and press are kept well back behind cordons.

After a moment the door opens just a crack and a dead body falls through. Cameras begin flashing immediately, punctuated by screams of horror from the crowd.

Lois fights her way to the front, past the camera crews, with Clark and Jimmy trailing in her wake.

LOIS

Captain Sawyer!

As Jimmy begins snapping pictures, CAPTAIN MAGGIE SAWYER (30s) hurries over to where Lois is stood.

SAWYER

Lois, this really isn't a good time.

LOIS

What's happening?

SAWYER

Robbery gone wrong, it's turned into a hostage situation. Don't even think about it!

Her words stop Lois in her tracks before she manages to duck under the barricade. Lois decides to stay put.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

They've started killing the hostages.

LOIS

What're you going to do?

SAWYER

The only thing we can do - send SWAT in guns blazing.

CLARK

But more people will get hurt that way.

SAWYER

I know - we don't have a choice.

Sawyer makes her way back over to the police lines. Clark turns and tries to move off but Lois grabs his arm and stops him in his tracks.

LOIS

Where do you think you're going?

CLARK

I, uh, I thought I'd go round the back, see what's happening back there.

LOIS

Okay, great idea, I'll stay here.

She turns away. Clark moves off, moving very fast behind the crowd.

Between the people we see a moving figure that gradually turns from a grey suit into the familiar colourful uniform.

Across the scene, Jimmy looks horrified as he sees the SWAT team readying their weapons.

JIMMY

This is bad.

LOIS

Bad? This is gonna be a bloodbath. Where the hell's-

BYSTANDER

LOOK!

Everyone looks up as a red-and-blue blur DESCENDS FROM THE HEAVENS at high speed. Lois gets it immediately.

LOIS

Superman...

Superman descends into the square, takes a right and SMASHES IN THROUGH THE FRONT DOORS of the bank and vanishes from view. SCREAMS come within, punctuated by GUNFIRE--

Then, abruptly, all noise within the bank STOPS DEAD. Everyone looks worried--

And then Superman comes FLYING out of the front door, eight frazzled-looking bank robbers held in his arms. He dumps them to the ground at the feet of an amazed looking Sawyer.

SUPERMAN

Captain Sawyer, please take these men into custody.

Lois digs Jimmy hard in the ribs with an elbow.

LOIS

Get a picture, quick!

Jimmy's camera is already snapping away as Sawyer shakes Superman's hand.

SAWYER

I, uh ... thank you, Superman.

SUPERMAN

Any time.

And with that he's gone, vanishing into the clouds. Back on the ground, Lois shakes her head in amazement.

LOIS

Why does he never stick around long enough for me to ask any questions?

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Clark, Lois and Jimmy are sat in the window of a perky-looking coffee shop. Clark is dawdling over his drink, not saying anything.

Lois and Jimmy are sat together as Jimmy flips through the photos of Superman on his digital camera.

JIMMY

I like that one.

LOIS

You do? Now see I would have gone for the other.

JIMMY

You're sure?

LOIS

What, you think I just said it for the hell of it? Yes, I'm positive.
(looks up)
What do you think, Kent?

No answer. She looks up to see Clark staring into space.

JIMMY

Mr Kent?

LOIS

Hello? Earth to Smallville?

She pokes him in the ribs. Clark snaps back to reality with a jerk.

CLARK

What?

JIMMY

You were miles away.

Lois glances across the street, catches sight of what Clark was looking at - a LexCorp billboard showing a huge photo of Luthor's smiling face.

LOIS

This has really gotten under your skin, hasn't it? Come on, out with it - what did Lex do this time?

For a very long moment Clark seems to be deciding whether or not to tell her. Then he sighs and gives in.

CLARK

LexCorp owns a plant in Smallville - its been there for years, no-one likes having in on their doorstep but it provides more employment to Smallville than anything else. One day I was passing by, there was an explosion ... and I pulled Lex Luthor out of his car before he died.

JIMMY

You saved his life?

CLARK

I did. And we were friends for nearly a year, but then ... then Lex did something that I'll never be able to forgive him for.

The hurt in his voice is obvious. Lois' expression softens.

LOIS

What did he do?

Another long moment before Clark answers.

CLARK

He ruined the life of someone I care about.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LANA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Clark and Lana are sat on the porch of her house. Clark looks very frustrated.

CLARK

And he's all smiles and friendliness, even after what he did to you.

LANA

Clark, getting frustrated about Lex Luthor is not going to do you any good.

CLARK

The thing is ... I KNOW he was behind those helicopters going off. I just can't prove it.

(MORE)

CLARK (CONT'D)

I heard the signal, I heard it coming from LexCorp, and I know that the way things are going LexCorp is going to get that defence contract and make even more money ... that IS all he cares about, after all...

LANA

Clark!

Her sharp tone jars him out of his melancholy.

LANA (CONT'D)

You can't live your life feeling guilty about Lex Luthor and something you had no power to prevent.

CLARK

Even after what he did to you?

LANA

He conned my parents out of their land and my father died of a broken heart. For a while I wanted to kill Lex Luthor myself, but ... we can't live in the past forever.

(beat)

I could have given in to my despair, and then he would have won. But I clawed back my dignity and put my life back together. Now he can't hurt me any more.

She leans in close.

LANA (CONT'D)

Clark, you can do things nobody else can, but you can't change the past. The world might call you Superman now, but you are still a man.

CLARK

Maybe you're right.

LANA

You know I am.

She takes his hand.

LANA (CONT'D)

You might not be able to help me now ... but there are plenty of people in this world who need someone to fight for them. You can do that, Clark. Go save the world.

Clark looks up ... and there is a new resolve in his blue eyes as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NORTH SEA -- NIGHT

A Scottish fishing vessel is battling a bad storm.

INT. FISHING SHIP -- NIGHT

The CAPTAIN and MATE are battling to control the boat.

MATE

Captain, we can't take this!

CAPTAIN

I know, but we can't navigate back,
the instruments are...

At that moment the ship shudders violently ... and then rises out of the sea!

MATE

Christ on a Bike!

EXT. NORTH SEA -- NIGHT

The ship rises out of the turbulent waters ... and we see that Superman is beneath it, flying the stricken ship to safety.

INSERT: Newspaper headline: "Fishing vessel rescued by flying man!"

INT. HOUSE (ITALY) -- DAY

An ITALIAN MAN slaps his WIFE across the face and sends her sprawling to the floor. He stands over her terrified form, holding a broken bottle.

[The dialogue in this scene is Italian and subtitled)

ITALIAN MAN

Why do you always make me do this?

He raises the bottle ... and then a hand shoots onto screen and grabs him around the wrist. The man howls in pain as he realises Superman is stood behind him.

SUPERMAN

Bad move.

He grabs the man by the collar and hauls him out of the house.

EXT. ITALIAN STREET -- DAY

Superman flies the Italian man right up into the air until the whole of Naples is spread out below them. The man is screaming in terror.

ITALIAN MAN

Put me down! Please, put me down!

SUPERMAN

As you wish.

And he lets go. The man plummets screaming to earth, watching the ground rush up to smack him in the face ... and he stops two feet from the ground.

We PULL BACK to see Superman holding the man up by one ankle.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Next time you try lay a hand on her, I might not catch you. Remember that.

And he drops the man on the floor before taking off and vanishing into the sky.

INSERT: Newspaper headline: Superman - the man of steel!

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

Lois is stood talking to a FIREMAN in front of a burnt out building.

FIREMAN

Yeah, he was here ... well, I'm pretty sure ut was him, that water tower didn't just up and drop itself onto the blaze now did it--?

EXT. SOUTH AMERICAN TOWN -- DAY

Armed militia fighters roll into town on tanks - the locals look up in horror as the armed gunmen begin sacking the town.

A commander, sat on top of a tank, barks orders.

MILITIA COMMANDER

Take what you like, this is all ours now!

A VILLAGE ELDER walks up to the commander and regards him coldly.

VILLAGE ELDER

How dare you? This is sacred ground - have you no honour?

The militia commander smirks slightly, signals one of his men - who fires a shell from the tank at the elder's house, sending it up in flames.

The elder turns back to look at the remains of his house - all the flames have gone out.

MILITIA COMMANDER

What the--?

A tap on his shoulder - Superman is stood behind him.

SUPERMAN

Perhaps you didn't listen to the gentleman.

He BENDS the tank gun BACK ON ITSELF. The militia commander jumps him from behind, knife in hand--

The knife shatters as it connects with Superman's back. He picks the man up and hurls him across the village with no effort before rounding on the men.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Put everything back.

He flies over to where the commander has fallen, picks the man up by the throat and holds him up in the air.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Do yourself a favour - DON'T make me come back here.

The man nods urgently, struggling to breathe.

INSERT: Newspaper headline: Superman - America's secret weapon?

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

A GANG OF THUGS come charging out of a diamond store laden down with bags of swag. They leap into their waiting getaway van and roar off into the streets.

INT. GETAWAY VAN -- DAY

The thugs whoop with triumph.

THUG #1

Woo-Hoo! We did it guys, we did-!

At that moment the roof rips right open, melted ... it peels back to reveal Superman stood on top.

SUPERMAN

Quite the day for you boys, huh?

VARIOUS TV STATIONS

All of which are running stories on Superman.

NEWSREADERS

...acts of heroism across the globe
... the mysterious flying saviour
known only as Superman ... saved
eighty people from a train wreck
in Paris this afternoon ... daring
diamond heist in downtown Metropolis
narrowly averted by the man they
now call 'the man of tomorrow...'

INSERT: Daily Planet headline: Superman - America's hero!

A fist CRASHES INTO FRAME onto the picture--

LUTHOR (O.S.)
 Superman! Everywhere I look!

We PULL BACK to REVEAL:

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor's desk is completely covered by various national and international newspapers, all of which are running stories on Superman. Luthor looks furious and begins pacing up and down.

LUTHOR
 Eight months of planning, that
 helicopter job took. Eight months!
 And all ruined by this flying circus
 performer!

CORBEN (O.S.)
 Maybe we should just do him in,
 gov'nor.

Luthor looks up - Corben is stood across the office.

LUTHOR
 (reproachful)
 'Do him in?' As appealing as that
 possibility is, Corben, right now
 it seems somewhat difficult.

CORBEN
 Lock me in a dark room with him
 for five minutes and-

LUTHOR
 And I'd most likely be short one
 head of security. No. No, this
 needs some thought to it. Everyone
 has a weakness, and once we've
 found his then by all means you
 can 'do him in, gov'nor'.

He sits down behind his desk, picks up the paper and looks hard at the photo of Superman on the cover.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)
 This is going to take some thought
 to it.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Lois is sat with her feet on her desk, reading the paper.

Inside the middle pages feature a huge spread - "*Sightings of Superman*", by Lois Lane, showing a map of the world, pin-pointed with various locations in which Superman has appeared.

There's a huge smile of triumph on her face.

LOIS

Well ... he certainly keeps himself
busy...

She looks up as Jimmy approaches, weighed down under the
biggest bunch of flowers you have ever seen.

JIMMY

(struggling slightly)
Miss Lane? This just arrived for
you, special messenger.

Lois smiles and stands up, taking the card from the flowers.
Across the way Clark looks up in interest from his desk.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

So what's the occasion? Don't
tell me it's your birthday and
I've forgotten...

LOIS

Jimmy, no-one in this office knows
when my birthday is, and that's
for a very good reason...

Clark looks over the rim of his glasses

TELESCOPIC

*The note is a piece of LexCorp stationary with a handwritten
note:*

7:30 tonight - L.L.

BACK TO SCENE

Clark puts his glasses back on and tries to act nonchalant.

CLARK

From someone special?

Lois suddenly looks shifty and pockets the card very
quickly.

LOIS

No, not really.

Clark doesn't look convinced.

CUT TO:

EXT. METROPOLIS -- NIGHT

We pan across the night-lit city.

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- NIGHT

A long white limo makes it's way down the streets.

INT. LUTHOR'S LIMO -- NIGHT

Lois and Luthor are sat in the back of the limo. Luthor wears a tuxedo; Lois is clad in a long evening dress and looks positively stunning. She smiles at Luthor.

LOIS

Of course, it's your tower - you had to physically sneak out the back way to jump into this limo and drive around the front. You certainly like to make an entrance.

LUTHOR

(smiles)

It's called publicity ... in this game you can't get enough of it.

LOIS

The good or the bad?

LUTHOR

All publicity is good publicity.

LOIS

And if this is a game, then that makes me, what, a pawn?

Luthor turns and gives her a sincere look.

LUTHOR

Oh no. Nothing of the kind.

In spite of herself Lois smiles.

EXT. LEXCORP TOWER -- NIGHT

The place is jumping with a glitzy atmosphere - red carpet rolled out, papparazi snapping photos as celebrity guests arrive.

Luthor's limo pulls up. The chauffeur - Hope - comes around and opens the door.

Luthor emerges with Lois on his arm, and immediately the papparazi barrage them with yelled questions and camera flashes.

INT. LEXCORP TOWER - FUNCTION ROOM -- NIGHT

The party is jumping as a house band performs on the stage; the air is very chic and glamorous.

As the song finishes, Luthor and Lois enter - as one the whole crowd begins to applaud.

The crowd parts to allow them through. Luthor leans in and whispers to Lois.

LUTHOR

You're enjoying this, aren't you?

LOIS

Don't know what you're taking about.

She flashes him a wry smile ... but yes, she's loving every minute of it.

They take to the stage, to more applause as Luthor takes the microphone from the singer.

LUTHOR

(to crowd)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming.

He initiates the applause this time.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

As I'm sure you all know, when I was seventeen, my Father - God rest his soul - had a nervous breakdown and left me saddled with a company that was going bankrupt before my eyes. I took that company and turned it around. I sweated blood into this business, and I'm now finally able to give something back. Hence tonight.

His presence is magnetic - the crowd hangs on his every word.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

The Luthor Foundation Ball is my way of repaying a debt to the city of Metropolis that I know I will never be able to fully balance. Last year we raised two million dollars to give to the poorest of the citizens of Metropolis ... well, tonight I want to double that figure. And with your help, I'm sure we will.

More applause - even Lois looks hypnotized by the performance.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Well, I'm sure you don't want to have to listen to me all night, so for now I'll just say two final words...

(beat)

Enjoy yourselves.

More applause as Luthor and Lois walk off the stage. The singer counts in and the band launches into a swinging tune.

LOIS

Cute.

LUTHOR

I thought you'd approve.
 (offers his arm)
 May I have this dance?

Lois smiles and takes his arm. Luthor leads her to the dance floor.

INT. CLARK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Clark is pacing up and down, as though trying to make a decision.

CLARK

Clark Kent, you have got to be out
 of your mind...

He makes his mind up, walks across the room, opens a secret compartment in the wall and removes the Superman costume.

And in a WHOOSH of air he is gone.

INT. LEXCORP TOWER - FUNCTION ROOM -- NIGHT

The party is in full swing. Lois is stood on her own by a huge picture window.

Luthor is in the middle of the floor, meeting and greeting. He looks up to see Lois watching. He smiles and hurries over, snagging two glasses of champagne from a waiter.

LOIS

Champagne? Are we celebrating?

LUTHOR

It seems like it at times.
 (laughs)
 Well, what with one thing and another we never got the chance to have a proper talk the last time our paths crossed.

LOIS

Because of Clark?

Luthor looks up, his expression unreadable. Lois leans forward, interested.

LOIS (CONT'D)

It's funny - I mention your name to him and he clams up. I mention his name to you, and he does the same. Just what happened between the two of you?

Luthor takes a long pull from his drink.

EXT. LEXCORP TOWER - ROOF -- NIGHT

Superman descends from the clouds and lands on the roof.

Below him he can see right down into the functions room below and has a perfect view of Lois and Luthor.

He focuses his hearing and--

LUTHOR (O.S.)

Clark Kent blames me for something very painful that happened to a friend of his many years ago. After all this time I would have thought this would be ancient history.

LOIS (O.S.)

You seem to have made quite an impression.

INT. LEXCORP TOWER - FUNCTION ROOM -- NIGHT

Neither Lois nor Luthor can see Superman above them. Their conversation continues unawares.

LUTHOR

Well ... perhaps. Do we have to talk about Clark Kent?

LOIS

(shrugs)

No. What do you want to talk about?

LUTHOR

What about you?

Lois gives him a wry look; Luthor smiles and carries on smoothly.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

What are you working on at the moment?

LOIS

(grins)

You mean apart from this piece about the millionaire egotist who thinks he owns Metropolis?

LUTHOR

(correcting)

Billionaire. And I do -- well, most of it, anyway.

They both laugh.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Apart from that.

LOIS

I'm still working on the story about Superman.

Luthor's reaction to this is minute - but Lois notices.

LOIS (CONT'D)

What's the matter. You don't approve of our new arrival?

LUTHOR

I worry about a world where we find ourselves having to put our trust in a flying costumed vigilante. I'm not questioning the work he's done or the lives he's saved - his efforts are commendable to say the least. But I can't help but wonder what his motive is.

Lois gives him a hard look.

LOIS

His motive is that he wants to help people - is that so hard to understand?

(beat)

Lex, not everyone is out for themselves all the time, even these days.

LUTHOR

So that's Superman, is it? A selfless protector?

LOIS

Maybe.

She smiles, a faraway look in her eyes.

EXT. LEXCORP TOWER - ROOF -- NIGHT

Superman watches with a slight smile on his face.

LOIS (O.S.)

There's something very inspiring about a man who offers help and asks for nothing in return. It's nice to know that even in a world as cynical and messed up as this one, there are still heroes out there.

Luthor looks heartily annoyed - and Superman smiles even more.

EXT. LOIS' APARTMENT BLOCK -- NIGHT

Luthor's limo pulls up outside; Mercy opens the door and Lois and Luthor emerge.

LOIS

Well ... this is me.

(beat)

Thank you for tonight, Lex.

LUTHOR

The pleasure was all mine, Lois.
Until next time?

He kisses her on the cheek before getting back into his limo. As it drives off the smile vanishes from Lois' face.

LOIS

God...

There is a gentle sound of air behind her and--

SUPERMAN (O.S.)

Good evening, Miss Lane.

She WHIRLS to find Superman stood behind her. She smiles, broad and genuine.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

I hope I'm not intruding.

LOIS

No, I ... no, not at all.

For a moment the two of them just stand there - for the first time, Lois looks completely lost for words.

LOIS (CONT'D)

I've, uh ... I've got so many questions for you.

SUPERMAN

Well, I'm here now, I'm not going anywhere.

LOIS

There's so many. Um ... who are you? What's your name?

SUPERMAN

Well, 'Superman' seems to have caught on. Your doing, I believe.

Lois blushes slightly.

LOIS

Well ... if it works.

SUPERMAN

Come on - there's something I want to show you.

LOIS

Where?

SUPERMAN

(grins)
You'll see.

He walks behind her, takes hold - and Lois' eyes go wide as he suddenly lifts her right off her feet and the two of them take to the skies.

EXT. DAILY PLANET -- NIGHT

Superman and Lois land gently on the rooftop of the Daily Planet.

LOIS

Whoa.

SUPERMAN

Are you alright?

LOIS

I'm fine...

He takes her hand and leads her to the edge of the rooftop. The night-lit city of is spread out all around them, a beautiful vista.

SUPERMAN

This is what I wanted to show you.

LOIS

(awestruck)

This is so beautiful.

SUPERMAN

I feel that way every time I fly over Metropolis. The city really never stops - it's always alive, always vibrant like this.

LOIS

There are times that I feel like I'm spending all my time on the ground, looking up. It's nice to see another side to the city. How do you do it?

Superman looks up, surprised..

SUPERMAN

Do what?

LOIS

The whole flying-through-the-air bit.

SUPERMAN

(smiles)

It just happens.

LOIS

That's not much of an answer.

SUPERMAN

No, not really, but it's the best one I can give you. Let me put it this way - how do you walk?

Now it's Lois' turn to be taken aback.

LOIS

Excuse me?

SUPERMAN

You asked me one, no fair dodging the question.

LOIS

I don't know - I just do.

SUPERMAN

And it's the same with me and the flying. I just do, and it's as natural to me as walking. More so, actually - I think it's possibly the most liberating feeling in the world.

Lois gives him a look of amazement.

LOIS

I've been following the reports about you. You've been appearing all over the world and helping people when they need it. You certainly keep busy.

SUPERMAN

I try.

LOIS

Why are you here?

SUPERMAN

To help.

He notices a look on her face.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Something wrong, Miss Lane?

LOIS

No, no, it's just ... I kind of expected you to say something like you were here to fight for truth, justice and hope.

SUPERMAN

(laughs)

That's got a ring to it, hasn't it? Write that.

LOIS

Really?

SUPERMAN

Really.

LOIS

Great...

She scribbles notes hastily into her notebook.

LOIS (CONT'D)

I've heard it said that you can see straight through solid objects.

SUPERMAN

I can see through most things...

He suddenly breaks off and looks around as he hears a sound - the same LOW WHISTLE we heard earlier when the helicopters went out of control.

LOIS

What is it?

Superman doesn't answer. Again, we hear what he hears and the screen fills with sound, all kinds of noises...

Until the clear, crisp sound of an EXPLOSION RIPS THROUGH, cutting off all noises.

He snaps back to reality and turns to face Lois.

SUPERMAN

Something's happened. I have to go.

LOIS

Be careful.

SUPERMAN

I always am.

With a smile, he turns and takes flight. Lois watches him go as he vanishes out of sight.

LOIS

Great. Another man who won't stick around.

EXT. CAMP SCHUSTER -- NIGHT

An establishing shot of a big military base on the outskirts of Metropolis, close to the mountains.

The whole place is in flames.

SUPER: Camp Schuster - US Military Training Base

Superman descends out of the clouds, hovers over the base and quickly takes stock of the situation. The main building is a complete wreck - that was clearly where the explosion happened.

In a flash of blue he shoots down to the building.

BINOCULAR P.O.V.

looking down on Camp Schuster, in flames.

CORBEN (O.S.)

Bollocks.

INT. CAMP SCHUSTER -- NIGHT

Inside it is a blazing inferno. Several SOLDIERS are trapped under a huge piece of fallen masonry, unable to move, with a fire on one side and a brick wall on the other.

After a moment the WALL CRASHES DOWN and Superman bursts in. He grabs the piece of masonry and HEFTS it up and off the soldiers.

SUPERMAN

Go!

The soldiers don't need telling twice and head out through the hole in the wall ... but just then Superman abruptly STUMBLES and DROPS TO THE GROUND.

The huge slab of wall SHATTERS as it FALLS ON HIM. He looks at his left hand ... and we see that the veins beneath the skin are WRITHING and have gone an EERIE GREEN in colour.

With some difficulty, Superman gets to his feet and walks out of the room. He looks like he's forcing himself to perform basic movements as he takes flight.

EXT. CAMP SCHUSTER -- DAY

A crowd of soldiers has gathered outside the building. An OFFICER runs up beside a DRILL SERGEANT.

OFFICER

Is everyone out?

DRILL SERGEANT

Sir, I think so - but Superman's still inside Sir!

At that moment a roaring noise comes from the building.

OFFICER

What the--!

A red and blue VORTEX has formed around the blazing building ... and a moment later the fire is extinguished, the flames simply vanishing...

And then Superman lands on the ground, half-staggering, gasping for breath. The Officer rushes over to him.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Superman, are you alright?

SUPERMAN

I think so...

He looks back to his hand - which has stopped writhing and has returned to normal.

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

Is everyone out?

OFFICER

We're doing a head-count now, but
I think everyone got out alright.

SUPERMAN

Good. If you'll excuse me...

With what looks like some effort he takes off.

We pan with Superman as he rises up above the base, stops and begins to look around, using his TELESCOPIC VISION to scan the area.

And he sees it - part way up one of the mountains, a man dressed in black stood by a jeep, watching the base through binoculars.

Eventually he spots what he was looking for - part way up one of the mountains he spots a man dressed in black stood by a jeep, watching the base through binoculars.

Superman's face goes stony and he flashes down towards the man.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST -- NIGHT

The man in black - Corben, we now see - is watching the base through his binoculars. A small smile spreads over his face.

CORBEN

Well well well...

At that moment he heard a whooshing sound. He turns to see Superman descending to Earth behind him.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

Been wondering when you'd show up.

SUPERMAN

This wasn't an accident, was it?

CORBEN

Very clever. What's your next trick, you're gonna sense the card I'm thinking about?

SUPERMAN

Funny.

He walks forward menacingly, arm outstretched to grab Corben ... but the moment he gets within three feet of Corben he RECOILS as if struck.

Corben watches in interest as Superman looks horrified. His hands have begun WRITHING again, the veins going green.

CORBEN

Now isn't that interesting?

And with that he PUNCHES SUPERMAN HARD IN THE FACE, sending Superman FLYING BACKWARDS and CRASHING INTO A TREE!

From SUPERMAN'S P.O.V we can just about see Corben getting into his jeep and driving off before Superman loses consciousness.

FADE TO:

EXT. METROPOLIS -- MORNING

The sun rises over LexCorp Tower.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Luthor pulls on his coat. He picks up the Daily Planet and looks at the front page.

The headline reads: *"My Interview with Superman, by Lois Lane"*

EXT. LEXCORP ROOFTOP -- MORNING

Luthor emerges off the lift to find Corben stood waiting by a LexCorp helicopter. Luthor has a face like thunder.

CORBEN

Good morning.

Luthor doesn't answer. They get in and the chopper takes off.

EXT. KENT FARM -- MORNING

The sun is rising over the farm.

INT. KENT FARM -- MORNING

A very shaken looking Clark is sat on the sofa, minus his shirt and glasses. After a moment Martha comes into frame holding a glass of water.

MARTHA

Here, drink this.

Clark accepts the water gratefully.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

He knocked you out?

CLARK

I'm fine.

MARTHA

Now, yes, but...

CLARK

Mom - I'm fine.

Martha looks as though there's a good deal more she wants to say but at that moment the door bangs open and Jonathan comes in, carrying an armful of newspapers.

JONATHAN

Nothing. I bought a copy of every paper I could get my hands on - no-one's reported anything about the explosion or what happened to you.

(beat)

You seem to have made someone's day, though.

He holds up a copy of the Daily Planet with the "My Interview with Superman" headline.

Martha looks intrigued; Clark disregards it almost immediately.

CLARK

The second editions will probably pick it up.

MARTHA

But if they'd got something about you they'd have printed it.

JONATHAN

Looks like you had a lucky escape.

CLARK

Doesn't feel like it.

There's an awkward pause.

JONATHAN

Clark, when you got hit by this man--

CLARK

It felt exactly like the way I get around the meteors.

MARTHA

But those meteors only hit Smallville. How could they have got to Metropolis?

EXT. LEXCORP SMALLVILLE PLANT -- DAY

Luthor's helicopter descends from the skies towards the LexCorp Smallville plant.

The plant is nothing short of an eyesore - a gigantic ugly factory complex rising out of the endless fields of wheat.

INT. LUTHOR'S HELICOPTER -- DAY

Luthor is riding with Corben as the chopper begins landing.

LUTHOR

You knocked him out?

CORBEN

I told you he wasn't much to write home about, gov'nor.

LUTHOR

He is now, Mr Corben. This is all very interesting.

EXT. LEXCORP SMALLVILLE PLANT -- DAY

Luthor and Corben get out onto the helipad.

Waiting for them is the plant manager, DR TENG (30s, cruel looking).

TENG

Mr Luthor, this is an unexpected pleasure.

LUTHOR

Feeling's mutual, Dr Teng.

TENG

This way please.

He leads Luthor and Corben into the plant.

INT. LEXCORP SMALLVILLE PLANT - CORRIDORS -- DAY

Teng leads Luthor and Corben down the corridors of the plant.

LUTHOR

How goes progress?

TENG

Very well, I assure you. After the initial breakthrough last year things have been moving faster than any of us could have expected.

INT. LEXCORP SMALLVILLE PLANT - RESEARCH DIVISION -- DAY

Teng leads Luthor and Corben into the huge research laboratory. Luthor looks around and smiles.

LUTHOR

Very impressive.

The huge room is full of scientists, and all of them are working on samples of the meteors that hit Smallville twenty-five years earlier.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Congratulations doctor - you've justified my faith in buying up all this land in Smallville.

TENG

Thank you, sir. The studies of this mineral have yielded some very interesting results. Depending on the correct atmospheric conditions, it's highly volatile.

CORBEN

We already know it blows stuff up.

LUTHOR

Corben!

Corben shuts up. Teng continues as if nothing happened.

TENG

The mineral is highly volatile,
but it also contains huge reserves
of raw energy. If harnessed
properly, this stuff could make
traditional power sources obsolete.

LUTHOR

Excellent. And the other project?

TENG

Achieving the projected results.
If you'd care to follow me?

LUTHOR

Please.

He leads them towards the door.

INT. KENT FARM -- DAY

Clark pulls on his shirt, picks his glasses up from the table and pulls them on. Jonathan and Martha don't look happy.

MARTHA

You can't go back now.

CLARK

I've got to get back to Metropolis
or they'll be wondering where I
am.

He heads for the door. Martha, distraught, follows with Jonathan right behind.

EXT. KENT FARM -- DAY

Clark emerges onto the back porch just as Martha grabs his arm and holds him back.

MARTHA

Clark, please, we don't know who
this man is or how he did that to
you or...

CLARK

Mom, I know, okay? But I have to
go back. I can't hide from this.

JONATHAN

He's right, Martha.

(MORE)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Besides, wouldn't do to have too many people wondering where Clark Kent is this morning, right son?

CLARK

Right. Mom, don't worry, I'll be fine.

He hugs her tightly. Tears form in her eyes. Finally he breaks the hug and walks away down the path. Jonathan puts a supportive arm around Martha's shoulders.

INT. LEXCORP SMALLVILLE PLANT - SECURE WING -- DAY

Teng leads Luthor and Corben into a hallway - the room beyond is hermetically sealed off and visible only through a gigantic floor-to-ceiling glass.

TENG

As you can see, Mister Luthor, our experiments have achieved some very positive results.

Beyond the glass is an horrific sight. We see DOZENS OF MEN AND WOMEN lying on hospital beds in sheer agony, their hands and faces covered in EERIE GREEN SORES that seem to glow slightly in the dimness.

Nurses and doctors move among them in white isolation suits complete with full breathing apparatus.

Corben looks revolted, but Luthor seems pleased. Teng smiles slightly at the sight.

TENG (CONT'D)

Our initial analysis proved to be correct. Under normal circumstances, the mineral is completely safe to handle. However, when reduced to a powder state and subjected to enough heat, it becomes a different story.

LUTHOR

How is the virus ingested?

TENG

Via inhalation, also as we suspected.

CORBEN

And the cure?

For the first time, Corben seems genuinely worried. Teng addresses his answer to Luthor.

TENG

Our vaccination is 100% effective in all cases.

(MORE)

TENG (CONT'D)

However, it must be taken on a regular basis in order to avoid re-contamination. The mineral is not purged from the body by our vaccination - it simply stays there, dormant.

LUTHOR

And your vaccination keeps it dormant?

TENG

Yes. Without the vaccine ... well, you get the idea.

He gestures back to the room beyond the glass. Luthor nods, businesslike, and moves on.

LUTHOR

This is better than I could have hoped for. Right now though, doctor, I have a special job for you and your team.

TENG

Not a problem, sir.

LUTHOR

Good. It needs to happen like this...

EXT. DAILY PLANET -- DAY

Clark makes his way towards the Daily Planet, head down, lost in thought ... and he steps out in front of a car without seeing it.

The car SCREECHES to a halt, driving Clark from his thoughts with a bump. He looks up to see Lois and Jimmy sat inside.

Lois leans her head out the window to yell at him.

CLARK

Lois?

LOIS

Well don't just stand there, get in!

Clark suddenly realises he's blocking the road. He gets into the car and Lois drives off.

INT. LOIS' CAR -- DAY

Lois gives Clark a look in the rear-view mirror.

LOIS

Nice of you to join us, Smallville.

CLARK

Where are we going?

LOIS

What, you haven't heard? There was a big explosion last night at Camp Schuster.

A moment while we note Clark's quiet reaction.

EXT. CAMP SCHUSTER -- DAY

The aftermath of the explosion is still being cleared up by the army and also by the civilian fire fighters.

Clark, Lois and Jimmy make their way across the base, Jimmy taking photographs at lightning speed.

LOIS

What a mess.

CLARK

Explosions tend to have this affect.

Lois shoots Clark a sideways look, taken aback by his snappy tone.

LOIS

Something wrong?

CLARK

Rough night.

(beat)

So, how was your evening?

The question is casual, but Lois gives him a suspicious look nonetheless.

LOIS

Fine. Why?

CLARK

Nothing, just curious.

Lois looks intrigued, but at that moment the base commander, COLONEL FITZPATRICK, marches over looking distinctly pissed off and with several squaddies trailing in his wake.

FITZPATRICK

What the hell are you doing here? This is a closed base.

LOIS

Colonel Fitzpatrick, I'm Lois Lane of the Daily-

FITZPATRICK

I know who you are, Miss Lane, and I'm not impressed. These men are here to escort you from the base.

The squaddies close ranks menacingly around the three of them. Lois looks furious.

LOIS

But what about the explosion?

FITZPATRICK

It was an accident, nothing more, nothing less, and the Daily Planet and every other blasted newspaper will get a statement very soon. Until then, sergeant get these people off my base.

CLARK

Lois - we'd better do as he says.

Lois isn't very happy but realises she doesn't have a choice.

LOIS

If you're hiding something, I'll find it.

Fitzpatrick's face is impassive. As the squaddies escort the trio off the base, Fitzpatrick turns and marches towards one of the equipment storage lockers that was caught in the blast.

INT. EQUIPMENT STORAGE -- DAY

Fitzpatrick enters the hanger, and just from the pattern of debris we can tell that it was from here that the explosion happened.

A Military Police officer, CARLSON, marches up and salutes.

CARLSON

Sir.

FITZPATRICK

Captain, is there any chance in hell that this was an accident?

EXT. CAMP SCHUSTER -- MOMENTS LATER

Clark, Lois and Jimmy are escorted off the base by the military police. As they pass by the hanger Clark looks over the rim of his glasses.

X-RAY

We see the inside of the hanger and Fitzpatrick and Carlson talking. He HEARS what they say.

CARLSON

It looks like faulty wiring in the guidance system of one of our new Hermes Helicopters. It started a fire that punctured the fuel reserves below the floor.

FITZPATRICK

But how could that happen? The Hermes choppers are brand new!

CARLSON

My guess is that it's a design
flaw.

FITZPATRICK

Maybe - but it sounds like a damn
convenient design flaw to me, and
it's a design flaw that cost twelve
good men their lives. Alright, I
want STAR Labs called in, see what
Hamilton can throw out...

BACK TO SCENE

Clark slips his glasses back on and allows himself to be
led off the base with a thoughtful look on his face.

EXT. WASHINGTON DC -- DAY

An establishing shot of Capitol Hill.

MCKENNA

No.

INT. CAPITOL -- DAY

Luthor, with Mercy trailing behind him, is walking down
the corridor beside TOM MCKENNA (50s) the Secretary of
Defence.

MCKENNA

I'm sorry, Lex, but it's out of
the question.

LUTHOR

I had hoped we'd get past this...

MCKENNA

Yeah, well, we ain't.

They enter McKenna's office.

INT. MCKENNA'S OFFICE -- DAY

McKenna dumps his papers onto his desk and faces Luthor,
looking annoyed.

MCKENNA

Just so we're clear, I was never
happy with this project. My
predecessor signed off on it, not
me. But I gave you a shot and so
far you haven't come up with
anything. Now I'm sorry, Lex, but
I have a very busy afternoon and--

LUTHOR

Just out of curiosity ... you don't
think you won your election through
sheer force of personality, do
you?

This stops McKenna short. Luthor looks out of the window nonchalantly.

MCKENNA

What?

LUTHOR

I knew you were idealistic, Tom...
 (turns to face him)
 But I didn't think you were stupid.

McKenna is stopped dead in his tracks; Luthor smiles.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

You're from Metropolis, Tom - you know how things work in Metropolis. Everyone works for me, whether they know it or not. How much support do you think you got from LexCorp employees on polling day? And you're up for re-election again in, what, six months? If I were you, I'd seriously reconsider my position. I'd hate for you to end up running against a donkey...

He looks McKenna hard in the eye.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

And for the donkey to win.

McKenna has gone bright red in the face.

MCKENNA

Get out.

Luthor smiles slightly. As he leaves, he leans in close and whispers in McKenna's ear:

LUTHOR

Think about it. Good and hard.

EXT. DAILY PLANET -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Clark is sat at his desk, reading through today's edition of the Planet. He gets up and makes his way over to Lois, who is sat at her desk with a big smile plastered all over her face.

CLARK

(reading from article)
 "'I'm here to fight for truth, justice and hope' he says. To millions across the world, Superman has already become a symbol of hope - a flying saviour arriving in the nick of time just when he
 (MORE)

CLARK (CONT'D)
 is needed most, asking for nothing
 in return. The age of true heroes
 is dead no more..."

He lowers paper and looks at Lois.

CLARK (CONT'D)
 This is good stuff.

LOIS
 Thank you.

CLARK
 How did you get an interview with
 him? How did you even find him?

LOIS
 I guess you could say he found me.

Lois is happier than we have ever seen her, and it's
 infectious. Clark cannot help smiling.

CLARK
 He's certainly put a smile on your
 face.

LOIS
 Me? Don't know what you're talking
 about.

CLARK
 What was it you said about using
 excuses we've all hears a million
 times before?

Lois' smile gets even broader than before. At that moment
 Jimmy shouts up from his desk.

JIMMY
 Miss Lane? Call on line four,
 STAR labs.

LOIS
 Got it!

She grabs the phone.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 Hello? ... what ... when ... sure, I'll
 be right over. Okay, see you in
 half an hour.

She hangs up and begins to grab her stuff.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 Jimmy, you're with me!

CLARK
 What's up?

LOIS
Hamilton over at STAR labs, he
reckons he's found something.

CLARK
Want me to come along?

LOIS
No, I think I can manage this one
on my own. Olsen!

She and Jimmy hurry out, leaving Clark behind.

EXT. STAR LABS -- DAY

Just to establish.

INT. STAR LABS -- DAY

The debris from the explosion is laid out around the lab.
PROFESSOR EMIL HAMILTON, a venerable scientist in his
fifties, is squinting down a microscope at something.

HAMILTON
Incredible ... just incredible...

Across the room a technician, DOBSON, watches Hamilton
closely. He surreptitiously heads out of the room, pulls
out his cell phone and dials.

DOBSON
It's me - we've got a problem.

INT. LUTHOR'S HELICOPTER -- DAY

Corben is talking on his phone. Luthor watches with
interest.

CORBEN
Don't worry, sit tight, it'll all
be sorted.

He hangs up and begins to dial another number. Luthor
gives him a look.

LUTHOR
Problem?

CORBEN
Hamilton at STAR seems to have
tumbled something.

LUTHOR
Have it dealt with.

CORBEN
Will do.
(into phone)
Mackey? It's Corben - got a problem
I need you to take care of.

Luthor looks the other way out of the window.

LOIS

You said you had something to show me?

INT. STAR LABS -- DAY

Hamilton is talking to Lois, who is frantically scribbling the details down into her notebook. Jimmy snaps photos, awed.

HAMILTON

Right here.

He stops by a workbench where a few charred metal remains are located. Hamilton picks up a piece so Lois can see.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

We started by doing a standard metallurgical analysis of the fragments, and that's where we found this - DON'T TOUCH THAT!

Across the lab Jimmy jumps, caught with a delicate looking gadget in his hands. He puts the thing back.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

(to Lois)

As I say, that's where we found this. It was inconsistent with the design of the rest of the helicopter.

LOIS

What is it?

HAMILTON

This was located right next to the fuel lines of the chopper.

LOIS

So this was sabotage?

HAMILTON

Oh yes, but that's not the interesting part. Look at the outline - it was hollow, clearly designed to hold something.

LOIS

Like what?

HAMILTON

Like this.

He takes Lois back to the microscope he was working on earlier.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

We had to go down a long way to find this stuff. We still don't know what it is, but it was definitely part of that device.

He pulls the slide off the microscope and holds it up for Lois to see. She looks; the slide is full of green dust that sparkles ominously. Lois advances, awestruck.

LOIS

What is that?

HAMILTON

Well damned if I know. Some sort of mineral I would guess.

EXT. STAR LABS -- DAY

An ominous-looking black car with blacked-out windows pulls into the parking lot.

Dobson, stood outside smoking a cigarette, sees it arrive.

INT. STAR LABS -- DAY

As before.

HAMILTON

I'd say this was the heart of the bomb - it would have been activated by some outside trigger...

LOIS

Like a radio signal? Something in the ultrasonic range?

HAMILTON

Possibly. But this wasn't an accident. This was deliberate sabotage. What I don't understand is why. Who would want to blow up a warehouse full of helicopters?

LOIS

Maybe to cover their tracks.

She pulls out her cell-phone and dials.

EXT. STAR LABS -- DAY

The car doors open and four nondescript men in black leather jackets emerge. They enter the building. Dobson looks terrified.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Clark is working away on his computer. After a moment his phone rings and he picks up.

CLARK

Daily Planet, Kent speaking.

LOIS (O.S.)

Clark, it's me.

INTERCUT:

INT. STAR LABS -- DAY

Lois is talking on her phone.

LOIS
Tell Perry to clear the front page.

CLARK
You've got something?

LOIS
Oh yeah - this was sabotage,
deliberate sabotage...

Across the room, Jimmy snaps a photo of an expensive-looking gadget. He raises his camera for a better view.

CAMERA P.O.V.

Jimmy loses focus, struggles to get it back ... and sees a man through a window, raising his GUN to fire.

BACK TO SCENE

Jimmy's face contorts in horror--

JIMMY
DOWN!

He drops to the ground. Lois turns, sees the gun, TACKLES Hamilton to the ground--

The window smashes to bits as several shots are fired.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Clark on the phone, as before.

CLARK
Lois?

INT. STAR LABS -- DAY

Clark's voice squawks from Lois' dropped cell phone.

CLARK (O.S.)
Lois? Lois, what's going on?

Lois grabs the phone from the floor.

LOIS
Clark, we got trouble-

More GUNSHOTS smash in through the windows, keeping Lois, Jimmy and Hamilton pinned down.

LOIS (CONT'D)
Is there another way out of here?

HAMILTON
Back door, that way.

LOIS
Right. We need a diversion--

JIMMY
On it!

He grabs two dropped vials from the bench, looks around at the other dropped containers.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Tannic acid, where's the tannic acid...

HAMILTON
Are you INSANE?!

Jimmy takes no notice - he pours three chemicals into a beaker and lobs it like a grenade in the direction of the gunmen.

It hits the ground, EXPLODES and a thick black smoke screen fills the room.

JIMMY
That's what you get for paying attention in chemistry class!

LOIS
Nice. Come on!

She makes her way across to the back door, down low behind the workbenches, with Jimmy and Hamilton right behind.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Clark jumps to his feet and runs to the door, nearly colliding with Perry on his way out.

PERRY
Jeez, Kent, where's the fire?

CLARK
Lois called, she wants some help down at STAR labs.

He turns and legs it before Perry can stop him. Perry shakes his head.

PERRY
That's Lois, in over her head yet again.

EXT. STAR LABS -- DAY

Lois, Jimmy and Hamilton make it out of the back door and charge over to where Lois' car is parked.

They all jump in.

LOIS
Nice move, Jim.

Jimmy looks out of the back windshield and goggles at the sight of the black car screaming up to them.

JIMMY

Uh, Miss Lane, now might be a good time--

SMASH! The window splinters open ... everyone whirls--

And one of the thugs sprays a gas into the car - in seconds the world goes BLACK.

FADE TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE -- EVENING

TIGHT on Lois' face, unconscious, lying on a concrete floor.

CORBEN (O.S.)

Wakey wakey...

Water splashes onto Lois' face, snapping her back to consciousness in an instant.

LOIS

What the--?

She looks up - to find Corben stood over her, looking her in the eye. He gives her a sadistic grin.

CORBEN

Sweet dreams? I hope so - right now I'm your worst bloody nightmare.

EXT. STAR LABS -- EVENING

Day is rapidly turning to night.

The whole area is now a crime scene. Sawyer, coffee in hand, moves across the scene. A photographer snaps a shot of Lois' car, complete with broken window.

SAWYER

(shakes her head)

Lois Lane, what the hell kind of trouble have you got yourself into this time...?

Behind her Superman descends to earth, looking concerned.

SUPERMAN

Captain Sawyer...

She JUMPS in surprise, turns to see Superman--

SAWYER

Oh, it's you.

SUPERMAN

What happened here?

SAWYER

Right now, your guess is as good
as mine.

Superman looks very concerned.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- EVENING

One of Corben's thugs hauls Lois to her feet as Corben
gets right into her face.

CORBEN

You get one chance to do this the
easy way, and I do mean one chance.
What did you find at Camp Schuster?

Lois remains silent, defiant. Corben seems amused.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

What, no pithy comeback?

LOIS

Not for you.

CORBEN

Fine. How about for them?

He points upwards. On a balcony above them, armed thugs
are holding Jimmy and Hamilton, half-nelson.

Below them is an ominous looking vat.

EXT. METROPOLIS -- EVENING

Superman rises up out of the cityscape - Metropolis is
beginning to light up for the night.

He stops in mid-air and hovers. He closes his eyes and
concentrates...

And the SOUND OF the city assaults him from all directions.

His face is SCREWED UP in pain ... he concentrates for a
moment and begins to filter through the sounds ...
individual voices emerge...

EAVESDROPPINGS

(various)

Don't know what I'm supposed to do
... how can you say that, you know
how I feel about you ... at the
Iron Maiden concert last night ...
blast it, where are you...

He continues to hover and sift through the sounds.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- EVENING

As before.

CORBEN

You know what this is?

He walks over to the vat - the thug drags Lois behind him and she looks inside to reveal a molten brown liquid with a metallic sheen.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

This is boiling copper. Perhaps not the most dramatic or efficient of substances but, hey, that's what the smelter was using today.

The look of horror on Lois' face says it all.

EXT. METROPOLIS -- EVENING

Superman is still there, still listening...

EAVESDROPPINGS

(various)

...synthesis of a new plastic ...
this is intelligence speaking ...
how are we supposed ... this is
YUMMY ... working on a deadline
here ... don't think you can really
compare...

INT. WAREHOUSE -- EVENING

Corben rounds on Lois, grabs her face:

CORBEN

You've had your chance. Now I'm going to ask the question three more times. The first time I get an answer I don't like, the professor goes in.

(beat)

The second time I get an answer I don't like, the kid joins him.

(beat)

The third time, you go in ... and then it won't make any difference what you know because none of you are going to be in any fit state to tell anyone.

(beat)

You got that?

And for the first time, Lois looks genuinely terrified. She nods quickly.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

Good, that should save us some time. So now I'm going to ask you again...

EXT. METROPOLIS -- NIGHT

Day is turning to night ... and at this moment Superman hears it:

CORBEN (O.S.)

What did you find out at STAR Labs?

Superman's eyes snap open - new resolve visible.

Then he's gone in a flash and the roar of a sonic boom.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

The standoff continues. Corben raises his eyebrows.

CORBEN

Well?

LOIS

I...

Corben rolls his eyes and pulls back.

CORBEN

She thinks we don't mean business.
Chuck the professor in.

LOIS

NO!!!

Hamilton and jimmy struggle but their captors are too strong
... Hamilton is thrown over the edge--

A BLUE FLASH whips through the warehouse - Hamilton seems
to vanish in mid-air.

CORBEN

Shit.

At that moment Lois KNEES her guard in the groin, HARD -
he goes down. Lois turns to run--

Corben grabs her by the throat, lifts her off the ground
with one hand--

CORBEN (CONT'D)

Just precisely where do you think
you're going?

EXT. BACK STREET -- NIGHT

WHOOSH! -- Hamilton finds himself standing on a pavement,
next to Superman.

SUPERMAN

You alright, Professor?

HAMILTON

Yeah, I--

SUPERMAN

I'll be right back.

WHOOSH! -- and he's gone again.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Jimmy manages to wriggle out of one of the guard's grips -
a tussle ensues--

Corben holds Lois off the ground - her feet dangle just above the pavement--

CORBEN

You're not going anywhere until you've answered my question--

BLAM! Something EXPLODES off-screen--

Superman descends into the warehouse--

The thugs draw their guns and fire - the bullets bounce off Superman's chest--

The explosion throws Jimmy off-balance - he slips, falls - grabs hold of a railing -- looks down to see him hanging over the vat of boiling copper--!

JIMMY

Whoa!

Superman swoops in on the thugs - his eyes turn red--

The guards drop the superheated weapons--

Lois kicks Corben in the stomach - he drops her, more surprised than hurt--

Someone lobbs a grenade - Superman catches it, pitches it STRAIGHT UP, out of the hole in the ceiling--

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

The grenade flies up vertically before exploding harmlessly 5,000 feet above the ground--

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

The explosion startles Jimmy - he lets go and DROPS DOWN--

And STOPS inches above the molten copper - Superman has hold of his arm.

SUPERMAN

Don't let go.

Jimmy nods vigorously.

Lois recovers, looks up--

To see Corben legging it out of the room. She gets to her feet.

LOIS

Oh no you don't--

She runs after him--

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Lois emerges just in time to see Corben and the three remaining thugs piling into a 4x4 - it SQUEALS off into the night--

INT. 4X4 -- NIGHT

Corben pulls a remote from his pocket, presses a button--

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Jimmy takes shelter behind the vat as Superman takes out the last of the thugs--

A beeping sound comes from a nearby crate. Jimmy looks down--

To see several wired with remote detonators.

JIMMY

Superman!

Superman looks up, sees it--

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

And the whole warehouse GOES UP IN A SPECTACULAR FIREBALL!

For a moment nothing happens ... we fear the worst...

And then we see Superman rising up out of the flames, holding Lois and Jimmy to his sides.

Lois looks down at the flames, then into Superman's eyes...

LOIS

Perfect timing.

Superman smiles.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LEXCORP LABORATORY -- NIGHT

Corben is lying on the floor, howling in pain. Luthor is standing over him, stony faced, holding some kind of remote.

After a moment Corben stops, gasping for air - Luthor regards him coldly.

LUTHOR

I thought I'd made myself quite clear that Lois Lane is off limits.

Corben is gasping for air. Luthor crouches down beside him.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Let's get something straight, Corben.

(MORE)

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

I brought you back into this world -
I can send you out of it again at
the touch of a button.

(long beat)

Remember that.

He stalks out, leaving Corben moaning in pain on the floor.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Mercy? Get the car.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Clark fights his way through a crowd of police and paramedics to where Lois is sat, a blanket around her shoulders, sipping coffee from a styrofoam cup.

CLARK

Lois! Lois, are you alright?

LOIS

Yeah, I'm okay.

CLARK

You're sure you--

LOIS

Clark, I'm fine.

(beat)

You took your time getting down
here. What happened?

CLARK

I heard gunshots down the phone,
so I called the police but by the
time they got down to STAR--

LOIS

Yeah, I get the idea.

She sips her coffee, looking very shaken. Clark sits down beside her.

CLARK

You're sure you're alright?

LOIS

Yeah, I will be.

(grins)

Jimmy and the professor are a bit
worse for wear though.

INT. LUTHOR'S LIMO -- NIGHT

Luthor is sat in the back of his limo. After a moment he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a box.

Inside is a gigantic diamond engagement ring.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Clark gives her a look.

CLARK

So what was this all about?

Lois takes a long drink from her coffee before answering.

LOIS

Hamilton found out that the explosion was sabotage - those helicopters were rigged to explode.

(beat)

Obviously the saboteur was tipped off and wanted to keep us quiet.

CLARK

Whoever this saboteur is must have a lot of resources to conjure up a kidnapping squad just like that.

LOIS

And obviously thought this was a secret worth killing to protect...

Lois has a thoughtful look on her face. At that moment a car screeches to a halt and Luthor emerges, with Mercy trailing behind him.

LUTHOR

Lois - they told me what happened, are you alright?

And just for a moment there is a barely perceptible look of doubt on Lois' face. She covers it very quickly.

LOIS

Yeah, I'm fine.

LUTHOR

Are you sure? Say the word, I'll have you airlifted to Metropolis general--

LOIS

Lex, for Christ sake, I'm fine. Honestly, you two are as bad as each other.

Luthor and Clark lock gazes for just a second.

LUTHOR

Clark - I hear you were the one who called the police.

CLARK

That's right.

LUTHOR

Then I'm in your debt.

He holds out his hand - but Clark's face goes stony and he pointedly refuses to shake it.

CLARK
I didn't do it for you, Lex - I
did it for Lois and Jimmy and the
professor.

The hard look passes between the two of them again.

LUTHOR
Of course.

Luthor helps Lois to her feet.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)
Come on Lois, I'll take you home.

LOIS
Thanks.

Clark watches, stony-faced, as Luthor helps Lois into the car. Lois turns back to face him.

LOIS (CONT'D)
Clark?

Clark looks up.

LOIS (CONT'D)
Thank you.

CLARK
No problem.

Lois favours him with a smile before getting into the car with Luthor. Clark's face goes stony again.

EXT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Just to establish.

LOIS
There's no need for this, Lex,
really...

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Lois closes the door behind herself and Luthor.

LOIS
I'm quite capable of looking after
myself.

LUTHOR
I know that - but for your own
safety I would like to station a
guard unit with you, at least until
the perpetrators have been caught--

LOIS
Lex - stop.

Luthor turns to face her in surprise.

LOIS (CONT'D)

While I appreciate the concern,
this is hardly the first time
someone has said that they were
going to kill me. In this business
it's an occupational hazard.

Luthor actually laughs at this.

EXT. KENT FARM -- NIGHT

Jonathan emerges out onto the porch, coffee in hand. For a moment he looks wistfully up at the stars.

CLARK (O.S.)

I'm not sure I can keep doing this.

Jonathan starts - turns to see Clark sat on a chair by the door, glasses off, his eyes shining very bright in the dimness.

JONATHAN

Clark?

(beat)

Son, what's wrong?

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Luthor steps forward, takes Lois' hands in his.

LUTHOR

I wasn't implying for a minute
that I thought you couldn't take
care of yourself, Lois. I think I
know better than most people that
you can take care of yourself. I
mean, how could I not be confident
in the abilities of a woman who
gatecrashed a Mafia party and--

LOIS

That was a misunderstanding - the
police over-reacted.

Luthor laughs again.

LUTHOR

Of course.

INT. KENT FARM -- NIGHT

Clark sits facing Jonathan and Martha.

CLARK

I thought things would be so simple.
I could get a job at the Planet,
the moment we found out that
something had gone wrong or that
lives were in danger--

MARTHA

Are you saying it's not working?

CLARK

No, that bit of the plan's actually working fine. But now...

(pause)

But now things have got complicated.

Jonathan gives him a look.

JONATHAN

Because of Lex?

Clark's look is all the answer we need.

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Luthor and Lois, as before.

LUTHOR

I remember the first time I saw you. The public dinner...

LOIS

Oh God...

LUTHOR

You accused me of using my satellites to monitor all communications on the planet and use information from this as blackmail leverage...

LOIS

Which, for the record, you still haven't provided a satisfactory answer for.

Luthor laughs gently.

LUTHOR

Maybe not.

(beat)

But I was impressed then. I remember thinking to myself, 'here is a woman who will get to the bottom of any given situation by sheer force of personality.'

INT. KENT FARM -- NIGHT

Clark is on his feet, pacing up and down.

CLARK

It would be so easy ... but I can't. I can't reveal what I know about Lex Luthor without revealing my identity as Superman. So instead he gets to act with impunity - his goons nearly killed Lois and Jimmy tonight...

MARTHA

But they didn't - because you were there.

CLARK

Because *Superman* was there. But I can't reveal that I know LexCorp was behind the helicopter sabotage and what happened to Lois tonight ... not without giving up who I really am.

Clark falls heavily into an armchair, looking beat.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Whatever way you look at it ... Lex Luthor wins.

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Luthor's hand goes into his pocket, takes hold of the box with the ring.

LUTHOR

From the moment you came into my life I've realized the things I've accomplished mean nothing without someone to share them with. I can distil the essence of how I feel down into the simplest phrase - four little words that hold the power to transform our lives--

He's about to spring the ring on her -- but at that moment she pulls back.

LOIS

No...

LUTHOR

What is it?

LOIS

Lex, I think we need to just take a moment here...

LUTHOR

A moment? What for?

She looks him in the eye, brutally honest.

LOIS

You want something from me that I can't give you.

And this is something that Lex Luthor has never experienced before - rejection.

INT. KENT FARM -- NIGHT

JONATHAN

Clark ... I think you might be
looking at this the wrong way.

Clark looks up, interested ... and a small smile creeps
over Jonathan's face.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Maybe there's nothing Superman can
do about Lex Luthor right now ...
but maybe there's something Clark
Kent, reporter for the Daily Planet,
can do.

Clark thinks about this for a moment ... and matching small
smile appears on Clark's face.

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Luthor looks like he doesn't know what to say.

LOIS

(gently)
I'm sorry, Lex ... things have
been great between us lately, but--

LUTHOR

You can't love me any more?

She doesn't answer. Looks down at her shoes.

Luthor turns away - his eye catches a pile of papers and
paraphernalia on the table ... all of it of Superman.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

But you can love him?

LOIS

What?

LUTHOR

That night ... on the top of the
Daily Planet. After you left me
at the ball...

LOIS

(outraged)
You were having me watched?

LUTHOR

(ignoring her)
You'd take some flying circus
performer who swanned into our
city five minutes ago over me?

LOIS

Lex...

LUTHOR

Honestly, what's the point of pretending anymore? Trying to spare my feelings? You should have thought of that before you started lying to me--

Now Lois is getting angry.

LOIS

I have NEVER lied to you!

She marches forward on him.

LOIS (CONT'D)

You're right, Lex. There was something between us. Once. But now...

(beat)

I've seen things about you that I don't understand. The darkness that exists just beneath the surface. I know you keep secrets from me. I know that there's far more to your 'legitimate business' than meets the eye.

(beat)

We've been together for nearly a year, Lex ... but I still don't think I really know who you are. I don't think I'll ever know that.

She pulls back. Luthor's expression is unreadable.

LOIS (CONT'D)

I think you should probably go.

Luthor looks from her, to the pile of Superman images, and back again.

LUTHOR

I'm sorry it's come to this, Lois.
For both of our sakes.

He turns and walks out of the apartment.

EXT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Luthor emerges onto the street, where his car is waiting. He looks back up to where there's still a light on in Lois' window - Lois is stood there watching him.

He turns away - and we see a look of absolute fury on his face.

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Lois watches as Luthor gets into his car and drives off. She leans against the wall and sighs loudly, sliding down into a sitting position.

LOIS

God...

INT. LUTHOR'S LIMO -- NIGHT

Luthor is sat in the back seat, watching as the city goes past, his expression unreadable. The phone rings.

LUTHOR

(angry)

What?

MERCY

Sorry to interrupt Mr Luthor - I have Secretary McKenna for you.

LUTHOR

Put him on.

(click)

Tom.

MCKENNA

Lex...

As the scene continues we INTERCUT:

INT. MCKENNA'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

McKenna is sat behind his desk in the darkness.

MCKENNA

Sorry about the late-night call
... I think ... I think I may have
been a little hasty before.

A small smile crosses Luthor's face.

LUTHOR

Do I take it you and I need to
have a little talk?

MCKENNA

Yes ... yes, I think we do...

Luthor looks triumphant again.

EXT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Lois is sat at her desk, leafing through old issues of the Planet on her computer. Eventually she stops on one, a triumphant grin on her face.

LOIS

Gotcha.

She picks up her phone and dials.

LOIS (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hi, I'd like to leave a message
for Captain Sawyer please ... tell
her it's Lois Lane calling...

On the screen we finally see the picture - a mug-shot of Corben.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 I need all the information she can
 give me on a man named John Corben.

Across the room Clark enters. He makes his way over to Lois' desk - she looks up, sees him and smiles.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Yeah, thanks ... bye.

She hangs up, looks up at Clark.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 Hey.

CLARK
 Hey.
 (beat)
 Lois, I need to talk to you about
 something...

But at that moment she is cut off as the door bangs open and a red faced Jimmy comes running in.

JIMMY
 Turn on WGBS, NOW!

Ron Troupe grabs the remote and changes the channel on the huge TV screen that adorns one wall. Everyone turns to look just as Perry storms out of his office.

PERRY
 Great Caesar's ghost, Olsen--!

But he stops dead at the sight of the screen. The caption at the bottom reads:

"LexCorp'S Star Wars"

ANCHOR
 --Just minutes ago when Secretary of Defence Thomas McKenna, with the authorisation of the President, has given the go-ahead order for the creation of a brand new space-based missile-defence program. Details are still sketchy, but it is known that the government has confounded expectations by giving this contract to LexCorp. LexCorp CEO Lex Luthor was unavailable for comment this morning, but his press office has issued the following statement...

As the report continues Clark and Lois exchange glances.

CLARK
 "Space-based missile defence
 program?"

LOIS
 First I've heard of it. What's
 Lex up to now?

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor is stood before his wall of TV monitors watching as the news report on WGBS continues.

LUTHOR
 All these years and Tom McKenna
 waits until now to grow some balls.

He makes a hand gesture and the monitors switch off. He turns briskly and makes his way out of the office.

INT. LexCorp - CYBERNETICS FACILITY - DAY

Luthor enters the stark white facility to find Corben sat in a chair near the centre of the room, surrounded by a doctor and various TECHNICIANS.

They seem to be doing something to Corben's hand.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)
 Gentlemen, how's it going?

TECH
 I think we've just about got it.

At that moment something sparks off the screen and Corben winces.

CORBEN
 That tickles.

TECH
 Sorry.

As he walks off to get something he mutters under his breath:

TECH (CONT'D)
 Like you can feel anything, freak.

Corben glances up sharply - he heard that. Luthor gives him a look and shrugs.

The tech comes back and makes a final adjustment to something off screen.

TECH (CONT'D)
 Okay, that ought to do it. Try
 that now.

Corben stands up and pulls a black leather glove over his right hand ... and just for a second we get a glimpse of

something that looks distinctly like metal and wires being hidden under the glove.

Corben holds his hand up to eye level and flexes his fingers. We hear vague sounds of mechanical squeaking.

CORBEN

Feels good. Not too fussed on the sound effects.

TECH

(under his breath)

Maybe you need some oil on it.

Corben's head shoots up and a murderous look comes into his eyes - this tech has annoyed him too much. He advances on the tech, who backs away in fear.

CORBEN

Think it's funny do you?

The tech is backed right up against the wall. Everyone else in the lab looks too terrified to say or do anything.

TECH

Look man, I'm sorry, I didn't mean, I ... Mister Luthor, please...

He shoots Luthor a desperate look, but Lex is nonchalantly checking his pocket watch.

CORBEN

Still think you're clever now, do you?

And he grabs the tech's face with his gloved hand. Immediately CURRENTS OF ELECTRICITY CRACKLE out of his fingers. The tech screams in pain. The whole lab looks horrified - apart from Luthor who seems very interested.

Corben eventually lets go and the man drops to the ground, clearly dead, his face charred to the point of being unrecognisable.

LUTHOR

Feel better?

CORBEN

Oh yeah.

LUTHOR

Good.

He consults his watch.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Seven seconds, very impressive people. Someone clear that up. Corben, with me.

And Luthor turns and leaves without saying another word. Corben shoots a look around the lab that clearly says:

"Someone else make a joke; go on, I DARE YOU!" And follows him out.

EXT. METROPOLIS STREETS -- DAY

Clark and Lois are stood in the queue at a sidewalk hotdog stand.

LOIS
You didn't strike me at the hotdog type.

CLARK
You learn something new every day.

He pays the vendor and they walk off down the street.

CLARK (CONT'D)
And you didn't know anything about this missile-defence thing?

LOIS
Lex never talks much about business when I'm around.
(grins)
He always said he was always afraid of giving me some kind of exclusive.

There is a tone in her voice - Clark clues in immediately.

CLARK
Lois, are you alright?

Lois looks up - a beat while she makes her mind up.

LOIS
Lex and I broke up last night.

A long beat.

CLARK
Oh. Sorry.

LOIS
(shrugs)
Don't be. I'm not. We were never exactly together anyway, so...

CLARK
You're okay with that?

LOIS
I really don't know. I guess I've known who Lex was for a very long time - I just didn't want to admit it to myself.

CLARK
Known who he was?

Lois gives him a look.

LOIS

Clark, you were Lex's friend once.
Now you're not. I guess last night
I saw what you had seen all those
years ago. And I didn't like it.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor is stood talking to Doctor Teng, who's face is visible on the gigantic wall of TV monitors.

TENG

The last work was completed this
afternoon, Mr Luthor. We're ready
whenever you are.

LUTHOR

Very good work, doctor. Thank
you.

He motions with his hand and the monitors turn themselves off. He turns to face Corben, who is stood silently in the background.

CORBEN

All set?

LUTHOR

Not yet. There's still one last
matter to be attended to.

He makes his way across to his desk, where a copy of the Daily Planet with the "My Interview with Superman" headline is sitting. He picks it up and regards it thoughtfully.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

We're going to need an incentive
to draw our friend in. Bait.

He looks down at the tiny portrait of Lois in her byline.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Someone he cares about.

He turns to Corben and holds up the paper.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

I think I know just the person.

Corben looks from the paper to Luthor and back again.

CORBEN

I thought she was off limits.

Luthor turns his back, gazing out across the night-lit city.

LUTHOR

Not any more.

INT. LOIS' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Lois enters and locks the door behind her, looking beat.

LOIS
God, what a day.

She makes her way into the bathroom and turns the shower on. There is a knock on the door.

LOIS (CONT'D)
Who is it?

VOICE (O.S.)
Special delivery for Lois Lane.

She moves across the room and opens the door ... and stops dead at the sight of a leering Corben stood outside.

CORBEN
Good evening darling.

And before she can do anything he brings up his gloved hand and grabs her face. ELECTRICITY CRACKLES.

BLACK OUT.

FADE TO:

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- MORNING

The sun rises above the launch site. We PAN UP the side of the rocket containing the LexCorp satellite.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Clark is busy working away at his desk. After a moment Jimmy approaches carrying a pile of papers.

CLARK
Hey Jim.

JIMMY
Hey. Have you seen Lois this morning?

CLARK
No, not so far, why?

JIMMY
Captain Sawyer just called from the police department - they've sent over some stuff for her. It's about what happened the other night.

(beat)
Check this out.

Clark glances at the photo ... and abruptly his face freezes as he recognises the face of the man who knocked him out.

CLARK
 (involuntary)
 That's--

Jimmy glides right by it, not noticing

JIMMY
 The bastard who tried to smelt us
 in boiling copper? Yeah, that's
 him. Name of John Corben. Small
 time petty crook, started out in
 the London gang scene before making
 his way over here...

But at that moment there is a HUGE EXPLOSION somewhere
 outside the planet. Everyone REACTS. Perry comes running
 out of the office.

PERRY
 Great Shades of Elvis--!

They all run over to the window to see a column of smoke
 on the horizon.

PERRY (CONT'D)
 What the--?

Clark looks over the rim of his glasses.

TELESCOPIC

*We shoot forward through the city - the explosion has ripped
 one of the support girders clean off the Hobbs Bay Bridge.*

BACK TO SCENE

Jimmy is the first to say it.

JIMMY
 Looks like it came from the Bay!

RON
 What could have happened?

Perry abruptly remembers where he is.

PERRY
 Right - Ron, Olsen, get down there
 now! Kent, I need you to - KENT!

He looks around, but Clark is nowhere to be seen.

INT. DAILY PLANET - HALLWAYS -- DAY

Clark charges up the stairs at HIGH SPEED, heading for the
 roof. He rips off his glasses and rips his shirt open to
 reveal the 'S' shield just before he reaches the skylight.

Then he rockets upward in a red-and-blue blur and a tinkle
 of broken glass.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE METROPOLIS -- DAY

Superman flies over the city at high speed, heading in the direction of the bridge.

EXT. HOBBS BAY BRIDGE -- DAY

It is a scene of utter chaos. SCREAMS from everyone. The bride is TEETERING OVER THE ABYSS, looking as though it might fall apart any second.

The edge of the bridge abruptly GIVES WAY under a SCHOOL BUS. It ROLLS, TEETERS ... STICKS, on the edge of the bridge, balanced very precariously..

INT. SCHOOL BUS -- DAY

All the kids are screaming. The driver yells to be heard.

DRIVER

Nobody move, okay, nobody move or
we'll send it over-

KID

Look! Superman!

Everyone looks to see--

EXT. HOBBS BAY BRIDGE -- DAY

Superman descends from the heavens at high speed.

Without ever slowing down he GRABS the bus and PULLS IT OFF THE EDGE, setting it down in the middle of the bridge.

INT. SCHOOL BUS -- DAY

The driver sags in overwhelming relief as the kids all keep shouting.

KIDS

(various)

Neat! ... awesome ... can we go again?

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor's wall of TV monitors shows various news stations, all covering the bridge. He watches as Superman rescues the school bus before picking up his phone.

LUTHOR

Now.

EXT. HOBBS BAY BRIDGE -- DAY

BOOM! Another explosion rips through the air. Everyone turns to look--

The two main support cables have both SNAPPED ... and the bridge is BEGINNING TO SAG IN THE MIDDLE!

SCREAMS come from all directions. Superman, in the centre of the bridge, sees it all. He flies upwards at speed, GRABBING one end of the cable and SHOOTING UPWARDS to grab the other.

As the bridge moans in protest, Superman's eyes turn red and the metal begins to melt ... he is welding the cables back together with his heat vision!

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor watches in something like admiration as Superman puts the bridge back together again.

LUTHOR

The boy's got guts, you've got to admire that.

(into phone)

Corben? Phase two.

EXT. HOBBS BAY BRIDGE -- DAY

As Superman finally welds the final cable back into place a gigantic cheer goes up from the crowds all around.

Two cops on the bridge salute Superman - he salutes back.

In spite of himself Superman smiles ... and then we HEAR a low whistling sound, this time accompanied by a voice.

CORBEN (O.S.)

I'll bet you're feeling real good about yourself right now, ain'tcha boy?

Superman looks around in confusion for a second.

CORBEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Yes, by now you should have figured out you're the only one who can hear this that isn't a canine.

(beat)

This is just to let you know that I've got something very pretty ... something you probably care a lot about.

Superman looks around in all directions, then flies upwards.

CORBEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now if you were smart, you'd go down there and meet all of those people who want to thank you for saving their lives.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE METROPOLIS -- DAY

Superman flies high across the city, head turning in all directions, trying to tell where the sound is coming from.

CORBEN (O.S.)

But you ain't smart. You think
you're a bloody hero.

And abruptly Superman catches it - the low whistling sound -
and he fixates on it, changing direction sharply and
FOLLOWING THE SOUND.

CORBEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And because of that, you're doing
what you're doing right now. You're
coming to find me.

Superman sharply takes a left and flies at speed down a
disused street in the grotty end of Metropolis - Suicide
Slum.

He heads for the end of the street, flying lower and lower
all the time.

CORBEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well hurry up, blue boy - I'm
waiting.

And at that precise moment Superman reaches the end of the
street and the BOARDED UP SUBWAY STATION at the end of it.

He sets his face and goes SMASHING THROUGH THE WOODEN BOARDS
and into what awaits inside.

INT. SUBWAY STATION -- DAY

With a crash of exploding boards and brickwork Superman
comes flying into the abandoned station. The cavern is
huge, dark and dismal, lit only by a few industrial
spotlights. The air is filled with an eerie green light.

At the far end of the station Superman sees something -
Lois, chained to a post and semi conscious. In a flash he
is at her side, snapping the chains in an instant.

SUPERMAN

Lois! Lois, can you hear me?

Lois looks up, groggy, and abruptly snaps back to
consciousness, a look of terror on her face.

LOIS

No! You have to get out of here
before-

SMASH! A fist comes from off-screen and connects with the
side of Superman's head, sending him off balance.

He picks himself up and whirls to face Corben, who is
holding Lois in front of him like a human shield.

CORBEN

That's close enough, tough guy.

Superman strides forward--

But again, when he gets within three feet of Corben he RECOILS as if struck, the veins of his hand WRITHING, GREEN.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

I said that was close enough.

SUPERMAN

Let her go, Corben. She's not involved in this.

CORBEN

Oh, but she is. Besides ... I don't want to let her go.

He holds up his hand and electricity crackles from the black-gloved fingertips.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna have me some fun with her when I've finished you off.

LOIS

In your dreams!

And she STAMPS HARD on his foot..

There is a metallic THUNK and Lois moans in pain. Corben grins.

CORBEN

I like them rough, how about you?

Superman advances again, but Corben goes to grab Lois' throat.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

I'd stay right where you are if I were you. The fun's only just beginning.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

The monitor screens have changed - half now show images of the stand-off in the subway station, while the others show orbital diagrams and views of the satellite network.

The phone rings and Luthor makes a hand gesture.

LUTHOR

Yes?

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Secretary McKenna on line two.

LUTHOR

I'll take it.

(beat)

Tom, nice to hear from you again.

MCKENNA (O.S.)

Let's skip the pleasantries, Lex.

INTERCUT with:

INT. MCKENNA'S OFFICE -- DAY

An irate-looking McKenna is sat behind his desk.

MCKENNA

You've procrastinated over this long enough, and the President's starting to resent it. I want that satellite in space, now.

Luthor smiles serenely.

LUTHOR

But of course.

He makes a hand gesture and cuts the phone off.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Begin launch sequence.

INT. LAUNCH SITE CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

The LAUNCH CONTROLLER is on the phone.

LAUNCH CONTROLLER

Understood.

He hangs up the phone.

LAUNCH CONTROLLER (CONT'D)

Begin the countdown.

A TECHNICIAN hits a control - numbers begin to count backwards from ten minutes.

TECHNICIAN

This is control - we are go for launch in T-minus ten minutes...

INT. SUBWAY STATION -- DAY

The Mexican-standoff between Superman and Corben continues.

SUPERMAN

I'm only going to ask one more time, Corben - let her go.

CORBEN

Hear my knees knocking together. No wait ... that's you.

And at that moment he pulls a small control box from his pocket and hits a switch. All around them, machinery whirs into life...

And Superman looks around in horror as lead plates in the walls RETRACT, revealing gigantic formations of KRYPTONITE behind them, glowing bright green in the dimness.

The effect upon Superman is immediate - he recoils as if hit, dropping to one knee, GASPING for air. He looks up to face Corben and the veins in his face and his eyes have gone green. Lois SCREAMS.

LOIS

NO!!!

She tries to wrench her way out of Corben's grip..

CORBEN

Getting bored with you now.

Electricity crackles from his hand, sending a dose into Lois' body! She drops to the ground, dazed, fighting to stay conscious as Corben advances on Superman with a grin.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

This has to be the oldest trap setup in the world, sonny boy. I still can't believe you fell for it. The lead plates were a nice touch - for some reason they seem to block the effects that this stuff has on you, and you don't seem to be able to see through lead. This stuff is acting quicker on you than inhaling plutonium would on a human. Way I see it, you've got about five minutes of agonising pain left and then you're officially the man of yesterday.

Superman looks up at Corben in abject confusion.

X-RAY: And we finally see the truth about Corben - the cyborg body parts grafted onto his body, the synthetic organs in place of living tissue and, worst of all, the fist-sized chunk of Kryptonite at the heart of the whole thing, powering him, keeping him alive.

SUPERMAN

What the ... how...?

CORBEN

Lets just say things don't always turn out the way you planned them.

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Launch preparations continue to be made.

INT. LAUNCH SITE CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

The numbers continue to count backwards ... 9.09 ... 9.08...

INT. SUBWAY STATION -- DAY

Corben is pacing around the dying Superman, enjoying this, savouring the moment.

CORBEN

It's ironic, all of this ... you,
brought down by this stuff
(waves at the
Kryptonite)
The same stuff that keeps me alive...
(pause)
The same stuff that killed me.

Superman and Lois are both fighting to stay conscious,
listening intently.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

The difference between you and me
is that this ... whatever it is ...
isn't harmful to humans under most
circumstances. Me however ... well,
I was the one daft enough to get
caught with his pants down and
inhale a mouthful of it.

He squats down to face Superman.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

I imagine what you're feeling now
is almost exactly what I felt then.
Sheer agony - my organs melting,
my muscles atrophying, living
healthy tissue eaten away...
(pause)
I was just fortunate enough that
LexCorp scientists found me in
time.

On both Lois and Superman as they react to this.

SUPERMAN

Lex ... Luthor?

CORBEN

Lex Luthor. His people rebuilt
me, organ by organ, gave me back
my life. You see, I was too far
gone - they'd developed a way to
counteract this condition, but I
was too far gone for this to help.
Everyone else, that's a different
story.

SUPERMAN

What ... what do you mean?

CORBEN

The whole world is about to get a
taste of what you and I are
experiencing right now.

INT. LAUNCH SITE CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

The numbers count down lower and lower ... 8.45 ... 8.44...

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Final preparations are made at top speed.

INT. SUBWAY STATION -- DAY

Lois is gradually regaining the use of her limbs. She begins inching her way towards the discarded control box on the floor.

Corben, unseeing, continues to gloat at Superman.

CORBEN

When that satellite goes up,
everyone in the world is going to
get a big mouthful of this stuff.
It might take years before people
start to notice the effects, but
by then they'll be too far gone.
They'll pay through the nose for a
cure ... and there will be LexCorp
with one all ready and waiting.

SUPERMAN

You ... diseased...

CORBEN

The whole world held to ransom ...
and Lex Luthor with his hand on
the only cure. He'll be the saviour
of the world, loved by all, paid
by all.

(beat)

And you know what the best bit is?

He squats down at Superman's side.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

They're gonna blame you.

Superman looks up as Corben grins.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

I mean, who else are them gonna
blame? You're the new arrival,
the alien from another world -
they're going to think you brought
it here. You're going to go down
in history as the man who brought
agonising death to Earth before
you were thwarted by Lex Luthor.
You'll be a pariah - hated by all.
It's not as if you're gonna be
around to deny it.

(beat)

I must say, you're taking longer
to die than I thought you would.

LOIS (O.S.)

That's because he's made of stronger
stuff than you!

They both look up - Lois has reached the control box!

LOIS (CONT'D)

Bad luck.

She hits the button ... the lead shields slide back into place--

Corben advances on Lois, hand raised and ELECTRICITY CRACKLING--

CORBEN

I think I've had about enough of you!

He raises his hand ... and it's suddenly grabbed by another, stronger hand. Corben turns in surprise to see...

SUPERMAN.

Standing right behind him, holding onto his wrist. His hands are writhing with the effects of the Kryptonite, but his face is set - he's fighting it and winning!

SUPERMAN

What say you and I take a little trip?

And he grabs Corben by the neck and the two of them rocket straight upwards, smashing through the ceiling--!

EXT. METROPOLIS BACK STREET -- DAY

The pavement explodes as Superman and Corben ROCKET UPWARDS onto the streets. They both hit the deck, DAZED ... Superman looks up, sees the sun shining above him--

And from the subtle shift in his body language we know that he's back to full strength.

And Corben knows it too.

CORBEN

Well shit.

Superman turns and advances on him. Corben scrambles to his feet and squares up.

CORBEN (CONT'D)

Bring it on, tough guy!

He picks up a big lump of pavement and hurls it at Superman - who raises an arm and blocks it.

He throws a second lump - Superman's eyes turn red, twin heat beams flash out and the lump is vaporised in a second.

Corben charges - Superman charges - they meet in the middle of the street and fight, FISTS, BOOTS, BRAWLING, MESSY.

Every now and then we see Superman wince as a punch land - Corben's Kryptonite heart has levelled the playing field slightly--

Corben grabs Superman, HURLS him against a wall - the wall COLLAPSES under the impact--

Superman looks up - to see Corben HURL A CAR STRAIGHT AT HIM--!

He flashes out of the way just as the car hits the ruined wall - electricity crackles and the car EXPLODES--

Superman flies forward - TACKLES Corben--

Corben grabs Superman's throat ... raises his hand, electricity crackles...

Superman throws him off, sending him crashing against the back wall. Corben falls to the ground, dazed.

Superman blasts his heat vision, striking Corben's hand, DESTROYING it.

Corben is MAD.

He leaps to his feet and charges.

Superman side-steps him and he goes crashing into a nearby car--

Superman fires his heat vision - the car explodes - Corben is caught in the blast--

Superman takes a deep breath and BLOWS - the flames extinguish...

Corben is lying on the ground, badly burned ... metal cyborg body parts visible beneath his charred skin.

The two of them stand facing each other, the huge puddle of petrol in the way.

SUPERMAN

Don't make it end this way, Corben.
We can get you help.

For a moment there is silence ... then Corben grins.

CORBEN

I don't think so somehow.
(beat)
End of the line for both of us.

And he thrusts the sparking stump of his hand into the petrol ... the fuel ignites...

AND THE WHOLE STREET GOES UP IN A GIGANTIC FIREBALL!

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

The fire on the street turns into the smoke as the pre-flight-flight thrusters FIRE on the rocket...

EXT. METROPOLIS BACK STREET -- DAY

Lois emerges from the subway station to see a scene of complete devastation.

Corben's charred body, mechanical skeleton and all, still twitching obscenely, lies smoking on the ground.

She immediately jumps to conclusions.

LOIS

No ... oh no...

There's a tense few moments when even we fear the worse ... and then a huge piece of rubble is pushed aside to reveal...

Superman, climbing back to his feet. His face is soot-blackened but he is unharmed. Lois nearly cries in relief! She runs forward, stops, just in front of him.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Are you ... are you...

SUPERMAN

I'm okay. What about you?

LOIS

Fine.

There's a tense moment, when nobody quite knows what to say ... and then they both remember...

LOIS (CONT'D)

The satellite!

SUPERMAN

I have to--

LOIS

Go. Go save the world.

He smiles at her for the briefest of seconds, and then takes flight, climbing straight upwards in a flash of red and blue and the roar of a sonic boom.

LOIS (CONT'D)

(to herself)

This looks like a job for Superman.

Lois watches him go ... and then cars screech to a halt at the top of the road - police, fire, and a car from the Daily Planet. Jimmy comes charging up.

JIMMY

Miss Lane, are you--?

LOIS

I'm fine.

(a beat)

Come on kid - we've got work to do.

She grabs Jimmy by the arm and pushes him into the car.

JIMMY

Where are we going?

LOIS

LexCorp. Lex has a lot of explaining to do.

The car SCREECHES OFF.

EXT. SKYLINE -- DAY

Superman flashes at top speed across the countryside, face set and determined ... America flashes by below him...

EXT. LEXCORP TOWER -- DAY

Lois' car screeches to a halt outside the main doors - Lois and Jimmy get out and head for the door at a dead run.

INT. LEXCORP LOBBY -- DAY

Lois and Jimmy march in and head for the elevator. A SECURITY GUARD rushes over to them.

SECURITY GUARD

Can I see some I.D please?

LOIS

We don't have time for this--

And she knees the guard in the groin, HARD. He goes down hard, and Lois grabs Jimmy by the arm and heads for the elevator.

Jimmy looks back at the dazed security guard in awe.

JIMMY

Let that be a lesson to you!

EXT. SKIES -- DAY

Superman descends out of the clouds ... and flashes down to where the launch site is visible in the distance.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor watches the screens as Superman arrives at the launch site. His face contorts in anger.

LUTHOR

No...

The intercom buzzes.

INTERCOM (O.S.)
Sir, this is security--

LUTHOR
Not now.

He grabs his phone.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)
Attack team, you are a go! I want
him out of my sky!

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Superman descends towards the launch site--

Something explodes just beside him -- he turns, looks--

And an attack squad of LexFlight choppers are rising up
from the ground to attack him - a second chopper fires--

Superman takes the missile full in the chest - the impact
hurls him backwards--

Smashing into through the glass into the control tower!

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

The door opens to reveal Lois and Jimmy stood outside,
watching...

Inside we see Luthor, watching as the helicopters attack
Superman.

LOIS
My god...

INT. LAUNCH SITE CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

Superman recovers himself slightly, looks around - everyone
in the control tower is watching him nervously. He
struggles to his feet...

Outside he sees one of the choppers descending in front of
the window and turning to face him. A second missile arms.

SUPERMAN
Everyone out! Now!

Nobody argues with him - everyone turns to run.

Superman takes a step forward ... walks ... then runs ...
then takes off--

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

FLASHES out of the control tower and SMASHES into the
chopper ... it blows apart spectacularly as Superman emerges
unharmd from the wreckage.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lois enters - Luthor turns in surprise.

LUTHOR

Lois?

Lois ignores him, walking towards the monitor ... sees Superman fighting with the choppers...

LOIS

You're going to kill him.

She looks Luthor in the eye ... and all the charm has gone from his face, replaced with cold hatred.

LUTHOR

That's the idea.

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Superman continues to fight with the choppers - he takes another hit to the stomach, recovers - dodges a missile then plows into one of the choppers, tearing it to bits with his bare hands.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lois looks into Luthor's eyes in horror, trying to comprehend.

LOIS

Why?

LUTHOR

Nobody embarrasses me like that
... not in my own city.
(beat)
Mercy.

Lois' head snaps up - Mercy emerges from a concealed entrance, guns trained on Lois and Jimmy.

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Another missile catches Superman in the side - he is blown down towards the forest...

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

The stand-off continues.

LOIS

You wouldn't.

LUTHOR

You tossed me aside, Lois. You don't get to do that. Now you can have a front row seat to the death of Superman.

Lois can only watch in horror as the fight continues on the screen.

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Superman picks himself up from the ground, sees the trail of devastation his fall cut through the tress.

He looks up to see the three remaining choppers descending towards him.

He looks across at the rocket.

X-RAY

We SEE the huge chunk of active Kryptonite at the heart of the thing.

BACK TO SCENE

Superman squares his shoulders.

SUPERMAN

No more.

The first rocket fires a missile--

Superman BLASTS his heat vision - the missile explodes harmlessly in mid-air--

Superman takes flight.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor and Lois watch - Luthor's face falls as Superman takes flight.

LUTHOR

No...

Jimmy fingers his camera--

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Superman flashes up - flies straight through each chopper - one! - two! - three! They all explode spectacularly behind him.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lois smiles in triumph as the cocky smile vanishes from Luthor's face.

LUTHOR

No!

And at that moment Jimmy brings up his camera.

JIMMY

Watch the birdie!

FLASH! The flasbulb pops, blinding Mercy for a second - he tackles her to the ground and a fight breaks out--

LOIS

Jimmy!

EXT. LEXCORP LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

Superman hovers in mid-air, seeing the wreckage of the destroyed helicopters...

And at that moment with a god-awful explosion, the satellite launches into the sky.

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lois and Jimmy are being held under armed guard by several really big security guards - Jimmy has a broken nose and Mercy is sporting a black eye.

JIMMY

Sorry.

LOIS

Nice try kid.

They are all watching the screen, enraptured, as the satellite launches...

EXT. SKIES -- DAY

Superman rockets straight upwards, face set, concentration focused.

Up ahead we can see the satellite just breaking the atmosphere.

X-RAY: Inside we see a massive chunk of active Kryptonite.

Superman grits his teeth and accelerates.

He reaches the satellite ... grabs hold...

WINCES IN PAIN as he feels the effects of the Kryptonite working on him ... but he knows he can't afford to back out now.

His face screwed up in intense concentration he pushes...

Flaps open on the sides ... vents to release the Kryptonite virus--

Superman PUSHES HARD!

EXT. SPACE

Superman emerges from the atmosphere pushing the satellite in front of him. With a Herculean effort he PUSHES ... the satellite flies harmlessly out into space.

After a few seconds it explodes. Safely away from Superman and from the planet.

Without even giving himself time to smile, Superman turns --
And flashes back into the atmosphere of the planet.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE METROPOLIS -- DAY

Superman flashes through the city at high speed, heading straight for the LexCorp building. Without slowing down he reaches the building...

INT. LUTHOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Luthor turns calmly as Superman comes crashing in through the window.

In seconds he takes out the guards holding Lois and Jimmy. Lois turns to Mercy--

SOCKS her in the face with a left hook. She goes down hard. Jimmy is impressed.

JIMMY

Nice--

LOIS

Save it.

Superman turns on Luthor - who looks at the broken window and flashes an ironic smile.

LUTHOR

The first one you could have on me -
this time I'm sending you a bill.

SUPERMAN

Save it. You're going to answer
to your part in this fiasco.

LUTHOR

What fiasco?

He calmly moves to sit behind his desk.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

You may think you've averted some
kind of global tragedy, Superman,
but in doing so ... you've destroyed
the only evidence you might have
had of said tragedy.

He pauses for a moment to let this sink in - Superman is not happy.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

No-one will ever know the truth
about that satellite now, you've
been kind enough to see to that.

SUPERMAN

You don't care, do you?

(MORE)

SUPERMAN (CONT'D)

You planned to unleash death on
hundreds of thousands of innocents
... and you really didn't care.

LUTHOR

I'm in business to make profit,
not friends. Look at that.

He stands up and looks out across the panoramic view of
Metropolis.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

This city belongs to me. Everyone
in this city works for me, whether
they know it or not. This city
was mine long before you ever showed
your face and it'll be mine long
after they've forgotten all about
you. So, if this is a battle
between you and I, Superman...

(beat)

I've already won.

Stalemate. Luthor smiles.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

And now if you'll excuse me, I
have a company to run--

At that moment the door blasts in and Captain Sawyer and
an armed team from the Metropolis PD stride in. Luthor
grins.

LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Ah, good, if you wouldn't mind
showing this costumed interloper
off the premises, Captain...

SAWYER

Alexander L Luthor, on the direct
authority of the Mayor of Metropolis
I am placing you under arrest.

And just for a second, Lex Luthor himself is surprised.
He quickly covers it with anger.

LUTHOR

If this is a joke, Captain Sawyer,
then it's in extremely bad taste...

Sawyer drops a piece of paper onto Luthor's desk. Superman
turns to see it. An arrest warrant.

Luthor looks from Superman - impassive - to Lois, who
shrugs.

LOIS

I called Captain Sawyer from the
car ... she was very interested in
some evidence I found.

SAWYER

I think you'll find corporate sabotage ranks fairly low on most people's lists of jokes, Mr. Luthor. Particularly when it cost the lives of the citizens of Metropolis.

Luthor glares at Superman. And just for a second, Superman permits himself a small smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAILY PLANET HEADLINE: LUTHOR UNDER ARREST

LOIS (O.S.)

Couldn't have happened to a nicer person.

INT. DAILY PLANET - CITY ROOM -- DAY

Lois and Clark make their way through the office. Clark is holding the paper, a bemused grin on his face.

CLARK

How did you...?

LOIS

I remembered what you said ... and what Superman said ... about the dogs barking when the helicopters went off-course. An ultra-sonic signal that was undetectable? Then there was Hamilton and his evidence that the helicopters had been sabotaged on both occasions. So I did some digging...

CLARK

So I see.

LOIS

And it turns out that the ground controller at Hermes Aerospace was one Paul Paxton - except that he used to go by the real name of Otto Juris, back in the days when he worked for LexCorp. If Hermes had been forced to cut their losses and pull out, then LexCorp would have been the natural successor as chief hardware supplier to the United States Air Force.

Clark gives her an impressed, sincere smile.

CLARK

That's a great piece of reporting, Lois.

LOIS

I know. But really it's all down to you and ... and him...

For a moment there is a very dreamy look on her face.

CLARK
And what about Lex?

The dreamy look vanishes from Lois' face.

LOIS
The man tried to kill me, Clark.
Still think he's my type.

CLARK
(laughs)
I suppose not.
(beat)
Say, if you're, um ... if you're
not doing anything Friday, maybe
we could...

LOIS
(grins)
Not a chance, Smallville.

Clark grins anyway.

CLARK
Would it help if I wore a red cape?

LOIS
I somehow doubt you could carry it
off as well as he can.

For a moment they both laugh. Then she gets back down to business.

LOIS (CONT'D)
I have to go.

CLARK
Yeah, me too.

LOIS
Oh yes? Where are you going?

CLARK
Home. See my folks for a few days.

LOIS
Nice. Well, I'm sure we can manage
without you for a few days. Have
a good time.

She smiles and walks away. Clark watches her go with a stunned expression of amazement.

Lois sits back down - something clicks in her brain.

LOIS (CONT'D)
No...

She looks across at Clark's retreating back. For a moment she has a look of wonder on her face ... then she smacks her palm into her forehead.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Lois Lane, that is the single dumbest idea you have ever had.

EXT. KENT FARM -- EVENING

The sun is setting across the Kansas farmland.

Jonathan and Martha are sat on the porch, watching the sun go down. Lana is with them, holding a copy of the Daily Planet with the story about Luthor's arrest.

CLARK (O.S.)

Couldn't have happened to a nicer person.

None of them look the least bit surprised to see him. He sits down between his mother and Lana.

LANA

How was your day?

CLARK

Oh ... eventful.

They all laugh.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Of course it's never going to stick. Someone like Lex Luthor doesn't get sent to jail. He'll get away with it.

JONATHAN

But this time, when he does, he'll have someone to watch out for.

His mother takes his hand.

MARTHA

We're proud of you, son.

We pan upwards and away from them up into the sky as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DAILY PLANET ROOFTOP -- EVENING

The sun is beginning to set over the city. Lois is stood watching the sun go down.

A WHOOSH comes from behind her ... she smiles.

LOIS

Been wondering if you'd show up.

Superman walks into frame.

SUPERMAN

I thought I'd find you here.

LOIS

Lets just say you made quite an impression.

They both smile - there is a shared look between the two of them.

LOIS (CONT'D)

You do know Lex Luthor is never going to go to jail for that? He'll get off one way or another. You've made a dangerous enemy.

SUPERMAN

So did Lex Luthor.
(beat)
You.

Lois laughs at this.

LOIS

So ... how long do you plan on staying here?

He turns and smiles at her.

SUPERMAN

I'll always be here.

And with that he turns away, stepping off the edge of the building.

Lois watches as he drops down into the city as we...

FADE OUT.

CREDITS.

END.