Human , super human, sub human.

by runkirya

Summary

They looked at each other “ You shall have to rely on my methods , Mr. Kent.”
He was left alone in the room trying to figure out the implications laying in the words. He felt confused. At least, this time, Batman hadn’t told him to get the hell out of Gotham.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
He knocked on the door, the butler had shown him, the sound was deep and solid as the polished wood. A muffled voice, without hesitation, answered from the other side. As he entered the study he took in the details: the warm golden light coming through the large windows, the tall shelves, filled with books, crammed in the first rows and tidy up the top, the decorated ceiling, a big dark desk with solid curving legs almost looking strained by a top full of papers, books and cuttings and an empty leather chair behind the jumbled pile.

It took a few moments to realize there was someone sitting cross legged on the carpet, half hidden by a divan. The man stood up and went to the door where he was standing. “Come and sit down, you look fit to drop.” He sounded concerned.

The first time Clark had met Wayne was in an elegant office overlooking Gotham’s sky line. Everything surrounding Wayne gave the distinct idea it was out of reach, the way his suit followed his body’s movements had made Clark feel cheap in his clothes. The man walking next to him now was different as much as the background… However it still was Bruce Wayne and once again Clark was feeling substandard. He was substandard. He didn’t know what to make about the situation, he said nothing and sunk in one of the armchairs. “I don’t know…” “We need to make…..”

They both stopped, Wayne slightly extended a hand and offered “You first.” He felt terrible, the situation was making him feel uneasy, having to face Bruce Wayne was almost unreal.

“I don’t know what to make of this…and … I can’t really focus on the events of the last few days….”

“Just to make things clear a charade is useless, you where in bad conditions, but conscious when I got you out of the lab and you fought to keep conscious during the decontamination, you know who I am and so do I Mr. Kent.” The tone was disimpassioned.

Wayne’s words should have shocked him, but now nothing seemed to sink in his mind, there was something else he desperately needed an answer for.

“Am I free to leave the Manor?” “Yes, obviously.” He said as if it was the most natural thing in the world “But if you want your life back it wouldn’t be wise to leave now. You would have to come up with a good explanation looking like someone out of a concentration camp. People would be asking, some can understand ,but the others?” he shot Clark a glance and carried on “As long as you stay here I can guarantee protection, out of these premises I may not be able to reach you in time.” He concluded businesslike.

The room started to sway a little as Clark’s gaze followed Wayne moving next to a window. “…but you…you are working with Luthor.” He managed to say weakly.

“Yes, and in a few hours I’m having dinner with him, this doesn’t mean I agree with his ways. He is willing to share ideas about Superman going ‘uncontrolled’ and discussing containment methods can be intellectually challenging.”

That smashed into him causing a wave of sudden anger “Do you really… think I could go…!??” Wayne cut in the hurt protest. “For one working with words, you don’t pay attention …” the young man sighed “but that doesn’t matter now…”

There was a knock at the door, Wayne answered and Alfred come in “Excuse me, Mr. Wayne, Commissioner Gordon is waiting for you.” “Yes, thank you ,Alfred , I’ll see him in a moment.” The man crossed the room stepping over the papers and photos strewn on the carpet where he’d been
sitting, he fished in one of the desk’s drawers and handed Clark a cell phone “The line is safe, no one will know where the call is coming from, but they can’t call back. Your family and friends may want to know how you are. ” He explained with a caring tone. “I know you can keep a secret.” Clark understood the man was in a difficult situation. They looked at each other “ You shall have to rely on my methods , Mr. Kent.” He was left alone in the room trying to figure out the implications laying in the words. He felt confused. At least, this time, Batman hadn’t told him to get the hell out of Gotham. He let his mind wonder for a moment. Memories slowly crept to the surface and made some sense.

He remembered the frantic clutch on the Bat’s arm, when he’d suddenly appeared. Words had failed him, he hadn’t spoken to anyone for so long, he couldn’t utter a sound, only hold on the arm in shear desperation. And the Batman had been kind and careful, putting him on his feet, while pain mounted drenching him of whatever energy was left. Next there was a sudden glimpse of the Batman saying something and shaking him in a confined space, different from his prison, while lights in tidy parallel rows rushed, blared and vanished over his head. Then more light in darkness, soft light making shapes clear while an artificial voice in the background asked confirmation for decontamination procedures; he’d panicked when he set eyes on a scalpel inches from his body. The monstrous Bat had pinned him down, effortlessly , to a table, slicing his suit. The creature withdrew as a familiar and distant face appeared, he couldn’t place it, the deep frown, mouth’s tight tensed line. It was all incongruous. The warm bare skin against his side and the arms lifting him, getting him back on his feet as light flashed and water painfully almost knocked him over. Bruce Wayne held him steady never allowing him to fall….

Now he realized the nightmare was something real and the confusion had left space to organized and controlled actions in his patchy memory. He was feeling miserable and warn out, he looked at the phone. His parents had to know he was alive…as for safe he still couldn’t figure out if he was or not. His hands were shaking and cold, he despised the knotty look they had.

He felt worst every second, giving up for the moment the idea to phone, he started to get back to his bedroom, it was slow going, steadying himself against the wall and unsteadily inching up the stairs. Alfred appeared and helped him, after that memories become once again confused as pain twisted and exploded inside, leaving him a raw bundle of heat ripping at his nerves . His body had never failed him, now it was revolting against him , what was happening was too much, he thought he wouldn’t be able to face it. Gradually he felt there was nothing left of him, even his mind was stormed by the agonizing sensation of bones ready to snap under stringy muscles contracting out of will. In all that, through a dimmed conscience, he felt someone else taking up the battle to force his body out of the struggle, till his limbs where limp and the blazing fever finally left space to a dreamless peaceful darkness.
Healing

Chapter Summary

Bruce hadn’t changed his mind on the possible threat the Kryptonian could become, he was collecting more information for future potential events.

II CHAPTER
As he learned, when he finally woke up, the fever had plagued him for three days, causing “some concern” in Alfred and Mr. Wayne.
He must have been a real hand full, since there wasn’t anyone who could be of any help for his situation, not even he knew how and when he may come out of it and wasn’t sure the Fortress could give answers. For the time being he wouldn’t be able to reach it anyway, but before deciding on any course of action, or telling anyone about its existence he wanted to be sure certain secrets where still so.
He was weary of the whole situation. What little he could figure out was telling him he may trust Wayne, the few words they had exchanged days ago had been matching his actions, as far as he could remember….true the encounters with the Bat hadn’t gone well, he knew why. The first time it was just to tell him to stay out of Gotham and the second to tell him in a ‘hostile’ tone he didn’t want him there because, apparently, he’d made a mess of things. He felt Batman’s sting and he was… pissed ….when, trying to explain his reasons, Batman had stepped off the roof and vanished in the shadows…leaving him in mid sentence like he was a useless idiot.
He had been drawn to Gotham after the first news about the sightings of a masked vigilante. Only rumors and most authorities denied his existence when they could or hid behind “no comments” when they couldn’t find good excuses… Nothing was sure about the rumors; all he got at first was a couple of masked men, emulators, beating up some worthless drug dealers, there was nothing relevant to that, the police took care of all, masked and not, with no problems in no time… It took Clark another handful of nights to finally meet the Bat and be honestly perplex by the fact he apparently was a man. He shouldn’t have been surprised, Oliver Queen hadn’t unsettled him with Green Arrow, yet Batman was different in his approach. He was darker in methods with, what appeared like a sadistic streak he disapproved of immediately, unapproachable and hostile, most of all he appeared lethal in ways that made him wonder if certain lines had been crossed and there was the cowl, telling him the man behind it was extremely guarded…..That made sense, since he guessed someone must be financing the Bat but…His experience now showed him something more than he knew, something as surprising as discovering Batman was a man with no powers: Bruce Wayne was the real legend the one who possibly didn’t really exist… Alfred told him to take it easy and explained where to find the kitchen since he didn’t want breakfast served in bed.
He showered and got dressed with the clothes the butler had left for him. Everything seemed to hang on him. His body was thin, muscles almost gone, he wondered if the belt would actually prevent the trousers from falling down.
He could hardly stand the sight of the man in the mirror, getting his hair through a comb made him feel ridiculous. He couldn’t recognize himself.
Having lived, for the past few years, as two different people, ending up with the risk of having no identity at all frightened him. But given the same conditions he’d do it again. There had been hostages ….he knew there was something strange. The place was isolated and a quick scan showed parts of walls he couldn’t see through, but some of the children were crying , frightened because one
of them had been badly mistreated… and when he got near, trying to talk to the kidnappers, he was hit by a cloud of dust. Green dust. Things become difficult to understand and got worst with time…. That’s how two months, as Alfred told him, of his life had gone lost, left him looking the shadow of himself and powerless. He’s jailers had been merciless using kryptonite, in various forms from rocks to dust and gas, to make sure they could test resistance to pain, hunger, cold and heat, take blood and tissue samples from him. The thought of what he’d been through made him angry and he still couldn’t believe how they could do such things without ever considering the pain they inflicted. He wasn’t so naïve to think the world was free of such people, or he was the only victim of certain ‘attentions’. When he’d encountered these individuals it always left him shocked and thinking back on what had happened made him rile. He’d figured out, behind all that, Lex Luthor was directing the experiments. There were times when his torturers had thought him unconscious or his mind too far gone to understand and Luthor’s name had been voiced.

Clark Kent had been away from the Daily Planet before and with no warning, yet never for two months running without handing in some article or a really good excuse to prove he was working undercover and not just missing. As for Superman he could go missing, he would eventually answer why he’d just vanished… but Clark wanted his life back, wanted to see his family, his friends both the ones who knew him as Clark and Superman. He needed the Planet’s bullpen, the hectic rush to get the work done on time, the deep satisfaction when writing an article….he had to come out of this situation some way.

But Wayne was right he couldn’t do it now, the only thing he was fit for was playing the part of a scarecrow in a field…

He took the phone he’d been given and phoned his parents. It pained him to learn how they’d been worried sick. Oliver Queen had reassured them they, the ones who knew him as Superman, would find him thus preventing Martha and Jonathan Kent informing authorities to go on a hunt for him … that would have been really difficult to handle. For most of the call he told them he was fine and in no threat ( apparently) , there wasn’t any need to explain more and they didn’t ask. He told his parents to let Oliver know, he was safe and would be back in a few days ( hopefully), Oliver would read his intentions and act for the best.

The first 'bits' of Clark and Superman had been handled, they were in a way, the easiest. Without thinking Lois' personal phone number was tapped out without hesitation.

Clark felt as if he was hit by a truck full of words….. but he managed to put in one of his own.

“What?”

“What do you mean ‘what’? Clark, where are you ?”

“Lois , Lois please…what do you mean Wayne…” he tried and failed to get the sentence finished.

“How come you don’t know Wayne is the new owner? Where on Earth have you been? No, wait a minute, you’re after Superman, you know where he is!”

“Lois…” He managed to say before she cut in again.

“Perry’s going to love this…” she giggled

“Lois please, say nothing, do nothing.” He begged her.

“Clark, are you sure you’re ok?” she sounded worried, that made her slow down.

“Yes…I just need time, to work things out.” How was he going to work that out anyway?

“Clark,get back please” she said softly “ You can’t even imagine who I’ve had to work with!”She concluded. Lois had her ways to let him know how much she liked him. He knew she was on his side and would back him up when he returned. He liked Lois, and before the call was over he promised he’d phone again.

So Wayne had bought the Daily Planet, it wasn’t really news. There had been offers, since there where financial difficulties and a lot of talk about ‘surplus’ to be settled , which had caused quite some stir… Wayne had made no offer till Clark had been there and most of the D.P.’s workers were convinced they’d soon be working for Luthor.

So that was it, his world had moved along and he badly had to catch up with all he’d missed. He closed the bedroom door behind him.

Clark smiled to himself at the idea Superman could get fired by Batman for the second time and for
good. Then: “Shit!” was the only thought he come up with, a good part of him wasn’t finding the idea funny.

He had breakfast with Alfred and was pleased for the company; he needed it after the total isolation he’d been abandoned to during the last days of his captivity. The old butler made good conversation, cooked well and fed him large portions of food, somehow convinced like that: “You’ll soon get back to your old self”.

He asked about Bruce Wayne, the simple answer was: “Mr. Wayne tends to sleep the mornings off.”

Clark decided he liked Alfred, he had a way of putting things, taking away the sharp edges, yet giving a precise picture of facts….

Alfred Pennyworth wasn’t a simple butler, Clark had managed to get some information on him when Bruce Wayne had turned up after he’d been missing for a few years. The old man had kept a firm grip on Wayne’s behalf in the enterprises Bruce had inherited, after his parents were killed, when he was a child. Years back, Alfred, had been appointed as Bruce’s guardian. Less wealthy members of the family, decided to start a legal war to get custody of the child, concerned about a guardianship they considered unsuitable for Bruce’s welfare and wealth in particular. Alfred stood up to it all, from the court case, to angry relatives and a growing hostile public opinion, proving he was a fighter, who wasn’t being helped either by a very troublesome child badly coping with he’s parents loss. Stepping further back he’d found something on a career and life left behind in Europe…but he never gave the information a better look. Wayne Enterprises’ heir was filling the papers and sold good, Alfred Pennyworth would never sell that well so he vanished in the background…some of the butler’s low profile, though, must have stuck to Bruce Wayne, the one carefully disguised behind the flashy ‘Prince of Gotham’, while the Batman had developed it in artistic virtuoso…

Alfred, was good company, he showed him around the Manor, so he wouldn’t get lost, the building was enormous and only just recovering from a fire which had severally damaged it. Clark learned it was not a drunken ‘Prince of Gotham’ who set fire to his own property and that completed a scenario he was still trying to unravel, owing to the fact the Bat wasn’t very inclined to talk… after almost two years it was rebuilt and restored, but in many ways it was all to keep up appearances. The house, with its elegant furniture, decorated ceilings, marble stairs and columns, was partially opened to guests only for special occasions, mainly found raisings. For the rest of the year, almost all of the rooms where closed and useless. Mr. Wayne would use his bedroom and his personal study at the most. Alfred had his private apartment in the manor, but only used a bedroom, most of his activity was in the kitchen and administration office where he’d instruct workers, coming in twice a week, on the parts of the house and gardens to take care of. The whole building looked a waste of space for two people, three at the moment, which got Clark considering, the bedroom he was using now, probably was as big as his apartment in Metropolis…the private grounds around the Manor where beautiful and Clark felt in his element going through the English garden, behind the building, gradually turning into a woods with no clear path. If the Manor looked like a show of wealth above any logic, the grounds around it spoke of a world far out Clark’s reach.

As the day progressed Alfred made sure Clark wouldn’t go hungry or get bored, giving him all the Daily Planet’s news papers he’d missed out in the last two months, with a laptop for more information if required….

As soon as he’d buried his nose in some article time started to slip by. Lois was the first to write and wonder where Superman had gone. As the weeks had passed she had always written about the Kryptonian’s disappearance. There were many other articles speculating on what had happened to him. None coming up with the right answer. The idea someone could kidnap Superman and keep him prisoner appeared preposterous. However, Lois had found something, having a word with the last ones who had seen him. Agents and hostages had spoken about tear gas, but some of the children had said the first shot of gas was green. Authorities never considered the words of a few frightened children, agents spoke only of tear gas and no one knew where Superman had vanished to. The woman didn’t give up and turned her attention and suspicions on Luthor, the only one who was authorized to mess around with
Kriptonite in his labs. The rumor was kryptonite could affect Superman’s powers. Kryptonite, some rumors said, was green. It could have been just a coincidence, nothing was confirmed… Wayne was part of it, since the recent business partnership on genetic research. It was clear how hard it must have been getting the ‘prince of Gotham’ to make a few relevant statements worth publishing, on something he evidently couldn’t care less about. Wayne made a good eclipsing game, now he could understand, previously he’d just thought it a shame a man with such wealth was mildly focused on business, but had nothing more than good looks to him. Luthor’s attitude was opposite, he made sure to give Lois a good interview and wasn’t in the least afraid to come up with unfriendly ideas on Superman in the most appealing ways to capture public opinion. Some of those ideas were reasonable if, Clark thought, Superman had been completely mad and with no interest other than destruction for the sake of it. Lex had given other interviews of the same nature and made it clear any objections to his arguments were worthless if not dangerous… Meanwhile business between Lex Corp. and Wayne Enterprises was going well. Luthor was taking all the advantages he could, the partnership was already perceived like the beginning of a new era in terms of medical research. Clark wouldn’t object about the business, he wondered about certain aspects of genetic research: who where they researching on? And exactly for what? The worst, for him, was the growing percentage of public opinion shifting towards Luthor’s ideas. The debate was open, he had to be part of it. Wayne didn’t show up for the next few days, except for the sports cars driving out of the Manor’s gates… could it be Wayne was giving him time to fill in the two months gap? Clark kept busy. He read, took notes, jot down ideas, deductions, research… things started to make some sense…

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Bruce opened the curtain, the bright afternoon light poured in the bedroom, making his eyes narrow. After a few seconds he got used to it and looked through the window to the gardens below. Alfred was taking care of his rose bushes, while Clark sat on the grass a few meters away in a patch of sun reading a newspaper. He still looked a little thin, but almost back to what he was… What made him to take a closer look at Kent wasn’t the fact he looked a lot like Superman, clumsiness and glasses apart. That wasn’t relevant. The Kryptonian’s face was well known and there were, from local to international competitions seeking doubles of Superman, TV, papers, magazines and the internet where full of that, with more or less good matching, grotesque photos, improbable videos, without counting the crazy rush for plastic surgery… at the point he could be anywhere or anyone. What made him turn his attention on Kent was: when asked an impression on interviewing the alien from Krypton, he said nothing like others he’d heard talking about the hero, he hadn’t mentioned anything unexpected, all was expected, impartial at the extent it appeared lacking of real personal impressions. It felt second hand. Bruce managed to give Kent the most unsatisfying interview in his career. As the questions went on the reporter started to come up with a few sharp ones he dodged carefully, with some effort. That was exactly what was strange. Someone coming up with good questions requiring straightforward answers, wasn’t fit to give such trite impressions on the Man of Steel. So he suspected Kent had made up the little interview with Superman….
That’s how it all started. He searched some information and bumped into something he recognized. Kent had lost himself for a couple of years. Bruce had done very much the same for longer, but that was normal for someone like him. Since his parents were killed, changing schools on a whim or leaving for futile reasons could be understood, mostly only by Alfred, but it was congruous with the way he was. Kent was different. He’d been raised in a place called Smallville, known only for a horrible meteor shower in the recent past. Such event had caused damages, casualties and several victims, some never identified. A closer look at the Kent family uncovered the adoption of a child no
one was looking for, a little time after the meteors. Quiet life, bright student, then the two years black out and he materialized in Metropolis at the same time as Superman’s first sightings….The first time he’d encountered Superman, as Batman, he just told him to stay clear of Gotham. The second time happened after the interview and the search done on Kent, again in Gotham on a roof top. Bruce thanked the man’s invulnerability, because he wanted to go for him. The alien had managed to wipe out a whole month of investigation and planning to get the new gang of dealers pinned for good. Superman had actually tried to justify himself and there it was: Kent wasn’t even hiding his voice! Obviously he had no reasons to, because he didn’t know who was behind the cowl and the voice distortion ……..

Bruce hadn’t changed his mind on the possible threat the Kryptonian could become, he was collecting more information for future potential events.
But the look Kent had in his eyes, the night he got him out of the lab, was lingering in his thoughts, whirling in his mind as a paradox, it made him think a lot. He trusted Alfred’s opinion and Alfred liked the man, but he wouldn’t discard Lex’s ideas, not completely.
They stayed silent for a few seconds. Bruce slid his hand forward till the tips of his fingers touched Clark’s.

Chapter III

He saw him walk along looking around, Bruce kept quiet and observed … The leaves rustled after a breeze of wind, he made a slight sound touching the towel draped around his neck. Clark moved a few steps forward among the trees. Superman’s powers weren’t back yet, he wondered how dimmed senses altered perception of the world around him… he stepped lightly on some grass growing among fallen leaves. Clark hesitantly turned round and caught sight of him. The man’s senses were probably average, but he was alert. “You’re looking a lot better.” Bruce said using the towel to sponge his forehead.

A bright smile appeared on Clark’s face. “I’ve got you to thank, Mr. Wayne… “

Walking through the woods they dropped formalities and fell into light conversation for a while, stiring back into more serious matters as they approached the Manor. “Bruce….I’m sorry I jumped to conclusions when we spoke…” “It’s understandable.”

“That’s how you found me? I mean, working from the inside.” He asked distractedly touching the bridge of his nose. “I wasn’t looking for you, but before anyone noticed clear skies in Metropolis, your disappearance happened to catch my attention.”

Clark was surprised “In what way..?”

“Storing and moving around little technical equipment and a load of empty boxes. It’s not unusual for Lex, but I don’t like my name involved in week explanations, hiding foggy intentions” “From what I could work out, I was often moved from one place to another” he said quietly as a bitter look made his eyes deep and distant.

“With no precise time scheme and often just putting up a show to mislead anyone who was looking for you or anything at all… you where lucky. Lex has a deranged mind, but he’s intelligent and dangerous.”

“You outwitted him…” he smiled faintly

“I still don’t know what exactly he’s up to ….and with sick ideas on ‘super humans’ ….”Bruce locked in a stone cold expression. “I don’t like history repeating itself.” said the Batman.

The day went along very much as it started: they spoke a lot. Clark felt the need to talk about what he’d been trough and Bruce wanted all the information he could get on the two months in Luthor’s custody, any detail appeared important, vital. Even Clark’s disturbed sleep. He’d get his fill of rest, but sleep, at the moment, wasn’t something he could take for granted as he usually did . As hard as he tried he couldn’t remember properly the events relating to his captivity, he knew what they had done to him, but everything seemed a confused blur as he tried to recall the sequence of facts. He could tell how he felt and was sure about the tests, but what left him wondering was the right sequence, the porpoise escaped him, some of the things they tried to do seemed deliberately without sense and only aiming to harm and humiliate him.
Bruce said coldly, he was suffering from a psychological trauma, very much the same way humans protected themselves from situations of distress, his mind was acting in the same fashion. As far as they could both tell it was connected to strong insecurity, keeping him vigilant, making sleep difficult, fearing there would be a danger…. Few days had passed since Batman had freed him from such a ‘nightmare’, so only time could tell if the trauma was deep or he could handle it on his own. If not Clark did know who may be of some help…he wondered if Bruce knew about the other alien. “I’m not sure, any psychotherapy we know could be applied safely.” Said Bruce, borderline with the Bat. “I’m not so different as you’ve noticed.” he kept calm, but didn’t like what the other man had just said. “You get me wrong. Would you trust a therapist with the secrets in your mind?” Clark smiled, realizing he was a little touchy on the argument. “I would if I decided I need help.” “I’d go for a trusty friend, species would be irrelevant.” Those words could be interpreted in many ways, but probably he knew, although he wasn’t trying to get information about anyone and Clark wouldn’t give any anyway. Bruce asked if something to help his sleep could work, but they both knew it wouldn’t work on his physiology….all Clark was worried about was if he had actually given information he didn’t want to be known. The Bat reassured him, nothing vital for the reporter or the super human, must have escaped his will and information was kept away from his captor. If that wasn’t so Luthor would have been able to threaten, if not a part of his friends, at least his family. That was definitely not the case. Luthor could have a lot of information about Superman’s biology, but probably nothing more, till evidence proved the contrary…. In the mean time they would have to be prepared for other types of trouble concerning the outcome of possible experiments. They both agreed they were in unknown territory there….

What was surprising for both was the ease of the words, the way they fell naturally into each other’s company, forgetting the passing time, as the day was turning to evening…they took to each other naturally….
They started to understand how different they could be and managed to clash on some points of view.

“You see ripples on water, calm the surface and think it’s done. Never stop and consider what’s deep down.”
“That’s why you kicked me out of Gotham?” Clark eyed him critically.
Bruce smirked. “I wouldn’t dream of kicking you.” Then he looked annoyed. “Delivering the dealers to the police was useless, they where no way near the end of their doings. Whatever evidence for charges there were, things were far too thin at that point to keep them in long enough. Now they are back on the streets again.” He sat heavily in an armchair opposite Clark. “There would have been casualties…” Clark stated grimly.
“Do you think I didn’t know that? The bomb was there for me.” The Kryptonian tried to find a more comfortable position in the armchair; he was getting a little frustrated. Obviously Bruce knew how to go about things, in some ways better than he would, any help wasn’t welcome, if not required and probably would never be, since it was clear how he didn’t like anyone interfering.
Clark wasn’t expecting any thanks but being told off with the additional bonus of, not too veiled, simple-minded accusation irritated him.
“If I see a problem, whether you like it or not, I’ll act the same.”
“Have it your way, as long as you stay clear of Gotham.”
The man was impossible; he had a good point on that specific case but…
“...You count on the fact you’re invulnerable and most people perceive you that way. But you’re not.”
“...Such perception avoids a lot of people from getting hurt.”
“...And when it’s not there, you are the one getting hurt.”
“Luthor is one … but I’m not stopping because of him.”
“There is something far worst coming along. There’s a department branching out of the government’s secret agency with one purpose: tracking aliens and metahumans, that means you won’t be avoiding trouble. They want you all for their purposes. If that’s not enough, Luthor may be working for them.” Clark looked at him; the situation seemed more complicated than it appeared. Bruce had that sort of information because he had gotten so close to Lex.
“Who told you about this?”
“One of Lex’s workers, now missing and someone near the secret services. Nothing of this is official but they are all collecting information.”
“We aren’t doing anything wrong, we aren’t hurting anyone…”
“They are not interested in you, they want what you have. Your biology, your technology……do you know anything about this, Clark?”
“I’m not having this! They can’t do whatever they want.” He felt extremely troubled.
“...Just try and protect your friends and family from this.”
He looked lost. Was it possible they were so close? Had he been induced to say things he couldn’t remember?
“...What does this mean?”
“Don’t rush at things as you do, consider the consequences of your actions. Your family and friends are safe thanks to Luthor’s obsession for you. He is full of Superman, his power and alien nature, he thinks you are hiding somewhere; but a secret identity is out of his way of thinking about you, though if he starts to set his mind on that …who knows.”
If there was anything wrong Bruce would have told him immediately, judging by the way he’d acted with him, chances were he would have given protection to others... he relaxed a little and voiced his thoughts.“...Takes one to know another one.”
Bruce shrugged.
“...Not necessarily. You’d be surprised how unpredictable some people can be.”
“...Are you talking about Luthor or yourself?”
The man smiled.
“I’m very predictable and with a little sound thinking you’d understand.”
Clark had the distinct feeling it would be difficult for him to follow Bruce’s trail of thoughts, the man appeared to be focusing on many things at the same time. He was more than just good looks. Especially when he smiled. He felt, deep inside, he could trust him.
“It was just a crystal my father gave me. He said he knew it was important, but I’d have to understand why and how.”
He started to tell the whole story, Bruce knew the basic facts, but Clark pointed to the shady zones no one knew about.
How he’d arrived on Earth, the reasons, the difficulties he had to face and the constant hiding, the way he was scared he would be taken away from his parents if someone discovered he was a ‘freak’, a monster... Bruce understood, he’d had his good share of troubles during youth, mostly caused by himself, but he could lash out and be on the safe side of things, he’d never been really worried or concerned, he didn’t always hold back, he grew partially protected by his social advantages, though not from life’s bitter sting…Batman was Bruce’s personal answer to rage slipping out of control and into a drowning chaos…
Clark had to protect himself from the very start without knowing who or what he really was. When the questions become urgent and painful his Kryptonian inheritance displayed itself, not making things easier, oppressing him with a sense of yearning for something he never really knew, lived or experienced. So from the crystal grew the Fortress of Solitude, a good name Bruce thought, for a place containing the memories of a lost world, for a place harbouring the last of an extinct
civilization.
“If Luthor had actually found the Fortress and a way to understand its technology…”
“It’s not that easy, clearance to the Fortress is genetically based…”
“Doesn’t mean it can’t be hacked in some way.”
“I’m not talking about a simple computer…” he smiled patiently
“Whatsoever that could be in Kryptonian terms.”
“The AI would make it hard to get in the Fortress for a start and worst to get hold of any information, but even in that event…” he tried to explain.
“We’d have to convert the knowledge in human terms, that doesn’t mean we would be able to apply the technology, yet it could trigger a few good ideas…” the man stated almost bored “We could go on with this till our minds blow up.” Bruce shook his head slightly almost to put out of the way a useless discussion “Clark, I can see how difficult it is for you, but at the moment I’m the only one who can help. I don’t blame you if you don’t trust me, but… just think about the possibility. I’m sure he has nothing, because he’s looking around for something.”
Bruce stood up, night was in and he felt the need to leave the Manor for Gotham’s dark heart of roofs and streets.
Clark gave out a few coordinates, before he could say anything.
They looked at each other.
“It’s where the Fortress stands.” He explained.
“I didn’t want to force information out of you, all I was pointing at…”
“I trust you.” He said plainly looking at the man.
“You know that is your problem.”
Clark smiled ”I don’t think I’ll regret it.”
Bruce felt almost guilty, Clark had just handed him over the most concealed part of his life. He wouldn’t have done so, he hadn’t even thought of the possibility to show him the cave under the Manor’s grounds. Clark had done it in such an innocent way it was hard to understand how someone like Superman was so trusty of others. He was convinced the Kryptonian was captured because he lacked a plan, not because he trusted others to go by the rules, he was kidnapped because he didn’t expect a threat but just wanted to help…
Bruce had lost trust since he’d witnessed his parents deaths, since then he’d tried to find a reason to make his life worth something, give sense to his rage, get rid of his fears… the shattered child in him had grown up to be a trustless adult, fighting a lonely battle for hope he had lost.

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Clark was just standing and taking in the sun light, his eyes where closed as if nothing was to disturb him while the star took care of his body. It was difficult to think he didn’t belong to this world, not easy to consider he wasn’t human. He could imagine how the Kents must have felt wanting to look after a lost child…
Oddly enough he felt the need to protect him, rationally it was a ridiculous idea to associate with Superman, but he was dealing with Clark, that made a great difference.
Impeccable dark blue suit, inky sun glasses shielding completely his eyes, Clark caught sight of faint shifting red in the blue tie’s texture, he bet that single item on Bruce cast more than one of his best suits … he looked gorgeous. Most of all it wasn’t the fact he dressed in what looked priceless. In many ways even Oliver Queen had captured Clark’s attention for elegance and good looks. He was starting to understand how complex the man was and how the obscure undercurrent he possessed made him unique and he daren’t think about attraction…

“The sun does you good.”
“ It’s good to photosynthesize now and then.” He said smiling warmly.
“A little sun would do you good as well, my boy.” Said Alfred, clipping a couple of rose leaves. “Remind me to try photosynthesis tomorrow.” Bruce answered in a mocking tone. “Meanwhile stay away from crosses and wooden stakes.” Alfred sounded serious and got a laugh out of the two. Clark understood the old man’s apprehension was deep for certain nocturnal activities, he didn’t like to think what it must be like, night after night, waiting and hoping Bruce wasn’t hurt… They started to walk through the garden, the day was bright and it was a pleasure just to take in the warmth of the early afternoon sun. “I’ll be leaving for Metropolis tomorrow, Bruce.” He’d decided that morning, the man in the mirror was once again Clark Kent…as for Superman, he’d soon be back… “Are your powers back?” “No, but there’s a lot I have to settle and I don’t need my powers for that. I’ll never stop thanking you and Alfred for all you have done.” It sounded too little to say, but he didn’t seem to be able to find better words. “You would have done the same.” “I wouldn’t want that to ever happen.” He couldn’t bring himself to think about such a possibility. “I don’t think it’s a good idea to leave now, but if you feel up to it.” Was it just his imagination or did Bruce sound a little put off by the decision? “Well…I have to discover if I still have a job.” He tried to make it sound like a joke, but he was concerned about the matter. There was a smile on the man’s face. “You shall have to ask Perry about that, I don’t interfere.” “Can I know why you bought the Daily Planet?” “A feeling, a good investment…make Lex mad.” Bruce smiled “ It just didn’t feel right to think you’d be on his pay roll.” “How did I give myself away?” He was quite puzzled about that… “Interviewing yourself and having no relevant opinion about the Man of Steel .” “Oh…that!” He groaned. He could see his mistake, he just couldn’t figure a decent personal opinion on Superman, he’d have to think better about that. Of course, he could fool people all of the time… till he’d bumped into Bruce fooling all , all of the time, the two of them played the same game from different points of view… Good thing it wasn’t Luthor, but he wouldn’t ask Kent’s opinion on Superman. He wasn’t interested in opinions, if not his own, all he wanted was the Kryptonian as a lab rat. Clark moved out of those depressing thoughts and asked with a teasing smile: “Can I get an interview from Batman?” “I though you liked your job.” Bruce smiled. “Thought so.” He chuckled. He’d have to put up with the fact the Bat was spiky and liked to be out of reach. “I’ll go and get myself changed for lunch, there’s something I want to show you later on.” After lunch, Clark had a few satellite pictures in various spectrums of light of the area around the Fortress. “Is this legal?” he asked. Bruce just stared back coldly “ Are you serious about this?” Clark noticed how the Bat appeared dangerously when Bruce was somehow displeased “I.I know it may be justified at the moment…” “Clark , I hope I haven’t wasted my time spying illegally on ice…” He was hovering towards annoyance. He must have though Clark had played a joke on him. The reporter put his hands on the screen, widened one of the sections and a great sheet of ice was clearly in view . “If that satisfies you, it satisfies me.” said Bruce. “I’d show you personally, but I can’t now.” “ As long as no one else knows about it, I’m not interested. I checked for safety sake.” “The hell with that…” Clark thought, the man was a liar, a good one, but he would bet his head on how interested he was. Bruce was full of state of the art technology, for military use he guessed, and
he’d only seen what was in his personal study; by the frustration he showed over those pictures he must be dying to know more.

Bruce pulled up his sleeves, punched a few commands in the panel in front of him and the screen obscured itself.

“I’ll check the area, till your powers are back.” Screen and command panel slid back flat against the wall, while shelves and books covered it all as if it had never been there.

Bruce’s left forearm showed an ugly patch of move and yellow complexion.

Clark looked at the bruise wondering how extended it was. He put out a hand, but the tips of his fingers never touched the skin’s surface. “Does it hurt?” he asked softly.

Bruce answered shaking his head slightly in denial, a frown shading his eyes.

Silence fell between the two as they locked in eye contact.

Clark felt Bruce’s hand sliding under the shirt’s collar and rest on the nape of his neck. His heart missed a beat. He took a step forward putting his hands around Bruce’s waist, the man moved in for body contact. Deep inside him desire blazed unexpectedly strong, it made a shiver go through him.

As Clark slipped a hand under the pullover, feeling the warmth of the man’s skin, their lips touched softly, tongues stroked. Clark trailed his hands up Bruce’s back while he was pushed to deepen the kiss. He hummed to the greed, eagerly accepted it.

It felt so good as they tasted and felt each other, slowly to capture and savor the sensations...

There was a knock on the door, making them unwillingly part. They where breathless, foreheads resting against one another. Their hands hesitant to let go of each other.

Bruce abruptly took a couple of steps away from Clark, smoothing down his pullover and running a hand through his hair.

“Yes, come in.” he said, putting on a blank face, Clark looked at him regain immediate control of the situation.

The door opened and Alfred said: “Gordon is here, in the parlor, with Montoya.”

“Thank you, Alfred.” Bruce nodded as the door closed once more.

They looked at each other for a moment; Clark took in the man’s pensive expression.

“What has Gordon got with you?”

“Collaboration. He’s getting none out of Lex. He’s trying to figure out what happened before the warehouse, next the lab, exploded and what they where up to in the place.” Bruce seemed to hesitate for a second then he picked up the black robe laying on the divan’s armrest and put it on.

The silken garment flared behind him as he walked out of the room without a word. How many times had he seen the Bat during those days?

Alfred had prepared another of his delicious meals, he really felt spoiled when they finished dinner with an apple pie and sweet wine. The old man wished them good night adding: “If there are any insomnia problems just care to let me know.” And left them with a smile they matched.

Clark told Bruce about the article he had managed to write during the days he’d been there. Since he couldn’t take into consideration Luthor’s actions he had tried to be on Superman’s side and his actions. He wished, like that, public opinion wouldn’t give Lex’s words so much credit, but what he regretted most was the fact Wayne’s name would go into the article owing to the business partnership. Bruce made it clear he didn’t care, as long as facts and figures where correct. That made Clark unwind a little, but he could feel the man’s anger mixed with pain. Two months in Luthor’s hands, abused as a lab animal had left the sign. He saw how desperately he was trying to find a way to tell someone, let the world know exactly what had happened to him. Clark had a bad habit of acting without giving things a second thought, yet it was clear he wouldn’t be able to do anything about this, because he knew far too well he had no real evidence to show Luthor was behind all of this. Even when they found any evidence of crime, Bruce knew, Clark would have to keep quiet about his captivity.

“If only something like … like…”

“Whatever you think of wouldn’t work. Voice recordings, videos, data or even notes on paper… anything. The moment you’ll enter a court room they will go for you in all possible ways. You’ll be
playing by their rules. And since we are talking about Superman it will be easy. Think about the identity question. In human terms you have none, legally speaking that would put an end to the case before it starts. And it would only be the beginning. You are risking ‘Mr. Kent’’s involvement, if you stick to their rules, that would affect all the people you love and care for. Clark, you have lived here all your life, you know we have our ways, this is a power struggle Superman can’t win.”
“I never acted against the law…”
“Whoever’s behind this is acting above justice and common sense. There is not just Luthor, we have to face this notion.” The Bat showed once again.
Clark toyed with the glass and the last drop of wine in it moved around. Putting the glass down on the table he let his hand fall next to it. They stayed silent for a few seconds. Bruce slid his hand forward till the tips of his fingers touched Clark’s. The contact took their attention, gradually the fingers slipped next to one another closing in an understanding comfort.
Bruce was the first to pull away. “Go and get some sleep.” he said standing up “Alfred will be mad at me if he knows I’ve kept you awake” he added with a faint smile leaving the kitchen. Clark looked at the man engulfed by the dark corridor.

Chapter End Notes

Please tell me what you think in the comments below ^^^
Chapter IV
As he entered the bathroom, after Alfred woke him up, he noticed a small glossy bag on the marble top next the washbasin.
In it there was an elegant oblong box with an Italian fashion brand stamped on it…
He opened the box and stared at the glasses.
Fashionable without being trendy. He tried them on, they looked good, but he was uncertain whether to give up the dumb parody in favor of a professional and serious impression. He slid the sober black frames off, putting them away.
Bruce, Clark considered, was confusing. Interviewing Mr. Fox, CEO of Wayne Enterprises, he got the impression Bruce Wayne had a mild flair for business, when he tried to concentrate; meeting him personally left him wondering if the young industrial really cared for anything connected to his name. During the last few days he was faced with someone considerate including the obscure Batman lingering in the surroundings. Now he felt attraction growing towards the owner of all those personalities. He’d thought about Bruce Wayne as an attractive man, but since he’d met Bruce and started to know him, the occasional thought, had become something more consistent and what had happened the day before made him smile. He almost regretted having to leave for Metropolis. He left the bedroom and headed for the stairs to the kitchen, where he found an aggravated butler.
“The lord of the Manor is disapproving of breakfast this morning.” Was the comment coming from Alfred.
“Isn’t he feeling well?” Clark asked concerned.
“Apart from no sleep and a foul mood he’s fine as usual, just decided to plan the board meeting now. I thought I’d done a better job with him, but apparently…” Clark smiled understanding once again the fatherly worry in the butler’s words. The night patrol must have been rough, he wished he could have helped, but that option was out at the moment, probably it was out anyway…. they had breakfast while Bruce was settling matters in his study.
He was a little disappointed.
In a way it didn’t matter, Bruce was taking him to the station, he’d have time to talk to the man as well as thank him for the glasses.

He was expecting a lift from Bruce, he got a crash helmet and a reckless run through Gotham on a motorbike…the only part of the ride he appreciated was having to hold on the man shamelessly. He was far too conscious of his missing powers, that left him wondering how skilled Bruce was to be so confident shooting away through traffic and streets. Having no powers had its advantages….not for him, the contact could on the long run, good thing that wasn’t, be embarrassing.
When they halted near the train station Clark got off the motorbike quickly and handed back the crash helmet.
“How can I get in touch with you?” he wanted to see or hear from him once in Metropolis, without crossing the Bat. Bruce appeared distant, it was making him feel uneasy.
“I’ll be in Metropolis next week.” he answered. Clark grabbed his arm before the motorbike moved.
“Bruce…” he asked quietly.
“I’ll get in contact. Stay in Metropolis and get back to your life.” He nodded slightly and left. It was almost as if he couldn’t wait to get rid of him. That left Clark a little upset; he was still feeling the man’s body under his hands, his back against his chest… Walking towards the station’s entrance he tried to pull himself together; they’d spoken a lot during those days, they had trusted each other with the most secret parts of their lives, in a way they understood each other, there seemed to be something… that didn’t mean Bruce was interested in him. When he thought a little more about it he realized he was the trusty one, Bruce had said nothing about himself…
And yet there had been something, why would have it happened if there was nothing?

What the hell had gotten him? Truth was, Clark’s arms wrapped around him felt good. That was a problem.
He was managing to balance his life in a way all was dedicated to his personal battle. There was no room for any deep relations. The one night stands were good enough for him, they relieved tension, gave Bruce Wayne a public image fitting his schemes.
Whenever things hadn’t gone as planned all went wrong, dramatically wrong. He’d been left with bitterness and sorrow; confirming once again emotional involvement had to be avoided.
He was a loner, that didn’t disturb him, though he’d never confess to himself he was lonely, because in being so he had found a way to face his life, balance his obsessions.
Beauty and brains not always happened, but when the two combined the attraction Bruce felt was strong. Clark had the two and affinity of intentions … Clark was a thought he firmly disapprove of.

The train started to move, cutting through the outskirts of the city, buildings with infinite grey colors, laced by wires, underlining the disorganized architecture, were increasingly being left behind as the train sped up.
He took the newspaper that was poking out of the hand baggage Alfred had handed him. The butler had insisting in there, there were all his belongings, he put the newspaper between his leg and the armrest and unzipped the bag, to take a look at so called belongings. A couple of shirts, trousers and underwear, his suit wasn’t there, not that it would have been of much use because Bruce had pealed him out of it with a scalpel and probably it was incinerated, if he had succeeded in doing so, since he was covered in kryptonite dust. As soon as he could get to the Fortress he’d have another one. He wondered if what he’d been wearing at the Manor were Bruce’s clothes, they had the same build…
The idea of the man’s clothes on him gave him a warm feeling…
He saw the glasses case, took it and decided to wear them, it didn’t feel right to be without that little mask.

Once at Wayne Tower he entered his private elevator and went for his penthouse suite, he needed to change in a suit before the meeting. A secretary come running along as he stepped into the hall, she looked troubled. Luthor, turning up and entering his office twenty minutes ago, was the cause.
“Good” he thought and made him wait a little longer.
Lex was sitting on the sofa with his arms stretched out; he welcomed Bruce with a smile.
“ You shouldn’t leave me waiting so long.” Come the reproach with no warmth, keeping the smile in place.
Bruce put on his friendly expression “You’ve made yourself at home, I see.” he eyed the glass of scotch on the low crystal table.
The two studied each other for a few seconds.
“There’s a magnificent view from this office. Your name, Bruce, is all over Gotham and well known over the world, think about what this means.”
Bruce looked at the man smiling, he knew exactly what that meant, Lex was about to ask a favor, most probably related to GPD. He always went for ego massages before getting something out of someone. He was disappointed Luthor had become so predictable.

“We know what’s best for our people” he said following Lex’s lead.

“We are shaping our society.”

Bruce listened, smiling even more and wondered how deep that man believed in such rubbish.

“We give hope in ways no ‘super man’ will ever do. We are super humans in the purest sense: above humans.”

Except hope, sometimes, was overestimated and could nothing against unpredictable events, no human or super human could control, though Bruce Wayne wouldn’t voice such opinion.

Bruce walked around his office, he was getting a little bored with Lex’s talk, just lately he’d go on in loop. The reason obviously was the fact Superman had vanished and he wasn’t able to understand where the Kryptonian was hiding. Mostly he must be worried he would be back, for pay back.

“You see we are natural leaders, but for such things, we can’t get stopped or involved in miserable human affairs. Greater purposes don’t follow ordinary ways, our actions are above common rules because we achieve more than anyone else.”

Bruce stopped and stood behind Lex, soothingly he let his hands slide on Luthor’s shoulders, knowing how much the man hated that sort of contact.

“What miserable human affair is afflicting you?”

“Stop Gordon.” he said while his body tensed.

“Oh, don’t worry, Lex, I’ve spoken to him.” Bruce reassured him purring in his ear.

“Get your hands off me, I’ve told you…”

Bruce put hands and eyebrows up with a very surprised expression, but sincerely smiling at him as he glared back menacingly.

“Lex, there are no second intentions there.”

“I know of your perversions.” He spat the words out.

Bruce smiled innocently and sat on the divan next to Lex, very close for the sake of the man’s discomfort, stretching out lazily he went on teasing.

“I could take you on a perversion tour and I know you’d love every bit of it. We all like to play master and slave.” He grinned.

“Do you really think I’d ever beg for you?” disgust clearly showing in his voice, he stood up.

“Do you think I’d ever consent to you in any way?” He smiled crafty, putting his feet up on the crystal table, thus blocking Lex striding away from the corner he’d gotten himself in.

“I’m here for business, Bruce, not for your dirty little games.” He said sharply.

“So am I, but you’re too bent on your own morals…”

“You’re wasting my time.” Lex walked round the sofa going towards the desk, sitting himself in Bruce’s comfortable chair, he opened a folder and activated a tablet. Bruce walked to his desk reached out and closed the folder, his expression had gone dead serious. “We are discussing this in half an hour, with the board.”

“Fool someone else, you and I don’t need anyone to discuss…”

Bruce ignored the man, slightly leaning over Lex he asked in a low voice “What are you up to in your labs? Why don’t we have access to the experiments on Kriptonite? Who is giving you the Kryptonite? Where are you hiding those labs and why? Because, Lex, two patents don’t justify the amount of money and investors we are bleeding for you. This is exactly what we are going to discuss with the board.”

Bruce went over to the door, he hardly turned round to Lex’s words “Bruce, you should beg…”

“As I said, I’m not getting fucked by you in anyway.” He cut in coldly and left the office.

Metropolis was in sight, the skyscrapers capturing the light of the late afternoon’s glorious sun. Clark picked up the bag, put it on his shoulder and walked to the doors as they opened. He felt happy, he was home. He touched the city’s busy rush as he fitted in the serpentine crowd of the
underground. He looked at the people walking knowingly to their own directions and lives. He smelled, as he entered his flat….. a horrible smell! It didn’t take long to discover, food left unattended for two months, had developed independent existence. Bruce would never be confronted with house cleaning and the Batman would never have to face two months old laundry…. 

The next day he went to the Daily Planet; he’d managed to face Perry, first by phone, the day before as he got home … so he knew what was waiting as he arrived. Some colleagues and friends were pleased to see him back and stopped their work for a little to have a few words with him. Lois was the one making him feel welcomed for the best, also passing a remark on how the new glasses frames where a great improvement . Basically Clark was a shy person but being the center of attention for a bit made him happy.
Perry got everybody’s attention after a second he’d emerged from his office, barking a few words to stir everyone back to work with a few new tasks for the day.
As soon as Clark said: “Chief…” with a fond smile on his face, he got chewed out in front of the bullpen. That was the start. The rest of the chewing was in Perry’s office.
All considered it went well.
He managed to give the editor a good reason for disappearing, owing to some undercover work which had revealed itself a wrong track; he’d spent most of the night thinking about those lies… next, Clark handed in the article written while at Wayne Manor.
The editor read it through eyeing Clark every now and then, he held his cigar between two fingers till it was out and the ribbon of smoke had dissolved in the air.
“ You do know Wayne might not like what you’ve written?” he said scratching his face considering trails of thoughts involving problems the article may cause with the new owner.
“ I haven’t said anything that isn’t true. All I want is try to get some attention on the basic facts of Superman’s behavior, not on what he may do if things go wrong and we still don’t know what’s supposed to go wrong.”
Perry looked at him in silence for a few seconds then :“ Get to work Kent , I want this ready before now.”

The article went down well; it started some debates, stirring back in Superman’s favor. Some even wondered if the Kryptonian’s absence was due to some adverse public opinion. Clark went through another article during the week, sustaining Superman on the base of bare facts, answering questions from readers and any media quoting his words. He was pleased, though, when Lois asked to step in the debate with something she had written. It wasn’t as if he didn’t feel up to the defense, he was feeling exposed and with what he’d been trough it would be better for him not to be noticed too much at the moment. Lois obviously did an excellent job using the most reasonable arguments, deductions, and conclusions for anyone who still voiced perplexity in anything the alien had done, reading bad intentions even where there were none. All that, come in with a fair amount of sarcasm towards the obstinate slanderers. Obviously they weren’t aiming to convince everyone, but a little sound judgment never harmed anyone. Luthor kept to his ideas as usual making sure the Daily Planet wouldn’t miss it with a couple of increasingly aggressive letters. Bruce Wayne, through a spokesman, made it clear Wayne Enterprises thought nothing of such question, they where only concerned about business and Superman wasn’t it.

“Damn, Olliver!”
The man in the driver’s seat laughed, as the car stopped abruptly. He always laughed hearing such statements, from Clark, he’d argue they just didn’t feel right.
“What are you worried about, you won’t be getting a scratch anyway?”
“As a matter of fact I’d be getting more than a scratch at the moment, mostly I’m worried about everyone, when you’re driving around.” with a nervous movement he put his glasses back in place. “Oh…! I thought…” he looked surprised but not sorry.

“No. But that’s above the point. There’s a code, speed limits…”

Oliver Queen stopped him before he went in full preach mode “Clark, what’s the fun of having a sports car?”

Actually, he couldn’t understand what was the purpose of making cars faster than speed limits… when he thought better of it why did the fantastically rich think the highway code wasn’t meant for them, did they believe certain rules had to be applied proportionally to wealth limits?

They got out of the red car, some people passing by took a good look at it, a young boy in awe decided to take a photo with his phone.

Two mad drives in under a week made him want his powers back immediately….if Bruce and Ollie liked speed he could provide some, he thought wickedly, and see how comfortable they’d feel with it.

Oliver got from Clark a rough outline of the days he’d spent in Gotham under the Bat’s protection. He insisted only once on the “where” he was hiding, he understood and respected the way his friend gave no relevant information. Oliver trusted Clark and if Clark trusted the Bat that much was good for him, but that didn’t mean he wouldn’t be taking a closer look at the Bat. What sounded a little odd was the fact there seemed to lack communication between Batman and Clark….

“Look, Clark, it can’t be that difficult, you spent ten days with him and…”

“I wasn’t exactly on holiday.”

“I know, but you don’t even want to talk to him.”

“No, I’m not saying that. I will try and talk to him but…he’s a little ….complicated” bits of him certainly were.

“What’s wrong? Doesn’t he trust you?”

“I don’t think so.”

Oliver wanted to laugh “…you serious?…”

“I’ll try for the sake of us all. He’s proved to be of great help, he knows what he’s doing. Criminal organizations in Gotham haven’t been spreading out since he’s appeared, he knows how to keep things under control, but he’ll need a little convincing and I don’t think it will be easy. The whole situation isn’t easy and he seems to be more comfortable working alone.”

“Working alone has its advantages, but on the long run…a little help can make a great difference. And talking about help. We’ve been keeping an eye on Luthor and… well the only way to get near whatever he’s doing is: business with him”

“Oliver, you don’t want to get involved with him….” Clark felt extremely uneasy. He knew what his friend was trying to do. He was using Bruce’s same technique working from the inside to prevent the worst…

“I tried to get near Luthor, but Fox has rigged the contracts in such a way all I could get hold of was financing support equipment. That meant: pouring in money and getting nowhere near anything relevant. ….that wouldn’t have been of any use. Fox has been clear on the partnership: anything has to go under Wayne Enterprises.”

“In other words they have the exclusive on whatever’s coming out of Lex Corp.”

“Exactly. …So I made an offer. I should be getting a good percentage on the patents and access to Luthor’s labs. If he’s got something unusual going on I’ll be able to find it.” Oliver drank some of the tea Clark had made and went on. “…. but you don’t know the best part of this. Others have been trying to get into the business, genetic patents are all the rage… but Fox and the Wayne board push everyone away, so I tried to talk some sense into Bruce. That was a challenge.” Oliver seemed proud of himself, Clark smiled back, he would be mad if only he knew…

“You know Wayne, I mean personally?” he asked curious.

“Sort of. We were in Princeton together. Not that there’s much to say about that, soon after I arrived he left and disappeared.”

“And how long did you stay there?” Clark grinned, Oliver laughed, he’d changed so many schools
he seemed to know them all. “Can’t remember, not too long. Bruce must have been a charmer even then, some of the nerds swore he was brilliant.”
“Don’t you think it’s possible?” The reporter was a little amused about the situation.
“No. The ass knows how to use people, I’ll give him that, that’s why Fox is working for him, well, that and the money.”
Clark would disagree on a couple of things Oliver said, but obviously he let it go. The two would understand each other in future, probably, realizing they weren’t so different; though he had a feeling, from some of the things Bruce had said, Oliver and his extracurricular activities weren’t unknown…

He’d taken the phone with him, Alfred had put it in the bag packed the day he left the Manor. There was no reason to carry it around, it was meant to be used only to phone, there were no numbers in its memory… anyway he had no number to get in contact with Bruce personally. It was useless, obviously it wasn’t meant to keep track of him, he could throw it away or destroy it any moment. He hoped to get a call from the man.
He tried to clear his head, after all nothing had really happened between them. It could have been Bruce had acted on a moment’s whim, once the moment was over nothing was left.
He wished he’d phone anyway.
Clark shoved those thoughts away as Smallville came in sight, he had Bruce to thank if he was getting his life back and now was entering the side road to drive to his parents farm. It had taken him forever to get there, first the flight to Kansas then the long drive, he hoped he wouldn’t spend too many weekends like that…
He stopped the car, in a small cloud of dust, by the house’s side, his mother came out on the porch, they saw each other. Clark smiled getting out of the car, his Mom ran to him and hugged him tight, while his Dad was there a second later.

Cutting a second slice of the cherry crumble, as his parents made a ‘no’ sign, he happily put it on the plate in front of him.
“Oliver made sure we were always clued on any move or progress, that was the only thing giving us hope.” Jonathan took his wife’s hand and squeezed it gently.
“I’m sorry you had to go through that.” Clark could feel the worry seeping in their words. He hadn’t given any details on what he’d experienced. It was far too gruesome to describe, he’d only been able to talk it over with Bruce… the Bat was unemotional enough to understand fear and degradation without involvement.
“You’re not the one who should apologize. Luthor should be locked up.” His mother said angrily. He dropped the argument of Lex Luthor ever paying for what he had done and tried to comfort them once again.
“I’m out of it now and that’s for the best.”
“So that…Batman isn’t that bad after all?”
He smiled, he knew his father had been curious since the day he told them he was back in Metropolis from Gotham.
“No, he’s…um… territorial and I must give him his credit he knows better than anyone how things in Gotham aren’t what they look like. He’s an understanding man.”
“So you got over the argument.”
“Not really” Clark laughed “He’s still angry about that. I hope I can find a way to settle things… though I don’t know, I guess it won’t be easy with him.” The thought of Bruce stirred something deep inside him. He concentrated on the crumble once more. Jonathan looked at his son’s unreadable expression.
“He didn’t push you out of Gotham, did he?”
The young man laughed “Oh, no. I decided it was time for me to get back to Metropolis, if I’d let
him have his way I’d still be there hiding.”

“Hope he didn’t keep you in a cave with bats.” Martha said laughing gently. Clark matched the mood, yes bats lived in caves, but not that particular one, Batman was a lot more sophisticated than that...he knew his parents could keep a secret, but he decided not to say anything for the moment. Less they knew the better, if anyone got discovered and the secrets uncovered not knowing who was who would protect anyone from questions and charges of favoring illegal activity...

“I was treated well...he’s a kind person.” He said knowing his parents wouldn’t ask or force any information from him. They understood the reasons of secrecy. They had taught him all he knew about secrets...

What was left of the day was spent catching up with some of the farm’s work, his parents had called in someone for help, while he went missing, but there was a lot left behind without his regular visits. He didn’t like to think his father was trying to do everything, he always pushed himself too much and just lately it started to show.

He did as much as he could, his powers had started to show, even if he was weak, compared to what he was before he’d been captured, he could do more than an ordinary man. He worked hard, clearing his head from any thoughts about himself, Bruce, the implications and complications of double lives...

Once his body started to slow down and tiredness got hold of him, night was in, with a delicious smell coming from the kitchen mixed with his parents’ voices. He’s hearing still wasn’t good enough to make out what they were saying, but it didn’t matter, he closed the stables’ door and went strait in the house to have something to eat, he was starving.

His week end was almost over he’d been absorbed by the farm and fields, by work and chats with neighbors so during the evening he wasn’t at last thinking about bats, Bruce or lack of communications...

Clark’s father called him, the phone went on ringing.

“Are you going to answer?” he said to his son, who was sitting in the same room, but had buried himself in a book; suddenly Clark realized where the ring was coming from and why he hadn’t recognized it. He dashed towards his jacket and got the phone.

“Hallo…?”

“I was about to give up. How are you, Clark?” asked the smooth low voice on the other end.

“Bruce...” he stopped for a second, mentally scolding himself. When with his parents he was always a little off guard and the name had slipped. “Almost back to normal, thanks.” He paced the room.” I thought the phone could only receive.”

“...so, why did you take it to Smallville?”

“Are you tracking me?” he was surprised and noticed his mother’s curious glance.

“Clark, all phones give out a signal...any other brilliant questions?”

“Never get anything right with you.” His smile must have showed from the tone of voice because Bruce sounded amused as he answered “Try thinking.” Then he went on in a businesslike manner. “I had a word with Gordon and gave him something to work on. By the description you made on what you saw from one of the warehouses I’ve probably found it, the place should be on the outskirts of Gotham”

“Where? I want to see it.” He left the lounge; he didn’t want his parents catching on more that was already evident.

“You are keeping out of Gotham.”

“I’m not.” He said raising his voice slightly, and wanting to kick himself as it happened.

“Stay out of it.” Bruce hissed.

There was a tensed silence. Starting an argument was stupid...

“Clark... chances are there’s kryptonite, I won’t be getting near the place. We still don’t know what that stuff does on the long run.... Most of all I’m not having another decontamination shower with you.”

Bruce sounded amused; all Clark could think of was the ghastly man he saw in the mirror.
“I looked like nothing on earth.” He mumbled to himself
“…you looked more than human.” Bruce answered softly.
“I don’ mean that …. I …” Clark was feeling a mixture of emotions growing.
“Oh…you’re vain Mr. Kent.” The man said teasing with a hint of a chuckle.
“No. No, I’m not …no,it’s just…” he suddenly felt embarrassed.
“Don’t tell me it was the first time you stripped in front of a stranger.” Bruce purred.
“Don’t give me the Brucie line.”
“Most people find it entertaining.”
“It’s irritating.”
“I like to please.”
“….enjoy every bit of it.” He laughed
He liked him there was no denying it, not that he would. He was falling for him, he knew the
symptoms …he wanted to see him again.
“When are you coming to Metropolis?”
There was a pause, Clark thought he’d been too direct …
“…not sure, after tomorrow, or middle of the week, I’ll let you know. Goodnight, Clark.” The man
cut short without warning.
“…have a good night, Bruce.” The phone was quiet once again.
Why was he getting so worked up over nothing? He knew the man’s reputation, if there was a little
truth in that, it could even just be he was intrigued by the idea of ‘Superman’. He wasn’t new to the
notion of someone looking at him like that, not even thinking there was more or there was just Clark
behind such a striking façade. He disliked the idea, but he had to consider Bruce could be fascinated
by the alien and not by him. The reporter, or worst the farm boy, wasn’t as attractive as the powerful
aura and image the Man of Steel projected around himself. Lois had been one of the last ones
confirming such discrepancy in his day to day life. Possibly, Bruce had understood and stopped
before anything started.
However that could even not be the case, besides it was a phone call, some phone calls could
become really hot…
He’d have to make a better use of his brain instead of letting it run free in love sick thoughts.
He went back indoors and set his mind to the book he was reading, then scattered bits of articles he
was planning to write. Gave it all up after a while and went to bed, the work he’d done fortunately
dropped him to sleep in no time.
Chapter Summary

A smile borne from his eyes spread across Clark’s face. Bruce suddenly realized, only a week had passed, but he’d missed that smile.

Chapter V

He left the Daily Planet, glad the working day was over; it had been difficult to concentrate. Bruce had been there, walking through the bullpen as if he owned the world not just the place. Perfect business smile to charm, with an equally perfect dark business suit, creaseless even after he half sat on Lois’s desk to have a chat about nothing. Perry White had a long talk and lunch with Wayne. Clark had a pathetically weak handshake. That was all. Bruce had been constantly in his thoughts, nowhere near him, completely out of reach. He crossed the road walking towards the parking building.

Taking the car’s keys, he moved for the driver’s door.

“Nice glasses.” Said a familiar voice. Clark looked round, a tall man with broad shoulders lifted slightly the bill of his baseball cap, eyes behind dark sunglasses, lips curving in a hint of a smile.

Another Bruce Wayne was standing a little distance from him, a loose-fitting sweatshirt with zipper, worn and stained jeans with old trainers, made him unrecognizable from the elegant man walking in the Daily Planet that morning.

A smile borne from his eyes spread across Clark’s face. Bruce suddenly realized, only a week had passed, but he’d missed that smile.

“Good taste I guess.” He answered.

They got in the car starting to move out of the parking area, Bruce tapped on a phone thoughtfully and slipped it back in a pocket. He looked at Clark somehow amused.

“Hum…what?” asked the reporter eyeing him quickly and curious.

“Lex wants to sue the paper for some articles he didn’t like.”

They both agreed the business man could be as threatening as he wished but that wouldn’t stop them from doing what they considered necessary to stop him.

As they got to Clark’s apartment, Bruce started once again to tap on the phone he used earlier. At first the reporter didn’t really care, but once in the front room, with the man walking about as if he was trying to detect something, it couldn’t be ignored.

Clark sat on the armrest of his couch rolling up his shirt’s sleeves. “Can I know what you’re doing?”

He asked without looking at the man.

“Making sure the place is clear and safe.” He answered putting the phone back in his pocket.

“Bruce, who would want to spy on me?”

The man looked at him with no expression. “You know it’s not all about you, Mr. Kent.”

Clark headed for the kitchen deciding it was safer to prepare some coffee and something quick to eat than get in a discussion with someone who was a ‘little’ paranoid.

A natural flow of conversation made time slip by unnoticed. Clark told Bruce how some parts of his memory weren’t so patchy, though in many ways forgetting certain details wasn’t all that bad. Part of his powers were showing again, but he couldn’t rely on them.

Bruce enlightened Clark, off the records for the reporter, how they were gradually dumping Lex: through shell companies, actions on financial market, making sure they’d strip him of enough resources so he’d be inactive for some time. Oliver Queen was in the demolishing job, getting things to move quicker.
“You’ve found something?” Clark was hopeful.

“Not much, but enough to know he’s doing something he won’t share with us, in a lab we knew nothing of. We are looking for evidence, apart from any Kryptonite lined cells”

“Wouldn’t that be enough to get out of the partnership?”

“I can’t back out completely, before Gordon comes up with something better than the previous investigations. What will really bring Lex down is sound proof he has betrayed the secret agency backing him at the moment. For business sake, it would sound odd for me to quit such partnership now, considering he’s given good explanations on the use of such rooms. Experiments on animals aren’t illegal.”

Clark paced the room in frustration, he was angry and powerless.

“He’s granted everything… It can’t be right, Bruce, this doesn’t concern only me.”

“I know, they’ve been warned. All we can do is be even more careful for the future.”

Clark looked at him in surprise. “‘we’…..?”

“The government’s secret agency has decided to classify Batman as metahuman, they haven’t a clue,” said Burce with a slight smile “asking Gordon’s collaboration to track him or anyone involved with the vigilante…”

Clark’s face dropped in concern.

“That’s bad news…”

“No. They’re putting the bits of the puzzle together. Luthor is working for them, they had an agreement and he was the only one capable of keeping you hostage. Clearly he must have stopped sharing part of his experiments on you. The night I got you out of the lab, I blew part of it up to distract Luthor’s men on my braking in and the tumbler was sighted in Gotham. They have no proof it was me, they’re just guessing your disappearance is Batman’s doing.”

“By now, not showing up, they must be thinking I’m your hostage” he smiled.

“Don’t tell Alfred, he’ll blame it on my bad manners.” Bruce smiled back.

“And they think someone else is involved?”

“They are turning their attention to Star and Central City.”

Clark let out a long breath rubbing his forehead, he felt bad about the situation, he didn’t want others involved.

“They can take care of themselves.” Bruce said apparently carless, sipping his coffee “You have warned Oliver and so have I.”

“You warned…?”

“I know he’s your personal friend and what he’s up to. I know you all keep in contact. Aliens, metahumans and humans. For Oliver I’m just business.”

Clark laughed softly, he started to have a clear picture of how much information Bruce had on all of them, well, probably only about the ones he’d hinted to, but that was enough. He sat on the couch next to the man.

“You have files on all of us.” he wasn’t asking. Secrets would be safe with him. Bruce didn’t answer, but Clark was curious, after all he was a reporter and being a little …nosy, was his second nature.

“Where do you keep the files?” he wasn’t expecting an answer.

“Secret cave.”

Clark looked at him and was almost inclined to believe the words, he sounded serious.

“With bats?” he asked, amused and seriously interested, wondering if he’d get a good answer from the Bat.

“Lots, the cave is big.”

Bruce still sounded serious, so Clark followed the trail of his own thoughts, with verses he’d learned years ago in school. Nothing logical to say, but it just come automatically to his mind.

“….Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea….”

Those words made Bruce smirk.

“There’s no pleasure-dome…”
“Some would argue about that…” Clark was smiling keeping eye contact with the man. As it happened at the Manor, Bruce’s hand was once again touching him, first on a cheek then his neck and pulling him in a kiss. Slow, sensual, taking up all their attention. Clark was lost in it, as if no time had passed, with his eyes shut, he could believe he was back in Gotham in that perfect moment, when words had no meaning and such a simple action had the full awareness of intentions. Mirrored movements brought them to deepen the kiss with growing thirst. Arms and hands pulled them closer, searching and feeling.

Bruce straddled him, while Clark cupped his ass with his hands to press him closer to his growing hardness. His shirt was unbuttoned while he felt sharp teeth trailing down his neck.

“Ah, God…Bruce…” He sighed and was immediately immersed in another intense kiss. Bruce’s hands stroked his chest and sides, sending a shiver through his body. He felt the man’s strength, the deep and lustful gaze of those crystal clear eyes. The way he was feeling his skin with his hands, as if to understand the muscles, the heat and single movements. Pressure stroking and gripping him, Bruce was harsh in a sensual way, intensifying touch every time he found Clark answering with a low moan, leaning in for more.

Bruce stopped to look at him with a satisfied half smile.

“…teasing me…?” he asked in a husky voice.

“Haven’t started.” He stood up smiling while looking at the bulge in Clark’s trousers, unzipping his sweater letting it drop carelessly to the floor.

There was no questioning, no answers to be given, they both knew what they wanted. They fell in physical sensations not even realizing they had moved to the bedroom and the bed.

Clark took lubricant and condoms from the bedside table. Bruce reached for him, sliding his hands over the reporter’s thighs rubbing slowly and firmly at his cock while pushing his own against Clark’s ass.

They turned to face each other feeling their hardness between them, against one another with increasing need. As their clothes had been forgotten they were just confronted with their desire, increasing at every touch, mounting with response. Bruce was rough, and felt himself melt by the way Clark’s strong body could become submissively tender under him.

Invulnerable skin was soft, warm and surprisingly sensitive when touched. There was no shiver with goose bumps but a low vibration in the body as a silent purr in a cat. The taste of Clark’s kiss, the sweet perfume of his sent, it was all driving him mad with sensations he had never felt so strong...

The way his hands held him firmly in a steel grip, but never with pressure he couldn’t bear, gentle and possessive on his shoulders, through his hair, guiding him to his cock, he stroked him with his tongue, tasted him teasingly and then swallowed him whole. Clark shuddered and moaned, all his senses focused on the way Bruce was making him feel…it was as if he knew exactly how to melt him down.

Clark pushed Bruce’s hip exposing his hard cock, he stroked it, as the man shivered stopping only for a second to intensify the hot wet embrace of his mouth.

“Fuck me.” Said Clark, voice thick with carnality.

Bruce grabbed the bottle of lube. He kissed him as he deepened a sleek touch starting to stretch him with his fingers, making his back arch in pleasure.

He put on a condom looking at Clark; they were lost in each other. Bruce spread Clark’s legs, hitching one over a shoulder and with a sinuous slide he thrust in deep and hard. Clark closed his eyes and let out a hoarse moan, Bruce stopped for an agonizing moment torn by the deep need of his body to move and not wanting to hurt Clark. He moved slowly, giving Clark a moment to settle and “Harder” Clark asked in a husky voice, “Harder” he urged at the next thrust. That was unfair, Bruce thought, if the man asked like that again he’d be over in no time and as it was now he was right on the edge...

He reached with a hand Clark’s cock and it was closed a moment after in a delicate steel grip going into a steady rhythm.

“I won’t hold back” Bruce warned him in a whisper. Clark moaned in transport, he couldn’t help it Bruce’s voice drenched in lust affected him in a way he couldn’t have predicted and made him lose
what little control he had. He was shameless as Bruce thrust deep in him, pushing in further, annihilating him for a fraction of eternity till the unbearable wash of pleasure exploded and engulfed his senses.

Bruce, a moment later, felt the tension build as he couldn’t get enough of the man, couldn’t stop, he felt the brim of the unreachable need fill him unbearably, straining for more. He let out a lost, low groan and come with a shiver tensing his whole body, draining strength and leaving him to feel satiated by the loss of energy.

Unwilling to part they lay untidily tangled to each other across the bed.

He heard him move about, idly he half opened a sleepy eye, and saw Bruce pulling on his jeans.

“Hey, where’ you goin’?” he asked with a sleep coated voice

“Back to Gotham.” Bruce sounded fully awake.

He rolled over and looked at the alarm clock on the bedside table, it took him a few seconds to take in the numbers: 3,12 a.m.

“mpf…” he groaned “’s three ’n the mornin’” then he sat up in bed realizing… “Must be day time for you”.

Clark got up and looked around the room, trying to figure out where to find his clothes. It always took some time for him to get fully awake.

As much as Bruce tried to ignore Clark he couldn’t help looking at him. Uncombed hair suited him making him look…gorgeous, there were no other words to describe the man, or probably it was the fact he was walking around in the best birthday suit he’d ever seen, warn with no vanity or awareness. Clark was deliciously tempting, but now he had to keep his focus on the mess he was in. He couldn’t afford any time in Metropolis as Lex was moving fast out of Gotham, he had to pin him down before he cleared his path.

“Give you a lift to…?” where was he going at thee in the morning?

“To the airport. No, I’ve got a car parked on the opposite side of the building.” He got out of the room and picked up his sweater.

“Oh…” said Clark, Bruce had actually thought about everything.

“And no, I didn’t plan this if you’re wondering.”

“Hun… no, I wasn’t…look, how can I get in contact with you?” he tried to think straight and quickly, Bruce was in his slippery, unreachable moods.

“If something relevant crops up I’ll get in contact with you.” He opened the front door.

“What if something happens here.” Clark pressed.

“I’ll know.”

“All I’d like is…”

“Clark, not now, it’s something we can’t afford.”

“I’d like to know about Luthor” it was his turn to be a little irritated. He looked around the room still trying to find some clothes, being naked and trying to have some sort of a serious conversation at that time in the morning wasn’t working out well.

“Bruce, all I’m saying is…”

“I know…” He walked out of the door and closed it.

Clark stood there for a second looking at the closed door, he paced the room, walked to the bedroom and found his underwear. What had gone wrong? Was it so difficult to understand he wanted to be informed as things got moving in Gotham? Was it so hard to understand anything Luthor was doing concerned him? Why was the man so closed up? Or was it just there where too many things mixing up together at the moment? As far as he could see the evening hadn’t gone in the wrong direction. They both knew what they wanted there was no questioning that, it had been definitely one of the best…’oh, God.’ Clark thought, he didn’t like the flashing notion of a night stand. He wasn’t new to that way of acting. No, he dumped the idea. Could it just be the moment was wrong for him? He had to admit the situation was a little delicate, also he couldn’t expect to impose himself and after all what
did he really know about the reasons moving Bruce away from him? The man had a life Clark really knew nothing about and presuming things could move among them, regardless of what they were facing and not knowing much about each other was a little rash… there was something Bruce had said: “not now”…those two words played about in his head for the rest of the night, he didn’t get any sleep after that. But …. there was Luthor. He couldn’t accept to be cut out.

Two more weeks passed and Clark was getting his powers back. Bruce had vanished and there was no attempt to communicate. The Daily Planet’s owner had shown up one more time, had a short meeting with Perry White, but didn’t stop to talk … not with him anyway. Clark tried to get an appointment, with the excuse of an interview, phoning Bruce’s personal secretary, just to hear her say nothing of the sort could be arranged in the near future, but he could meet Mr. Fox or one of the directors… he didn’t insist, he wanted to see Bruce, but didn’t want him to get the impression he was desperate. He could go to Gotham and…He had his pride and dignity. He worked, trying to avoid distractions. It was a little hard to prevent his brain from wondering off every time he heard Bruce’s name. His name was unavoidable, not only because he owned the paper Clark was working for, but also because Erica Webb, the latest sex goddess of action movies, made sure the world knew Bruce Wayne was dating her, with a pretty set of photos proving it all; that stung, but he was able to rationalize… a little. Then he was angry with himself for reading such stuff. There was also the constant flow of all sorts of news he would read about Gotham, he wanted to know how the Bat was moving, how Luthor was dodging him…

Another week rolled on, nothing had moved except for himself spending a week end in Smallville with his parents … and feeling even more annoyed with Bruce. It wasn’t just the attraction on his side and apparent rejection on Bruce’s…He was dealing with the fact Clark Kent couldn’t reach Bruce Wayne, but Batman would have to face Superman soon whether he liked it or not. In the mean time he still had a certain phone… He fiddled about with it and sighed. Again. He’d done it a lot since he’d started to tap on it and that was twenty minutes ago, with a deepening frown. Martha eyed him critically, feeling just a little fed up with her son’s mood she said: “Is your friend troubling you, sweetheart?”

“He…no…” he answered distractedly. Martha leaned forward to make sure she had her son’s attention and said bluntly. “Then find yourself something to do and stop pretending all’s fine.”

He was taken aback, though he knew there was little he could hide from her. Standing up he pocketed the phone. It was useless trying to use it because the only thing he could do was find a chance to talk to Bruce face to face. “Certain matters can’t be settled by phone.” She gave him a significant look going back to give her full attention to the mixing bowl. Clark took a step ready to leave the kitchen, he wasn’t at ease when his mother showed interest in his private life. It was his fault, anyway, for being too worked up about the situation, but when something was upsetting him it just showed and he couldn’t disguise it well when it come to his mother. She could always see right through him.

“A few seconds later something fast entered the house and headed for the stairs. Clark stopped a moment next to his mother.
“I’m off to the Fortress.” He told her with a smile and rushed away. All that was left behind him was a breeze in the house and the distant sound of a sonic boom in the Kansas sky.

Normal clothes sucked at super speed! He got rid of the remnants. In the mean time he’d have to stay there naked, it didn’t matter since he was the only one in the place. He lazily flew over to the heart of the Fortress. A circle of crystals started to glow and rise as he approached. He touched them, once at hand level and started to communicate with the AI in a language he shared with no one. The first thing he asked was a new suit, he then passed to feed the Fortress’s memory, all that had happened during the last months. The AI started to sort out the information storing it carefully and asking more detailed data on the kryptonite’s effects on his body and mind, at that Clark had to stop, realizing his memory was still fragmentary.

As for his recovery he could give better information for future use, wishing that he’d never need that sort of knowledge again. But there were still things he couldn’t recall correctly, however he could ask Bruce for some details...

The suit was ready, his powers back, but at the moment the possibility of talking to the man made him uneasy. He got dressed while realizing his feelings were a jumble of want and hope for something crashing in a brick wall with Bruce’s name on it. That hurt. He told himself off for falling in such a way. A night stand was something he understood, something he did on a regular basis when he was feeling the need, or most of all, the remoteness of his life. He always kept such things to himself, he told no one about the nights he’d walk in some place and pick a pretty face to keep him company. Carless of gender, loosing himself in the light company only strangers could give, blocking any clouded thoughts. He’d rather not think about the way he’d end up, alone in his apartment, with the sense of distance getting deeper. Though he had friends and a job he liked and he’d never give up what he did as Superman, he missed the deep connection with someone he could love and think as his... Sharing his private life had always been difficult. He’d blame it on a split identity, on two different people living in him. He blamed it on himself for being what he was: not human. Probably he was even incapable of understanding, what he was looking for didn’t really exist for him, in the way he wished. Yet every time he felt he liked someone, rarely he had to admit that, he hoped there would be the possibility to make things work, to fill the bareness of his private life, he believed it could happen, though till now, nothing had worked... He realized he was hoping more than other times, because Bruce somehow was like him, he could understand the pull to help, to care for others... he seemed to have matched his feelings and the sex had been... well... now he was nervous to face the man. Was Bruce feeling the same? Or was it more likely he simply wasn’t interested...

The first part of the evening with the vernissage had been interesting. Unlike parties, galas or similar social celebrations, thrown for a number of futile reasons by Gotham’s Gotha, art events where something Bruce didn’t mind... too much. Mixing with artists was fascinating, they had something in common with him, a façade, to live with and for the sake of the public. A convenient mask, warm because it was expected of them to be extravagant, original and eye catching at all costs. Another interesting aspect of artists was the fact they could drop the charade at some point and reveal the truth behind the show. It wasn’t true for all of them, but on this particular evening Bruce had found something he liked.

The artist, hard to figure out whether man or woman, had on show an interesting set of paintings, all focusing on the Man of Steel and the way people around the world perceived him. He had become a medium of people’s observation, since he regretted the fact there had been no personal encounter with the alien demigod and was quite upset because there seemed no possible encounter now, considering he had been missing for months...

The creative genderless mind, with a throat shattering name, had an explanation for Superman’s disappearance: “You know, Mr. Wayne, I believe he has now retired to his hypercube for meditation
on human lunacy.”
“Quite possible, after all we are talking about an alien. Where do you think his hypercube is?” he asked smiling.

According to the brains hidden under move hair, between heavily priced ears, it must be hiding in an Etruscan undiscovered graveyard. Bruce listened, but being mostly a rational man, he would be captured occasionally by philosophy, but mysticism failed completely to entertain him. They stopped in front of a big black canvas.

Bruce asked an explanation because the painting, if it could be classified as such, was completely different from all the others done in bright or evanescent light colors, yet always in a strong figurative language. The black canvas was odd.

“It’s a homage to Gotham’s hero, if indeed he does exist and is a hero…”

Bruce bought two of the pictures on show, one of them was the homage to “Gotham’s hero”. He just couldn’t resist that.

The rest of the evening was spent in the most expensive hotel, with two beauties he’d met at the art exhibition. Being Superman the main theme of the happening, there were as part of the event, a few good looking models with a strong resemblance to the Man of Steel.

Bruce had taken quite some interest in an attractive young man…his hair was longer than Clark’s, the voice wasn’t so warm and he wasn’t as tall. The model, going by the name of Jeffrey, did nothing without his girlfriend, Bruce had no objections…

He left the two asleep in the room and by two in the morning he headed back to the Manor in a most unsatisfied mood. Surrogates couldn’t compete with what he really wanted, but the one he wanted had too many complications at the moment.

By thee in the morning when he got back to the farm everything was quiet and dark, he hovered to his room making no sound; he didn’t want his parents to wake up. He would be paying a visit to Batman the next evening, hoping the night’s rest would settle the jumbled feelings a little.

Clark took a last look at the phone Bruce had given him. He was surprised to see there was a text. Only two words: ‘Eye shut.’
He’d kept his word. He smiled settling in bed, Bruce appeared less distant….
Chapter Summary

Bruce opened the door and left him there to consider the last things he’d said, giving him the tangible feeling he was acting like an idiot.

Chapter VI

Naturally since Metropolis was Superman free the number of criminal events had increased, nothing comparable to Gotham, yet…

Metropolis Police Department was the first to realize the Kryptonian was back and had a good load of extra work to deal with as various specimen of criminals where handed in by the city’s hero. Some were pleased to see him back, others looked puzzled and a few tried to ask where he’d been. He was polite avoiding the questions; he wasn’t prepared for excuses and didn’t want to invent anything. Lying made him uneasy, since a lot of his life had been covered in lies, pretending he was human and like anyone else, the best he could do was avoid answers…

The news of his return spread quickly and was all the rage for the next two days.

Lois had questioned him, he denied he knew anything and she vanished now and then from her office, he knew exactly where she’d gone. Superman wouldn’t be stopping on the building’s roof top to have a chat with her. He couldn’t face it now. He just set his mind back to the article he’d been trying to finish.

Perry White told Lois and Clark he was expecting an interview and threatened Jimmy to be fired if he couldn’t get a decent picture of the Man of Steel … they all promised they’d do their best. Lois hoped for some good luck, and a walk around some of the less recommendable areas of the City in the dark. Clark just thought: ‘No way an interview’ and watched out Lois avoided trouble. But she didn’t.

One good thing about being Superman, was the fact, more or less, everyone was aware of his strength and mostly he’d avoid fights. So when a thief, more desperate than practiced, tried to take Lois’ bag in a dark alley at night, first the man didn’t expect to get tugging with the reporter, then got a bit of a shock as a voice said: “Don’t!” the man dropped the handbag and run off scared out of his wits as he realized the order had come from someone hovering several meters above ground with a red cape fluttering idly in the night’s breeze.

It was never wise to pick a fight with Superman and Lois knew, the moment he smiled at her and slid away in the nights sky, she couldn’t force Superman for an interview if he didn’t want.

He failed to get to Gotham as he wished, there were things cropping up one after the other. In Metropolis, around the country and world……. Those two days had become hectic between work at the Daily Planet and sneaking out as troubles turned up for his attention…

Then as he was distractedly paying attention to some of the sounds around him he heard three voices he knew in the LexCorp. building. That really got him troubled. Oliver was in smart small talk with Luthor who was relaxed laughing and following the lead of some joke … and Bruce…Bruce…

“Me? I was an innocent boy, I trusted your experience.”

“Yes so inexperienced I was embarrassed all of the time.” Luthor chuckled answering Bruce

The trees of them were laughing heartedly. Any rational thought was immediately knocked out of Clark’s head, whatever they were talking about didn’t matter. The laughter of one man was in his head, the way he was so friendly, at ease and confident, the way he was joking keeping up the
conversation on personal terms. It just made him wonder if Bruce was really on his side. Double lives, double identity, with matching double truth could play havoc in some situations... and this was one of them. He felt too involved with Bruce, the man may consider it a simple night stand and pay little attention to what happened, but it was different for Clark, it was different for Superman... Luthor was his enemy, but what was Luthor for Bruce Wayne? He left the office.

It was something he’d never done, it was something he didn’t like much himself, on second thoughts, but what he did at the moment escaped his will. The most logical part of him was arguing on the futility of such a grandstand. He told himself, trying to find a good reason, it was for Oliver’s sake, showing his friend he would always be there to help him, back him up if necessary. He thought about Bruce, how could he not think about him? He wanted the man to understand he wouldn’t be cut out or give up the fight.

Who was he fooling?
The main reason was Luthor. He just couldn’t cope with the fact he sounded so at ease with the two.... he wanted to get at him in some way, he wanted to see him worried, know who he’d gone against, know he wasn’t scared, he was there no matter what and how he tried to stop him.

Luthor become nervous, as he took in his presence, his heart beat sped up as he saw him stop and float in front of the glass wall. He took the sound of the bald man’s accelerating heart with a deep dark pleasure. The fact he could stand out there and make the man scared was a little payback he felt he deserved. But what was best was the fact he was doing nothing to be threatening. Luthor had taken two months of his life and turned them in misery, almost destroying a lifetime as a human, without considering the pain he caused the people near him.... Fortunately, ironically in a bitter way, ideas of friends and family never crossed his mind. Superman was an alien and in such consideration Luthor excluded any connection to any other humans for him. Superman was some sort of a freak, a monster needing only its own company........

He just stayed there held by air, hovering in front of the Lex Corp. building.

Bruce had noticed him first of all, probably out of the corner of his eye. His heart missed a beat accelerated slightly and resettled, though he didn’t move or flinch in any way, he kept his eyes on the graphics Lex was explaining as if he hadn’t noticed anything.

“Well…. this is worth seeing.” Lucious Fox followed Luthors gaze, turned round and slowly straightened in his chair, as he looked out of the wall to wall window at Superman.

Five pairs of eyes, two of which were Bruce’s and Oliver’s, turned round and settled on the Kryptonian wrapped in air.

Bruce kept his face relaxed and passionless, but his eyes took in the sight. Leisurely as if tasting the suspended figure, his burning cold gaze looked him over.

If words hadn’t been so difficult to escape Bruce’s mind barriers, he would have told Clark how much he loved the way he looked effortless and perfect in that pose.

But he’d lost himself once for the Kryptonian and he promised to himself he’d be more careful, Lex was far too near, intelligent, dangerous and worst now he’d be nervous becoming even more a threatening… Clark just didn’t realize he was making a fatal error.

So he unfocused his attention from Superman, going back to Lex, the memory of the night he had spent with Clark was still vivid, that could generate some embarrassing reactions.

“Well” Oliver laughed “ Is he entertaining us?”

“As much as a nightmare.” Was the low snarl coming from Lex as an answer. Bruce’s gaze whent from Oliver back to Luthor.

“Do you often get this?” Bruce asked careless with a faint smile.

“No this is something new....” Said Lex without taking his eyes off the floating apparition.

“Why do you think he’s doing it?” Oliver sounded puzzled.

“You could ask him yourself, he can hear us.” Lex smiled slyly without taking his eyes off Superman.

“Really? In here?” Bruce faked surprise.

“...He can hear heartbeats if he wants” Luthor set his jaw, his tension showing more each second. Bruce and Ollie exchanged glances. “How do you know?” Bruce asked curious
“It’s a well known fact as much as he can see through walls…”
“So he might know who’s been good or bad…” Bruce smirked turned his attention to the man out of the office and a second later back to Lex who was frozen in a stiff pose…he was losing his nerve.
“So that’s the final truth!” Oliver laughed looking at Clark “and he does make a great show …”
“One day you’ll realize what a mistake we’ve made letting him stay free ...letting him believe he’s a super man.”
“He’s an alien that's all.” Bruce looked restless” Let’s get back to work and out of this damn office…”

Clark’s eyes flashed red, clearly visible to all. Bruce had stated the truth, nothing more. So why did it sound so bad? There were layers of meanings in those few words and it was so frustrating to realize it was so difficult to understand what Bruce intended or who those words were actually spoken to.

“See…” Lex sounded smug. “He’s a monster and would have us all killed.”

Bruce finally turned round, looked at Clark cold and distant.
“We certainly need to know how to stop him…” as Bruce said the words he turned to face Luthor, the two smiled.

Clark didn’t like it, the smile wasn’t, as much as he could tell, fake. Bruce was so ambiguous in his ways... it was unsettling and he could almost believe he was on Luthor’s side. But that wasn’t the case for sure...

Oliver froze for a moment looking at the two business men. .....there was something in Wayne starting to make him suspect he knew more than he showed especially how he was handling Luthor and how he would casually drop him a hint, every now and then, on some details of the partnership to keep away from, he really wasn’t sure of the game the Gothmite businessman was playing at.

Superman flew away accelerating and welcoming at last the sight of the sun above a curtain of thick clouds. Once again he tried to make sense of his jumbled thoughts and emotions. What he’d done was pointless and in the end it only made things worse for him and after all what did he expect from Bruce? It wasn’t as if he could show Luthor he was on Superman’s side…

____________________

It was already the fourth night he’d flown over to Gotham in, as it appeared now, the vain attempt to contact Batman. He’d failed one night after the other. He knew the man was out there, he’d read about the sightings from the next day’s reports.

On this particular night, Batman with the police where having a hard time with Joker raising hell. On one occasion he was able to hear him, though Batman had vanished once he reached the docks, where he had been beating up a handful of thugs.

Yes, Bruce was paranoid at the point he was using a led lined cowl and a voice distortion. He could understand the voice distortion and, in theory, he even accepted the lead lining, but what was making him mad , now , was the fact he thought he could be sneaky and listen to his heart beat, he’d memorized it to find him …. Bruce knew he could hear heartbeats, he’d told him and Lex had confirmed it. The tricky bastard, had come up with a ...Clark didn’t even know what to call it, but it was something blocking out the sound of his heart. That’s how after four nights he was still flying around Gotham aimlessly and frustrated. He decided to give it one last try, stopping on a roof top and concentrating to listen.

He listened carefully picking out the sounds of fights, people crying, some asking for help, others laughing and loving. There where police sirens and a helicopter…the night was all but calm. He felt the need to intervene, but that was Batman’s city and if something could be done it was only by his terms, yet the temptation to have a look in some of the problems, he was listening to, was strong. It had always been strong. He learned as he grew up and experience taught him, he couldn’t answer all, he would never be able to shoulder each of the problems he would hear, every cry for help. Superman’s powers were great compared to anyone, but he was only one, though not human, he still had all the needs and limits of anyone else. He had to choose where and when to intervene, who could be helped or not... he made mistakes and there were times he would arrive late….
But he was lucky at last, being the Bat the focal point of his search, he was really lucky in a worrying way….

The shoulder connected violently with the wall. It had always torn a painful grunt out of him leaving him breathless, but it was something he could bear. Leaning his back against the brick wall he tried to regain control of his breathing and get the pain to recede. He was angry with himself; Joker had done exactly what he’d wanted, driving him into a chase ending up being confronted with his men. Pointless: all his efforts to get hold of the psychopath had been pointless up till now, left him once again being fooled and with a dislodged shoulder he had to take care of there and then. Joker’s men had been left tied up in the building ready for the police to pick them up. He wouldn’t be waiting for Gordon, he was done for the night, too fuming to concentrate, the best he could do was get back to the cave and try to understand where he’d gone wrong. Most of all he wanted to understand to what extent the clown’s insanity was unpredictable, if it was mental illness at all…

He steadied his breathing even more, as he saw the silent figure descend and touch, almost soundlessly, the concrete in the narrow dark street.

He’d spotted him during the previous nights and wasn’t in the least pleased to see him now.

“What the hell are you doing here?” voice low, harsh and still filled with anger he barely was keeping under control. Superman stared back with a sparkle of annoyance rising immediately in his gaze, washing away a moment later. He couldn’t hear Bruce’s heartbeat and the voice distortion wasn’t covering the anger, but he understood, by the way the man was breathing heavily, he must be in pain.

“I need …I need some information on the effects of the kryptonite poisoning and my recovery.” It seemed mean just asking like that, but clearly Batman was in no mood for conversation, he wouldn’t be anyway even without pain or other patrol related problems. A low mechanical growl entered the ally and from the shadows the sharp angles of the tumbler come into sight, top and sides slid open as Batman started to walk towards it.

“Get in.” he ordered to a slightly uncertain Superman. Clark didn’t argue, the Bat wasn’t in the best of moods.

He slid in the “car” with a mixture of déjà vu feelings as they silently rushed in speed through one of the main road roots out of Gotham.

“I can wait for the data, there’s no need to endanger everyone.” He snapped firmly at the Bat. He was really aggravated with certain driving habits, but he got no answer. Cars were left behind at increasing acceleration.

“Bruce, I’m not …”

With a sudden jolt they were among trees, crashing safely to a land drop and moments later in a cave, behind a curtain of water.

So much for the warning, he felt stupid now.

A new boost in the engine and the tumbler leapt over a land fault in darkness, stopping some moments later in the light lit center of the cave.

He slid in the “car” with a mixture of déjà vu feelings as they silently rushed in speed through one of the main road roots out of Gotham.

He looked around almost in disbelief. He hadn’t been sure where Bruce could have stored a decontamination chamber; he’d had the feeling, but not the memory of a cave.

All the bits of the mosaic where composing an impressive picture. An enormous computer main frame come to life and partially lit what appeared to be a surprisingly high tech medical bay closed in crystal and steel walls. Cased in the cave’s volt there was a corner of the Manor’s foundations, there were other things stored in there but Clark’s attention fell on Batman working on some hidden catches of the cowl. As Bruce put back in place the Bat’s mask and the spiked gauntlets…

“This is….. Impressive…” Was the best he could say with a grin. Coleridge had emerged in his thoughts once more but he let the poet slip back in his mind.

Bruce smirked turning round and shaking his head going towards the computer.

“What?” what was so odd in what he’d just said?

“That sunny dome! those caves of ice!” Bruce sat heavily in the chair in front of the screens and started to move his hands over one of the key boards.
“Well…hum… I don’t think…”
“Where are you storing the data?” Bruce cut him off, he was frowning, he looked drawn in and his heart beat, now audible was telling him all about a troubled night and a rush of adrenaline he was still trying to master…
“In the fortress.” He went to stand next to Bruce still looking around impressed by the equipment scattered around the cave.
After a few minutes of fingers feverishly working on a keyboard, Bruce gave Clark a transparent key.
“The phone I gave you can read this. You shall have to feed the AI yourself I suppose… unless your technology can create an interface to extract the data.”
Looking at the key, Clark smiled, the device was rectangular and apart from a thin red strip crossing it, it reminded him of the fortress’ crystals… it looked less complicated and smaller but the similarity stuck him.
“You have all the tricks.”
“Only human.” Bruce stared at Clark expressionless, wondering why he was looking so intently at the key.
“That’s all I ever needed.” Clark didn’t really know how to take the man’s words.
“You’re overestimating humanity, you are more….”
“I’ve been raised by humans.” why did Bruce have to point to the fact he wasn’t human?
“So have I and a fellow human thought better of it.” He was too tired to get in an argument, because he had obviously hit a sensitive spot there.
Clark eyed him dubiously.
“You never fell for such weakness.”
Bruce chuckled low, bitter and said “You don’t know what you are talking about, Clark”
“I know what I see.”
“You don’t understand a thing.” The chair moved round, Clark had a hand on it and bent over slightly to face Bruce with a grim look in his eyes.
“Suppose I do.”
“I don’t suppose. It’s a fact I didn’t get a chance to do what I wanted. You think you know. You don’t know about the twists, how deep things get…” Bruce’s voice was flat distant.
“No,” cut in Clark “I just see ripples on water, but that doesn’t mean I’m oblivious of depths, I see how you’re deep in it, but you are not drowning.” He was annoyed with the way the man was answering and once again he couldn’t understand the full meaning of his words.
“That’s because I’m in my own element.” He pushed Clark away and stood up. They looked silently at each other for a few seconds. Something changed: distance vanished, annoyance receded. Bruce let a hand rest on Clark’s chest and as he went to cover the touch with his own the hand slid away.
“Get back to Metropolis.”
“…I’ll let you know how it works.” said Clark rising slightly from the cave’s floor.
“Bother me if it doesn’t.” said Batman with his back to him, while unfastening the catches on the upper part of his suit.
Two days later he was in Star City.
During the conference Clark had to loosen his tie, but the feeling of nausea didn’t leave him. There was something wrong. He knew the symptoms too well. Kryptonite. How and where Luthor had it in that room was troubling him. Perry wanted him there for the conference, Bruce had just invited Lois making sure she would be even at the party but she would be in Star City by the afternoon. So he was there because of Lois and Perry who got him an invitation even for the party. The partnership between Queen Industries, Wayne Enterprises and Lex Corp. was big news and the conference had to be covered. Bruce Wayne clearly didn’t want him there, but couldn’t do too much about his presence, if he wanted to avoid attention…
He was sitting in the front row of journalists, it was good for Clark Kent to be so near Luthor, it was
a good chance to distance himself from Superman as long as the kryptonite’s bite wouldn’t increase unbearably. It was a dangerous game, but understanding how affective it would be, for the Kent persona, was something Clark could discover staying where he was and doing his job as a reporter. As trouble goes, problems always kept each other company, kryptonite wasn’t the only thing he was facing.

The ease and friendly looks between the three business men were blending well with the physical discomfort.

The reporter wasn’t bothered by Oliver’s conduct, he knew his friend had to act pleasant; Clark did it as much as anyone else having two different identities, he understood all that. But the way Bruce was resting his hand on Lex’s shoulder, the way Lex leaned towards Bruce whispering something in his ear, making him smile, such friendly interacting disturbed him.

With Lois he’d done some good digging during the last week uncovering a strange accident in south India where a local lab, working for Luthor though owned by Wayne, had an accident. People had been intoxicated and everything had been hushed so no bad publicity would hinder business with Queen Industries.

Oliver knew about the accident but did he really understand what he was getting in? was he aware of the fact investors would dump him as soon as possible, as they were doing with Luthor? Lex was noxious and would drag everyone in his filth.

Luthor pointed towards him and gave Bruce a brief glance; Oliver kept his smile and carless expression. Clark thought he could face Bruce’s behavior, but the charade had become uncomfortable as the Kryptonite.

“hem..Kent, Daily Planet. Mr. Luthor, Mr. Wayne do you intend taking responsibilities for the Brompura water poisoning?”

Lex stirred a bit in his chair and looked at Clark.

“We gave the lab autonomy on experiments as long as they took precautions according to their laws and it must be clear, even to you, Mr. Kent, there is still no evidence the poisoning is our responsibility or can be connected to experiments they were handling for us.” Said Luthor dryly.

Bruce was playing about with a beautiful fountain pen turning it around between index and middle finger, apparently unconcerned about the question.

“Mr. Wayne the substance poisoning…” Clark tried to get the man’s attention

“Whether responsibility is ours or not…” Bruce answered in a tone matching Luthor’s. “We are taking care of the people and the worst cases have been dealt with in Gotham…. For the past two weeks.” Bruce underlined the last few words looking at the pen touching lightly the top of the conference desk, next Lex’s right, clean, impeccably manicured, hand wearing an elegant ring with a dull green stone. It took Clark a second to understand that simple action adding it to the fact Lois had a specific invitation from Wayne and he had got one through Perry’s barking orders…

He was pleased the conference was over so he could reach the nearest restroom to wash his face. During the last few questions, his colleagues had fired, to the three men, perspiration had started to increase on his forehead and discomfort was building in a headache. As he wiped his face dry and slipped on his glasses, two bulky men entered the room. He barely had time to realize as he was roughly pushed against the wall. Obviously they couldn’t cause any harm or in the least be threatening for him, Clark just went along with their movements.

“Hey...w-what’s the matter.” He protested, slumping his back against the wall.

The door was opened wide by a third man. “ There you are, Kent!” Bruce sounded angry. “Get out, tell Lex I take care of my employees.”

“er…Mr. Way…” said the bulkier of the two, letting his voice trail off as he got a cutting glance with deepening frown from the business man. The two looked at each other and decided without a word to get Wayne’s message to Luthor.

Bruce and Clark eyed each other for a few moments in silence.

“Thanks for the rescue, but I didn’t need it.” he tried to sound calm, but it didn’t work so well.
“You’re not supposed to be here.” Bruce put his hands in his pockets and leaned against the restroom’s door
“I’m not in Gotham.” Clark snapped back irritably.
“What’s so difficult to understand when I ask you to stay away from me?” Bruce’s voice was low and cold
“I don’t need a bodyguard.” He was getting aggravated.
“I doubt you’d understand the basic concept ..”
“This concerns me not just you.” He said pointing a finger at Bruce, taking a few steps towards him.
“I’m not staying out of it especially now Oliver is in …”
“Right.” He answered cutting through Clarks words calmly. “ Make a show of yourself, stalk Luthor as much as you like. Make him even more nervous, Mr. Kent, I won’t spoil your fun... You know, it doesn’t take that much to kill a man, when skin isn’t invulnerable.”
Bruce opened the door and left him there to consider the last things he’d said, giving him the tangible feeling he was acting like an idiot.
And the day had only just started.

End Notes

Set somewhere in the movieverse, comics and a deranged mind.
It’s the first time I write a story in English and in this fandom, so if I’ve written something stupid please tell me and I’ll correct it. It’s also the first time I write about the two and don’t really know all I should about them, but I like the two boys :D ..... not beta'd … but I hope it’s worked out ok.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!