Mommy Lex

by zlilyanne

Summary

Lex Luthor never expected to be a father, but like all successful business men slash supervillains he would adapt.
Chapter 1

Lex Luthor was known as a great many things; it was the price he paid for being a major player in the world. His allies lauded him as a brilliant, charming, decisive, eloquent, persuasive, and unbeatable man amongst men; while, his enemies denounced him as a villainous, heartless, pandering, fear mongering, manipulative, and unprincipled bastard.

None of them, however, would have called Alexander Luthor soft hearted. In fact no one excluding Lex’s father had ever called him that, and that was more due to Lionel’s inclination to crush people for fun, than any action of Lex’s. So it’s understandable that when Lex Luthor felt the first twinge of soft heartedness he didn’t recognize it.

Fifty two sublevels down into one of the best-kept secret labs in the world, Lex Luthor was contemplating the misshapen and irregular tunnel that led up to Project Kr as he listened to the head scientist, Dr. Mark Desmond, yammer on about the value of his research (in the twitchy way scientists tend to when any funding body is nearby). Lex spent the time absentmindedly wondering if the questionable material that made up the walls would ruin his shoes. This particular project was 5 years and 12 billion dollars in, and that much time and money meant that Lex was past the point of patience and since sending underlings for updates had yielded nothing of consequence he had showed up himself, unannounced.

“That’s enough.” Lex said, turning away from the wall to look coolly at Dr. Desmond. His displeasure was reinforced by Mercy standing silently but threateningly just behind him. Despite being five foot four and dresses innocuously she managed to menace better than most supervillains.

Dr. Desmond managed to look even more nervous as he walked briskly over to a control panel set in the opposite wall and scanned not only his ID card, but also his retina and full palm. The large hydraulic door marked “Project Kr” slid open silently and Lex walked through, followed closely by Mercy.

Inside was a cavernous room with walls of the same reddish brown material as the hall and a floor of what appeared to be steel. A large unlit capsule bolted to the floor took up the center of the room. Lex walked slowly towards it signaling with a flick of his fingers that Desmond should activate the lights.

Desmond once again scurried to obey. “This is our most advanced clone yet, series K model N number 017. KN-017 is the first of the clones found to be genetically stable after aging so at 15 weeks, it’s the farthest along in age of any series. Unfortunately its stability is due to its relatively high content of your own DNA, around 52%, and this led to a lack of several key Superman traits we want, so it will have to be discarded.” He said activating the lights.

What Lex saw… unsettled him. Held upright in the fluid filled capsule, wearing a fitted white body suit marked only with the El crest was the spitting image of Clark Kent, spitting image of the first time Lex had ever met him. The reminder caused a catch in his throat and a tightening in his chest that Lex passed off as distaste but was in actuality the first sign of soft-heartedness. If Lex were more willing to admit to his weaknesses he would have turned around and left before he got in too deep, but as it was, he forged ahead.

“Open it. I want a demonstration.” He demanded.

“Mr. Luthor!” Dr. Desmond protested looking panicked, “KN-017 is a research model only, and its capabilities aren’t complete to requirement.”
“I don’t recall asking you to demonstrate full Superman capabilities.” Lex replied. It was necessary to see how far exactly they had progressed, Lex reasoned. His interest in this particular clone was purely in the business sense. You don’t pay 12 billion and not get a progress report.

Desmond nodded, eyes flicking over to Mercy standing between Lex and the control panel. “Initiating wake up sequence,” he said after a brief pause, slowly sliding the first of several control switches down.

There was a hiss as the nutrient rich growth stimulating fluid drained from the capsule and a quiet hum as the first of several sun lamps flickered to life bathing the room in a yellow glow. The next switch led to the retraction of metal bands securing the boy’s arms, legs, and head and the slow sinking of the capsule walls into the floor. The final switches were lowered simultaneously and Lex watched as the network of wires attached to KN’s head gave a small pulse before detaching and retracting leaving the boy’s hair a mess, just like his other father’s did in the morning. However this was not the time to be thinking about Clark, even if KN was his clone.

Ignoring the warning squawk Desmond gave and the aborted move Mercy made towards him, Lex stepped forward into the capsule space as KN started to stir in the artificial sunlight. Lex was perhaps closer than advisable, but he recognized Clark’s own waking up faces and it was fascinating to see it played out on a clone who had never met the original, let alone watched him go from sleeping to awake.

Lex’s own curiosity came back to bite him. He stood almost nose to nose with the clone boy in the perfect position to see dark lashes flutter for a moment before blinking open to reveal…his own eyes staring back at him.

Lex went from the earlier catch in his throat to suddenly being unable to breathe. The tightening in his chest felt heart stopping for a moment because those weren’t just his eyes, the flower pattern and yellow collarette irises that KN had inherited were Lex’s mother’s. She had always called it their inner sky and it was as distinct as it was unique.

KN didn’t seem to be overly perturbed to wake up with someone inches from his face instead he furrowed his brows (like Clark) and cocked his head (like Lex) and studied the stranger back for a moment.

“Who are you?” He asked, snapping Lex out of his moment of reverie.

“Lex Luthor, I’m here to see a demonstration of your abilities KN.” Lex replied smoothly, stepping back. He kept his face blank, it wouldn’t fool Mercy but Desmond was none the wiser to his moment of panic.

Desmond led them up a floor to an expansive training facility outfitted not only with exercise equipment but also a bank of high-tech computers built to test memory retention and learning capabilities of someone with the potential for mental processing at super speed. Lex watched appearing ambivalent as KN completed impossible feat after impossible feat, having to school his features when KN hefted a stack of cinderblocks only to balance them on the tip of his nose while laughing. Lex swallowed his own responding laugh trying to remain stone-faced, well aware that he was making Desmond anxious.

He usually tried not to stress his geniuses if he could help it but he couldn’t bring himself to stop. Desmond was an irritant. He stood there reciting KN’s statistics followed by possible improvements to implement in the next model and it irritated Lex. The boy acted like a young Clark, smiling at anything and everything so pleased to be out and about like he was a human puppy and Lex couldn’t decide if the reminder was irritating or endearing. Everything physical was a game to KN, Lex
realized. The little clone boy didn’t know that if he had failed any one of these tests Desmond would have… discarded him.

Lex swallowed a little thickly, watching KN running and tumbling with boundless enthusiasm around the physical test area.

The mental tests went differently but were firmly endearing. They showed off KN’s extensive knowledge of language, literature, history, mathematics, philosophy, and all the hard sciences, as well as his full range of facial features.

KN periodically turned to look at Lex and beam, looking like he was waiting for Lex to scoop him up in a whirlwind of praise and affection. He also couldn’t seem to stand still while thinking, shifting from side to side or rocking up on his toes finally just drifting into flight hovering around the computer doing lazy aerial somersaults while he answered. Lex smiled at that mental image and KN lit up like a Christmas tree; fortunately Desmond missed Lex’s minor slip up.

KN was an open book. Lex could tell just from watching his expressions shift that physics and chemistry were his favorites but he hated philosophy. He found Greek harder than Latin but liked Greek epics better than Roman history. His military strategy needed work but Lex was sure he could be taught.

After the computerized test was completed Desmond shut everything down and walked back down to sublevel fifty-two to return KN to his capsule. KN slowed to a snail’s pace, shooting puppy dog looks at Lex as they walked down the tunnel to the capsule room.

Desmond clicked his tongue impatiently, walking quickly back to where KN dawdled. “KN-017 obey objective: return to capsule” Desmond ordered.

KN froze completely and Lex watched holding his breath.

KN took two large mechanical looking steps before juddering to a stop.

Desmond practically hissed at KN before repeating, “KN obey objective: return to capsule immediately.”

KN once again moved forwards, this time his steps were smaller, less mechanical, and definitely slower.

Desmond turned to Lex, “My apologies Mr. Luthor. This model shows resistance to the mind control training we previously developed but the next version this issue will be fixed. I’m sorry to inconvenience your busy schedule”

“Not at all.” Lex replied, noting that whatever it was they did to control KN it was incomplete. He felt oddly pleased as they arrived back in the main Project Kr room.

Lex watched as KN climbed back in silence, turning slightly sullen as Desmond reattached the neural interface wires to his scalp, before closing the capsule. KN held eye contact with Lex until the steady pulses from the neural interface and the suspension fluid flooding in forced his eyes to squeeze closed.

After a moment to silence Lex turned to the waiting scientist.

“I’m pleased with the results so far,” Lex told him turning on his heel and walking out of the capsule room and into the hallway that led back to the elevator. Desmond deflated for a moment before scurrying over to beam at him looking like he was about to start up about his research again, only to
“You said he’s the oldest ever at 15 weeks, with the artificial aging how old does that make him developmentally?” Lex asked as he walked down the hall.

“Well if it were human we would estimate its age at 14-15 years old, but Kryptonian aging may be slightly different.” Desmond replied promptly.

“And how many weeks will you age him before…..discarding him?” Lex asked not looking at Desmond, instead reaching forward to scan his ID and call the elevator.

“We plan to continue to only to 17 weeks before sending it down to dissection to determine what specifically made it stable.” Desmond answered oblivious to the micro-expression of dislike on Lex’s face.

The elevator doors slid open after a ding announcing its arrival and Lex stepped in turning to face Desmond as Mercy followed him in. “I’ll be in touch,” he said giving the man one last hard look as the doors closed.

The ride up was silent as was the walk through the building. Mercy exchanged a nod with Hope as she rejoined the group from the Cadmus security office and then Charity as she met them at the exit. Lex slid into the waiting car and was gone.

Lex arrived at LexCorp’s DC office feeling…something. ‘And here I thought I was an unfeeling bastard’ Lex mused. The visit to Cadmus definitely didn’t sit well with him. While he sat at his desk reviewing predicted stock price reports for the Japanese branch Lex couldn’t shake the unsettled feeling. He also couldn’t shake the feeling of Mercy’s eyes watching him as he tried to suppress his disquiet. After one hour of rereading a report that usually took ten minutes followed by three meetings he could only vaguely recall, Lex told Concord to cancel the rest of his day and reschedule his appointments.

“I’m not getting anything done.” He replied to Mercy’s raised eyebrow.

“I was more interested in the fact that you canceled the rest of your day when it’s 10 o’clock at night and you don’t have any other appointments.” Mercy said giving him a considering look, “It’s not like you to be absent minded Lex.”

Lex looked at her chagrined. She was right of course, but on principle he never admitted to mistakes. Instead he walked to a sleek panel set into his office wall to call the private elevator that led up to his penthouse, only considering locking her out for a moment. He wouldn’t, but only because Mercy was unforgiving of petty slights and would break in later but also probably hide all his remote controls in revenge. He’d be less tolerant except she had on multiple occasions taken a bullet meant for him, so he settled for amused and disgruntled. Still probably best not to this time. With a sigh Lex held the door open while she walked over to join him.

It was a short ride but Lex’s need to jitter made it unpleasant and even a generous pour of his favorite brandy didn’t seem to help, nor did chucking the tumbler at the wall, nor did the Jacuzzi tub, nor the excellent dinner and additional nightcap of his favorite whiskey (and he did even bother throwing the second tumbler).

Finally Lex gave up and swallowed three sleeping pills and went to bed. The pills would be metabolized too quickly to last the whole night but Lex only needed to get to sleep.

He didn’t remember what he dreamed about but Lex woke with the distinct impression of his father’s
mocking tone, which was always unpleasant. “Time,” Lex said quietly into to room. “It’s 3:12 am, Mr. Luthor” the soothing automated voice of his house’s clock replied. Lex laid in bed staring at the ceiling. What was wrong with him? It’s not like he had anything exceedingly stressful happening, all his projects were on schedule, his stocks were up, he headhunted rising star Dr. Lin Liu from Wayne corps R&D, there was nothing wrong. He was fine. He was fine. Fine.

Finally Lex gave up the pretense of sleep, throwing off his covers with a small-aggravated huff. He then retrieved and donned his house robe before he yanked open his door and shouted “MERCY I NEED- AAH!” only to find her already dressed and waiting outside his door.

“You need a?” she asked, eyes crinkling, he should have locked her out.

Slightly frowning at her he continued, “I need Charity, Hope, and Justice first, then wake up mobile security. Something’s off about Dr. Mark Desmond, he’s acting like he has something to hide and I want to know what.”

“Yes sir,” Mercy’s mouth said, however, Lex could see her eyebrows and they were saying, “Uhuh, sure, that’s why.” Lex shot her a dirty look for the impertinence but she smiled unaffectedly then turned and jogged to the penthouse security room.

Five minutes after that Mercy, Charity, Hope, and Justice were all giving him the “Uhuh” eyebrows.

Fifteen minutes after that, the debriefed mobile security group was saying, “Yes sir!” and moving out.

Fifty-five minutes after that Lex was standing in front a control panel slowly lowering the last two switches to release KN-017.

Standing in front of his beautiful little clone son Lex let go of the last of his pretense. He didn’t give a shit about Mark Desmond and his illegal “Blockbuster” experiments, he didn’t give a shit that he’d embezzled twenty five million dollars to do it either. He should have kept him for how fantastic his new son was, but he wouldn’t.

Lex was going to kill Desmond and make sure that all his secrets died with him. All around him the building already swarmed with his security experts transferring the entire labs data onto a single advanced drive (that Lex would take home himself) before wiping everything off the individual systems and loading them into trucks to be scattered to other labs.

Lex simply stood in the eye of the storm looking at his son, a son he hadn’t even realized he wanted until he was staring him right in the face.

After Lex’s kryptonite exposure he was told he was infertile. The same mutation that gave him his advanced healing and resistance to toxins made him too different to be genetically compatible with humans, and he had accepted that.

It hadn’t occurred to him that using his unique mutated DNA to stabilize Superman’s Kryptonian DNA was actually making Clark and his child. It had registered as “reagent for superman cloning”, but here he was with 14-15 year old KN who was his, 52% his. Which was actually rather amusing because it meant that they had used Lex’s mitochondrial DNA as well, which made Lex his mother, not that Lex would tell anyone that. Except maybe Clark, Clark would hate that.
What it came down to was Lex standing in front of a son he now knew he fiercely and desperately wanted; and he had no idea how, but he would be the best parent ever for KN.

As his smiling son stood in front of him gawking at all the people, his head swiveling every direction as they walked past, Lex decided on his first plan of action.

“How would you,” Lex started off slowly “like to see outside?”

KN head snapped around to face him. “Outside?” KN asked, eyes wide.

“Outside.” Lex confirmed. “It’s still dark out at the moment, but sunrise is in an hour, and we have quite the view from the penthouse.”

“I’m going too?” KN asked, eyes going impossibly wider.

“Of course,” Lex replied, “you’re my son, and that’s where you’ll live from now on, if you like.” Lex of course had no intention of letting his son live anywhere else but KN’s eager nods still left a warm feeling in his chest.

Lex turned and once again walked to the elevator with KN-017, only this time there would be no stopping at the next floor and no coming back to sublevel fifty-two.

Lex herded KN through the hallways and out of the building, stopping only briefly to wrap KN in his own great coat, covering the ostentatious house El shield on his chest. They stepped together out into the fresh cool air of an autumn night in Washington DC. Outside for the first time KN spun in slow circles under the sky before spotting his first tree and accidentally knocking it over in his excitement to get to it. Lex smiled at his son and made a mental note to have someone collect some leaves, Lex would put them in KN’s… baby book.

Lex stood outside and watched his son enjoy the world for twenty minutes before whisking him off to the penthouse to catch the sunrise all the while thinking: ‘Lionel was right, I am soft hearted’. Not that anyone else would ever receive such indulgent treatment from Lex Luthor.

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Although Lex had told KN they would be living at the penthouse, he had meant the Metropolis penthouse as home. They spent only enough time to watch the sunrise in the DC flat then left from the helipad for the airport.

Speed was of the essence as Lex knew the sudden movement of lab supplies and personnel from Cadmus would register as a threat to the newly formed Justice League. They may not have any legal grounds to investigate the facility, but come nightfall he could guarantee someone would have broken in to snoop.

They would find the place empty of course, the move would be completed by 3pm sharp and the bottom most sublevels completely destroyed. In the meantime Lex would be taking KN to Metropolis to settle in and complete the necessary paperwork for KN’s identity.

After boarding his jet Lex had some unavoidable business to take care of. It was already 10am and he had suddenly canceled all his meetings and was returning to Metropolis several days early. While it was necessary for his son, he now had to rearrange his business schedule. So Lex left KN with Mercy and shut himself into the small bedroom at the back of the plane.

Lex returned to his seat just in time for landing and to see Mercy had let his son watch TV sitcoms. Lex gave her a displeased glare and she looked back with faux innocence. She was probably doing this on purpose, as revenge for waking her up at 3am this morning. Ruining his heir with crap television.

The first thing that happened when they landed washed away Lex’s ire with Mercy and cemented his position as the most indulgent parent in Luthor history.

KN unbuckled his belt as shown then shot up from his seat with an excited “Look Lex!” before crowding into a still seated Lex’s space and wrapping his arms around him carefully.

“This is called a hug,” KN told Lex, as if teaching him something new, “and I am giving it to you.”

Lex’s breath caught… No one had hugged him in almost a decade but here he was, his beautiful little son, who probably just learned how from crap TV, giving him the first hug of KN’s life.

Lex raised his arms and wrapped them around KN pulling him closer, almost into his lap as he hugged him back. “Thank you, KN.” Lex said, clearing his throat so he wouldn’t sound choked up. Mercy had politely left the main cabin to prepare for disembarking, making it one less person to see the spectacle he was making of himself.

Clearing his throat again Lex gently pried KN off, holding him at arm’s length to look at him properly.

“It was wonderful. In the future however, hugs are only to given at home when we are alone.” Lex said quietly.

As much as he would rather indulge his son’s spontaneous displays of affection, Lex had too many enemies who would recognize KN as Lex’s weakness. And KN was a weakness: Lex had only known his son a day and already he would trade his reputation, fortune, and life to keep KN safe.
It was best for both of them if displays of affection were private.

“Oh,” KN said, looking puzzled and pulling back, “well…. are we home and in private yet?”

Lex smiled. “Not quite yet, in half an hour or so.” He told KN, standing slowly so the boy could slide off his lap and onto his feet.

“Sir,” Mercy called from the front of the cabin, “everything is in place.”

Smoothing his suit Lex relaxed his face back into a cool neutral and placed a hand on KN’s back to gently guide him down the aisle.

“What did you think of the flight KN?” Lex asked as they disembarked into a security blackout tunnel. Minimizing prying eyes was a must until all of KN’s papers were in order.

KN hummed in consideration before answering, “The TV was nice, but I think next time I can just fly us. That way we can see outside the whole time.”

Lex heard Mercy snort behind him. It seemed teaching his son what could and could not be talked about around other people was their top priority now.

Chastity grinned at Lex as she opened the waiting car’s door.

“KN,” Lex started trying to be gentle but stern, “it’s important for your safety that you not talk about your powers outside.”

KN slid into the car and smiled brightly as Lex followed.

“Don’t worry, I’m safe. I’m super strong, and hard to hurt.”

Lex looked at him at a loss. He apparently was not good at being stern. How had his father made him stay out of trouble? Lex wondered leaning across KN to buckle him in.

“Hey!” KN exclaimed “I thought no hugs until we got home!”

“I was helping you buckle in KN, not hugging you” Lex replied absently, still lost in thought, before buckling his own seatbelt.

His father wouldn’t have kept him out of trouble; he just would have covered it up afterwards, or maybe he would have paid someone to pretend to be Lex’s lover for a while. Why was he looking to Lionel Luthor for parenting advice? Lex didn’t want to be like Lionel as a parent. He actually loved his son.

He loved his son. So it was imperative for KN to be careful about his powers, and while it might take a while for KN to understand he wasn’t invulnerable despite being... invulnerable… KN loved Lex already. So Lex would be a little like Lionel.

“KN,” Lex tried again, “if people know about your powers they may try and take you away from me.”

KN’s head whipped around from where he had been staring out the tinted windows at the passing streets.

“What? Why?” KN asked tugging anxiously on his seatbelt.

Lex felt his stomach flip and he immediately wanted to take it back, but no, this was for KN’s safety.
“You are extraordinary KN, with extraordinary gifts, that people will want to take and use for their own benefit.” Lex reached over to cup his son’s cheek gently, gratified when KN leaned into his touch.

“If we want to stay together,” Lex continued looking KN straight in the eyes, “we must be careful who knows about your powers. Do you understand?”

KN paused before slowly nodding.

“Good.” Lex replied pulling his hand back.

They arrived moments later to the tower that housed LexCorp. Standing in LexCorp plaza across from the iconic Daily Planet newspaper, the LexCorp main office was a tower of shining steel and glittering glass, an architectural expression of progress that towered above all other buildings in the Metropolis skyline. This was home.

Lex and KN exited once safely inside the private section of the building’s parking garage. Flanked by Mercy and Chastity, Lex and KN took the executive elevator straight up to the penthouse.

The elevator rose at an almost alarming speed taking only a matter of moments to climb the hundred floors to the penthouse suite. The elevator came to a smooth halt and the doors slid open silently to reveal Justice, who nodded the all clear before allowing them to step out.

“Welcome home KN.” Lex said, one hand resting on the boy’s right shoulder and the other gesturing out to encompass the whole apartment and seeming to encompass all of Metropolis as seen through the wall of windows on the other side of the main room.

KN floated wide-eyed past the kitchen on his right and across the living room to look out the windows.

“Wow” KN said breathlessly.

Lex walked across the room to stop beside him. “One day KN,” Lex said, “this city will all be yours.”

KN didn’t seem to be paying attention but that was alright for now.

“Now son,” Lex gently pulled KN to the floor, reclaiming his attention, “before we introduce you to the world there are a few things to take care of, the first being a name for your papers.”

KN looked puzzled. “But I thought KN-017 was my name?”

Lex took a deep breath; if he never heard the words KN-017 again it would be too soon. “No son, that’s your laboratory designation. You’re a Luthor now, and a Luthor needs a proper name.”

KN nodded, he didn’t seem to understand why the distinction was important, but was willing to go along with it.

“I’ve thought of a few already that keep the KN sounds so it’s less confusing.” Lex started and KN nodded along, “My first choice is Kaan for ruler or Kagan for king, and I also approve of Kamil or Castor and if you like Krotos which mea-” “How about Conner?” KN interrupted.

“Conner?” Lex asked slightly off balance.

“Yeah,” KN replied, “like the boy on the TV! Everybody loved him and he had lots of friends and
he could play sports too!"

The T.V.

His son named after a T.V. show.

Curse Mercy and her deviousness, she had done this on purpose.

“Are you sure that’s the name you want KN?” Lex asked him, “I’m sure we could find other names if you don’t like the ones I’ve found.”

“Nah,” KN replied flippantly, “Your names are nice but I like Conner best.”

Lex was silent, of all the common and unaspiring names to choose from, it had to be Conner?

KN peered up at Lex looking slightly worried “Do you…” he trailed off “do you not like my name, mom?”

Lex jolted a little and cleared his throat. “No, no! As long as you like it it’s perfect.”

KN beamed up at him.

No.

Conner beamed up at him.

There was something Lex did have to address though.

“Conner, why did you call me mom instead of dad?”

Conner looked at him surprised. “Well…isn’t Superman my dad?” He said hesitantly.

“That’s what the scientists told me…..and in the memory implants there was one parent who was the dad….and the other parent was the mom. Since you’re my other parent doesn’t that make you my mom?” Conner explained.

Well technically at 52%... No, no, no. Lex couldn’t let Conner go around calling him mom, especially when Conner’s birth certificate would list someone else as Conner’s mother. It looks like he was going to start off educating his son on family structure with two same sex parents, the easy stuff.

“Superman is your dad…and so am I,” Lex started only to be cut off by Conner.

“Oh” he said, “ok.”

Lex blinked at his son surely it couldn’t be that easy.

“No wait, I’m confused.” Conner said face wrinkling adorably.

Lex mentally prepared what he would say about social norms and gender stereotyped parenting and that he would in fact be acting effectively like Conner’s mother even if he was a man.

“If you’re both my dad how will you know which one I’m talking about when I say dad?” Conner
Lex stood there and blinked at his son for a moment again. Conner had an unerring ability to throw him out of balance. It must have been because Conner was raised in a lab. He hadn’t been raised in society so he had no social reference for families.

“You can call me father and Superman dad.” Lex finally replied.

“Can I call you mom if we’re alone?” Conner asked, big baleful blue eyes looking at him pleadingly. It seemed he had picked up on Lex’s golden rule: nothing personal in public.

“Yes.” Lex replied before he had thought it through. In his defense he hadn’t had time to build up immunity to Conner’s puppy dog eyes yet.

“Mercy,” Lex called her into the living room, “have the paperwork filed with the name Conner Jonathan Luthor.”

Jonathan Kent would be rolling in his grave if he knew his name was attached to a Luthor, but Lex would be damned if he named a steaming pile of shit after Lionel, let alone his son.

Despite their differences, Jonathan Kent had been a good man, and he wanted that for Conner, he wanted Conner to live up to that name.

Mercy at least looked surprised, Lex was sure it was from the middle name though, she had probably know KN would love TV and had shown him that cheesy sitcom just to spite Lex.

“Come on” Lex said wrapping his arm around his son’s shoulders “don’t you want to explore?”

Conner’s feet left the floor in excitement and didn’t touch back down until hours later, and Lex’s resting bitch face wasn’t seen for the rest of the day.

The two went from room to room starting with the living room exploring all the luxuries and novelties being rich could afford.

Whenever Conner stopped to examine something, Lex would explain it to him, like a walking tour of his own home, and Conner absorbed it all like a sponge, zooming around the rooms picking up thousand dollar nick-knacks and flying them back to Lex asking for their story.

Lex would have never allowed anyone else to touch his priceless collection of historical artifacts, but here he was letting his son fly them around the room just because it made him happy.

Conner was looking at him like he was the most interesting thing ever, like he knew everything there was to know, like how Clark had used to look at Lex.

Lex pushed that thought away, he wouldn’t let the ghost of his and Clark’s friendship sour this moment. In this moment his perfect, happy, enthusiastic, wondrous son was here with him, and that was enough.

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Putting Conner to bed for the first time proved to be a frustrating ordeal. While they had explored rooms Lex had asked the housekeeping staff to have the guest room closest to his setup for permanent occupation.

The yellow room was perfect for Conner: not only was it close to Lex’s own master suite, but it was on the eastern face of the tower and every morning sunlight flooded through both the one way windows that took up most of the eastern wall and the large skylight just above the bed. The soft sunflower yellow seemed like sunlight itself as it reflected the morning light around the room and the whole room took on a soft glow.

If it wouldn’t have given his security staff an aneurysm, Lex would have chosen the room for himself. Even with the light pollution of metropolis the skylight above the bed made it seem like you were lying outside under the stars.

The only problem was Conner wouldn’t stay put in it. He apparently saw no use for the bed having never lied down in his life so far, he disliked the idea of sleep, having been trapped in a capsule to sleep most of his life so far, and he didn’t like that the Superman inspired soundproofing meant he couldn’t hear Lex once Lex left the room.

So naturally, every time Lex left the room Conner dutifully followed after him.

“Conner, you have to learn to stay in your room.” Lex told him after his third attempt to get Conner to stay in his room while Lex went and got his pajamas. He figured teaching Conner a bedtime routine would be easier if Lex showed him instead of told him. He could just let Conner follow him around as he collected all the items he needed but Conner needed some boundaries.

“Stay here for a minute.” Lex said. “Stay.” He repeated feeling like he was training a dog instead of his son.

Conner did stay put while Lex retrieved his toothbrush and toothpaste from the master bathroom, his pajamas from his closet, and a book.

Lex changed into his pajamas and helped Conner change into his, by first cutting Conner out of his super durable white lab suit… With a laser that he happened to have lying around the house. The pale blue silk was an improvement, and went a long way to easing Lex’s guilt about Conner's origins. Brushing his teeth was a little more difficult, after demonstrating proper technique Lex had opened a new toothbrush for Conner to use and let him have a go at it. Then carefully explain that toothpaste was not for eating. Yes it tasted nice, but that didn’t mean you were supposed to swallow it.
That completed, Lex had a small dilemma with the hairbrush, and since he had no hair, he couldn’t demonstrate, so he simply brushed Conner’s hair himself. It was more intimate and comforting than Lex expected. Lex had vague memories of his mother trying to tame his rioting red curls and he wondered if Conner would look back on this with the same honey sweet and warm nostalgia that Lex did.

Lex carefully tucked Conner in and sat beside him on top of his cover, gently smoothing Conner’s hair before opening his book and beginning to read. “Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son Achilleus” began the Iliad, and Conner’s own epic, Lex hoped.

Chapter End Notes

So here's the second installment! Thanks once again to itsoktobemarty for betaing. Tell me what you think of the devious ms mercy, the indulgent lex and the adorable conner in the comments!

for anyone who's interested Kamil means perfect, castor is half of the Gemini constellation, and Krotos was a demigod, hunter, son of Pan and devotee to the muses.

Next chapter look forward to Superman~
The first thing Lex became aware of when he woke was the painful crick in his neck. He must have fallen asleep reading to Conner last night and spent the night in an awkward, neck pain inducing position.

The second thing Lex noticed was what actually woke him. The light shining in through the windows of Conner’s room was flickering on his face as a shadow passed in front of the light over and over again. Squinting at the bright light Lex realized that the shadow came from Conner, hovering in front of the window and darting from one side of it to the other. He seemed to be following a bird or someth---Ah. It’s not a bird or a plane. It’s Superman. Damn. Lex would have preferred a bird, hell he even would have taken a snooping Robin instead.

Lex knew the Justice League had gone crawling all over the skeleton of Cadmus labs last night but he also knew they shouldn’t have found anything incriminating there.

Which made this a social call.

If you considered your arch-enemy showing up to tell you he was onto your dastardly plots social. Which Lex did.

Superman was hovering in front of Conner’s windows moving side to side and looking supremely annoyed. The windows were made of lead crystal and mirrored on the outside, so the annoyed look was likely from the inability to see clearly into the room. Lex had discovered lead crystal blocked out Superman’s X-ray vision like lead lining did, though unfortunately it didn’t seem to be as complete a protection as solid lead. But Lex refused to give up windows altogether.

It seemed that Superman could see something through the windows of the room if he had settled out in front of this one instead of Lex’s master suite or the living room. Lex sighed. It was a shame but he probably couldn’t get the super hero to sit down and take a survey detailing how well the window protection worked. Superman was unreasonable like that, and it made Lex’s data collection process harder than was really necessary.

Conner had apparently heard Lex’s sigh and turned to smile at him, as bright as the morning sun coming through the windows.
“Look! It’s Superman!” Conner announced shooting up a couple feet before turning a few backwards rolls towards Lex.

“He looks just like me!” Conner continued now hovering just above Lex.

“Feet on the ground Conner.” Lex said, probably a little sharply, but he had no idea how much Clark could hear through the windows and he didn’t want Superman to know anything about Conner just yet.

“Superman is here for business, he and I need to talk alone.” Lex told his son sternly.

At Conner’s disappointed look Lex softened a little, reaching out to cup his son’s cheek.

“Don’t worry, it will only take a little while, and I promise you’ll get to meet Superman another time.”

Lex was under no delusion that he’d be able to keep Conner away from Clark forever, the nosy superhero would find out eventually, then come around making demands. Hopefully that time was not the present. Even if the Justice League had found out exactly what Cadmus did, it should take them a few more days to parse all the data and find out what it meant.

“Now, run down to Mercy’s room. Tell her I said you can watch T.V. but only something educational.” Lex said, shooing Conner towards the elevator.

Conner lost his look of disappointment, whether from the promise of TV or meeting Superman later Lex couldn’t tell, and raced towards the elevator. All of Lex’s main security lived and worked one floor down, in between the penthouse and Lex’s office. They would look after Conner until Lex sent Superman on his way. Though they would also likely complain bitterly about being treated like baby sitters.

Lex sauntered out into the living room not bothering to stop and change. Superman thankfully followed him as he walked to the living room and not Conner down to the floor below.

Lex pressed his hand to biometric scanner that controlled the doors out onto the penthouse’s patio and one of them slid silently open for the brooding boy scout in blue, who then drifted in dramatically, cape billowing and arms crossed disapprovingly.
“Superman,” Lex drawled, doing his best to look utterly at ease, “to what do I owe the… Pleasure?”

It was best to seem unruffled when dealing with this sort of thing.

The hero remained floating silently as Lex sat down, ignoring Lex’s gesture to take a seat... Rude, but not unexpected.

Lex took a moment to really look at Clark. The differences between the farm boy from Smallville Kansas and the alien from Krypton were mostly in posture and attitude. Clark managed to look confident and comfortable, like there no other possibility for Superman except to exist larger than life and on center stage. People would never look at Clark Kent and see Superman because they didn’t look at Superman and see a person. They looked at him and saw the El shield and a celebrity alien. Lex wished for a moment that he couldn’t see the farm boy, it might have made fighting him easier. Then the moment was gone and Lex moved on.

“You know why I’m here, Luthor.” Superman said accusingly, but not elaborating any further.

Lex had to viciously suppress a smirk for a moment. Apparently the so called Justice League hadn’t found a thing. So here was their biggest gun trying to “disapprove” a confession out of him. It’s was beyond amusing considering Clark had been pulling the same schtick since he was sixteen years old. If it hadn’t succeeded when Lex actually cared about his disapproval, then it certainly wouldn’t now.

“I’m afraid not,” Lex said with faux innocence, “you’ll have to be more specific.” The motions of this dance were so old and time honored between them it might as well be a competitive waltz.

Lex could practically hear Superman grinding his perfect pearly whites in frustration.

“The facility Luthor. In DC.”

“Oh?” Lex said, pretending to think about it for a moment. This was even better than he had hoped for, they didn’t even know that Cadmus had been a lab. Someone on his security and clean up team was in need of a hefty bonus.

“What about my main office?” Lex continued. He knew that wasn’t what Superman was asking about and Superman knew he knew, at this point Lex was just proving that he was going to be tedious about this discussion.
“Luthor!”

Oh dear, Superman sounded angry and frustrated already. Something else must be on his mind for him to lose his temper so quickly. Lex made a mental note to poke around in Clark’s private life and find out what it was.

“Yes?” Lex asked, keeping the charade.

“You know which building I’m talking about and I want to know what you were up to!” Superman demanded, finally deigning to land, only to crowd into Lex’s space and loom over him a moment later. He probably wasn’t even doing it purposefully, he just forgot he had boundaries with Lex now.

“Well then.” Lex said calmly, he was unbothered by the enraged and indestructible alien in front of him, but he could practically feel his security team’s boiling rage seeping up through the floor, so it was time to wrap this up.

“Do you have a warrant for the building in question Superman?” Lex asked, keeping a calm face, anger revealed only by his sharp tone.

At Superman’s stunned look Lex rose and took a step forward. Superman took a step back to give him room to stand and again when he stepped forward, he never learned. All the power in the world and he was so used to playing normal that he instinctively stepped back. A common courtesy that might get him killed one day.

Lex continued, expression turning cold: “No? Well I must say I’m surprised. That is after all the “American Way”.” Lex said quoting part of Superman’s catchphrase sarcastically. It was a little petty, but Lex wasn’t above petty when it came to him.

“If there’s nothing else you need, then I am quite busy. If you do happen to get a warrant for one of my buildings in the future, you are welcome to take it to legal, down on the 85th floor.”

Walking over to the outside door’s control panel he once again opened it and waited patiently for Superman to float over. Lex could see from the corner of his eye that Mercy had just slipped into the room and looked like she was itching for Superman to resist so she could have a go at him. Honestly, one day he was going to find staff that was less confrontational.
Thankfully the big blue boy scout floated slowly out with only gritted teeth and a sullen, disappointed look.

Well that went much better than expected.

They would still have to move quickly, Lex was sure that they would find someone that would spill about Cadmus. They would probably come clean when pressed, thinking the Justice League would protect them from Lex, as people tended to be stupid that way. There was simply not enough manpower on their little superhero team to protect everything and everyone. Lex would track who it was and where they stashed the blabber mouth and in a few years Lex would send someone to dig the traitor up and take care of them.

Mercy walked over to stand next to him, watching as Superman flew away.

“Is everything is in order?” Lex asked.

“His papers have all been properly filed and aged. Born to Lex Luthor and Helen Bryce at Metropolis General 15 years ago, your personal physician delivered him right before Helen faked her death, and you thought you had lost them both.” At the reminder of Helen, Lex wrinkled his nose. Of all his ex-wives, Mercy had to pick Helen.

Helen had been the only wife Lex had married for love, and perhaps the harshest lesson his father had taught him. No one is who you think they are, everyone can be bought for a price, the deeper in you let people the more it hurts when they try to kill you by sabotaging your plane and leaving you on a deserted island for a year. Helen had been in Lionel’s pocket up until the moment she tried to kill him for his fortune. Helen had faked her death fifteen years ago to throw Lionel off track, but only actually died recently, so he supposed it fit in the necessary timeline.

Mercy ignored Lex’s displeasure and continued on in the same deadpan voice she used for anything official.

“We’ve supplied school records up to the 8th grade with teachers who remember having him in their class. Helen was living in Paris when she died so they’re from overseas. He has discernibly fake documents that match Helen’s cover under Luca Bertrand and “legitimate” documents under Conner Jonathan Luthor including a passport that shows you brought him over from France two weeks ago.”
Mercy handed Lex Conner’s brand new american passport and his “original” birth certificate and social security card.

“He has two childhood friends in Paris named Jules Brun and Leo Lemaire. We have pictures of them all together at various ages as well as phone conversations back and forth over several years. We also have pictures of Conner with Helen from infant to almost current age.”

Hope stepped forward, appearing out of nowhere to offer him a pastel green, soft covered, baby book with “Luca” embroidered on it.

Lex declined. He felt strangely hostile toward a book of pictures of Conner and Helen. Besides, Lex had a baby book for Conner that so far had Conner’s growth pictures from the lab, a few pressed leaves from the tree Conner had knocked over in DC, and a small square of super durable fabric from the white suit Conner had been wearing until last night. That baby book was locked in a lead and kryptonite lined safe under Lex’s bed, and it was pastel yellow.

“We’ve leaked the rumor of a secret child to the Inquisitor so they should come snooping around and we’ve arranged for several of your “personal staff” to give very hush hush interviews in the next few days.” Mercy finished.

It honestly amazed Lex how competent his staff was sometimes. It would have taken anyone else weeks if not months to pull together all this information. This is why Lex never bothered getting a less confrontational staff: his team was just too good to mess with.

Lex quirked his lips up in a slight smile at Hope and Mercy. “Excellent work, could you get me the name of the head of the clean up crew? They’re in need of a reward as well.” Lex always rewarded his personal staff personally and with individual detail, he found it an efficient way of maintaining loyalty, as he learned everything about them and used that information to his advantage. Whoever was responsible for slowing down that nosey group of supers was about to experience the glow from full force Lexian approval.

“Conner will start school in two weeks, after Thanksgiving break. That should give us enough time to teach Conner how to blend in but still be short enough to be called an adjustment period if anyone asks. He’ll attend “Edwin Highgate Preparatory Academy”, they’re close enough to commute from here, far enough to be inconvenient for snoops, and exclusive enough to keep out the riff raff.” Lex told Mercy, who sent the message to Concord to make the arrangements.

Lex finally turned away from the windows and started back across the room towards the elevator.
“What is Conner watching?” Lex asked curiously.

“Narwhals - The Arctic Unicorn” Hope responded totally straight faced and deadpan. Hope was quieter and more serious than Mercy as a general, but she had a dry sense of humor that meant this could easily be a joke.

Lex glanced between her and Mercy and decided it really didn’t matter.

As they stepped into the elevator Lex considered the best way to bring his son into the normal world.

One of the things spending all of yesterday with Conner had revealed was worrying gaps in his memory transfer education. Conner could speak a dozen languages but had never read any of the popular teen fiction, he could do calculus but didn’t know what juice was, and at any given time he was likely to float off the ground without noticing, to name a few issues.

Lex sighed as the elevator arrived and he stepped out onto the floor that housed his elite security team and Concord.

Conner was hovering in front of the TV in the common room trying to emulate the narwhals calls, in a frankly ridiculous sounding set of squeaks.

“Conner, feet on the ground please.” Lex said, getting the feeling he’ll be saying that often over the next few weeks.

Conner landed in front of Lex eyeing Mercy and Hope at his sides and visibly restraining his urge to hug Lex. Lex rewarded him with a warm smile and a hand pressed to his cheek.

“Thank you for waiting patiently Conner.” Lex started, “Now that I’ve finished up that bit of business I have something I want to talk to you about.”

Conner looked curious rather than alarmed and Lex felt unexpectedly warm at his son’s trust. Whenever Lionel had wanted to talk to Lex it had given him a sickening sense of anxiety and panic, and Lionel had alway liked to tell him days before so that Lex could build up to terror and physical illness. Even now hearing someone say “We need to talk” made his stomach turn, though now that his father was dead the only person who could making talking sufficiently unpleasant was Superman.
Lex smiled at Conner again, gesturing to the couch behind them as Mercy and Hope perched on the arms of the armchairs closest to him.

“Conner, I know this may seem a bit overwhelming but I was wondering if you would like to go to school?” Lex hoped that being straightforward with his son was the best option, because he honestly wasn’t sure how else to do this.

Conner’s jaw literally dropped and Lex reached out to gently close it… Such behavior didn’t suit a Luthor.

“You mean, I can go outside again?” Conner asked.

Lex nodded.

“And talk to people?” Conner added.

Lex nodded again.

“And… And make friends.” Conner continued.

Lex paused before nodding more hesitantly. The Luthor name was good for many things, but making true friends was not one of them. It didn’t matter though, because Conner was bright and innocent and brilliant, and Lex wouldn’t purposely crush people who were nice to him to isolate him and “make him stronger”, so he should be fine.

“When can I start? Right now? How long can I stay? Are you coming too? Is Mercy coming? Where is school?” Conner bounced up off the couch with excitement, spewing questions, and lit up with happiness. After a moment more his feet left the ground and he was hovering in front of Lex.

“Conner, feet on the ground.” Lex said firmly. “This is something we’ve talked about remember? You have to keep your powers secret so floating around the room in front of your classmates is not an option.”

Conner touched down on the floor looking chastised.
“You’ll start school in two weeks, but before then there are some things you need to learn in order to blend in with your classmates.” Lex said seriously. “Hope and Chastity will be your main instructors, but Mercy will come and teach as well.”

Conner nodded looking at first Mercy then Hope then back to Lex. He looked serious, which was good, but not crushed which made it even better.

“How then,” Lex said standing, breaking the serious mood, “It’s time for breakfast, what would you like to try?”

Lex basked in the flow of happy chatter from his son as he talked about all the breakfast foods he wanted to try. Breakfast options had never been particularly exciting before but Lex was willing to add it to the growing list of things that he was discovering could make him happy.

They stepped into the elevator alone, leaving Mercy and Hope to start making preparations for both the two weeks of training Conner needed and the transfer into Highgate. As the doors slid closed Lex pulled Conner close and into a hug, resting his chin on his son’s thick black hair. Conner instantly wrapped his arms around Lex, squeezing back just a little too firmly, and stopped talking in order to bury his face in Lex’s shoulder.

“I love you, Conner,” Lex said quietly into his son’s hair, “and the rest of the world is going to love you too.” he finished.

Conner squeezed a little tighter making Lex’s ribs groan in protest and muttered into Lex’s shoulder “I love you too mom.” This was a perfect little moment just for them.

The elevator doors slid open to the penthouse and the moment ended. Lex released his son, so Conner could go zooming over to the phone to order breakfast and chatter away at Mrs. Novak, the eighty-year-old housekeeper who had worked first for Lex’s maternal grandparents then Lilian and now for Lex. She seemed, if possible, even more pleased than Lex at having a new family member. Lex suspected it was because she was going to live forever and she worried that she’d be unemployed when Lex died of old age without an heir.

Lex settled into a chair at the kitchen island and watched his son be happy. Tomorrow Conner would start training, and Lex would go back to work and corporate warfare, but today he was just going to let himself enjoy being happy and with his son.

Chapter End Notes
This chapter is mostly fluff as it turns out, all the lovely comments you guys leave are super motivating me to write so this update has been way quicker than normal. Thanks again to itsoktobemarty for beta-ing.

Let me know what you think of high and mighty Superman, snappy Lex, and snuggly Conner.

If you want to know about Narwhals that program is a real episode from the BBC.
Clark couldn’t breathe. Which was ridiculous, since he was standing safely in the Secret Sanctuary with enough of the Earth’s super rich atmosphere circulating in his system to last him days. All the same Clark felt like he couldn’t breathe, couldn’t move, his face felt numb like the muscles he couldn’t seem to remember how to flex. The last time Clark had felt like this was when his dad died, and everything seemed to just… stop working. It was a symptom of shock he knew, having seen plenty of victims dazed and unresponsive after a rescue. He knew it was shock. He was fine. This information was just shocking.

Clark opened his mouth part way, then had to close it to swallow. It felt like his Adam’s apple had gotten stuck midway down. Opening his mouth again Clark managed to get out a question, despite the fact that his voice sounded like it belonged to someone else.

“I’m sorry Batman, could you repeat that?”

Batman, sitting directly across the titanium table from him, was unreadable. At times like these, Clark wished Batman wasn’t paranoid enough to line his mask with lead. Clark wanted desperately to know how he was supposed to react to this.

“The Luthor building we were investigating was a cloning lab, called Cadmus. Lex Luthor was using the lab to clone you, Superman.” Batman said, in the same even tone he had used the first time. “My source reported that the latest attempt at cloning was successful.” He finished.

“He cloned me?” Clark asked almost tonelessly.

There was a pause as Clark tried to process.

“Lex cloned me...multiple times?” He revised, now sounding slightly panicked.

The sound of screeching metal confirmed Clark’s panic. He had gripped the table too tightly and had accidentally pushed his fingers through the tabletop. Clark stood abruptly from his seat and started pacing around the meeting chamber. Suddenly the mountain base felt to small. His skin crawled with the need to run.
Lex stole his DNA. Lex had used his DNA.

The other members of the League seemed to have mixed reactions. Green Arrow’s was probably the most visceral, he was the only other member on his feet face twisted with outrage and fist slammed on the table. He seemed to be yelling at Batman but Clark couldn’t focus his ears on anything other than his own heartbeat.

Aquaman was the most mild, he seemed only vaguely shocked and seemed to have moved straight on to contemplating the consequences of a... a... a..., well he didn’t seem affected. He didn’t have the same innate hatred of Lex that Arrow seemed to, and he certainly didn’t have the history with Lex that Clark did. Clark honestly wasn’t sure why he even came.

Wonder Woman looked… concerned but it seemed to be more directed towards Clark’s panic then about this new… thing. She watched him pacing side to side behind the meeting table like she knew he wanted to take off straight through the roof, and her eyes gave him the disconcerting feeling that if he tried it she would catch him by the cape and haul him back down to the ground with it. It made Clark’s pace stutter for a second.

Flash looked like he was hiding something. His fingers were tapping along the top of the table at superspeed and his leg jittered underneath it, but every time Clark turned to look at him he would freeze. It was almost like he was. No way. He was excited. The Justice League might have been relatively new but Clark had worked with the Flash enough to recognize when he was geeking out. He would never understand science types, the world could be literally ending and they’d stop to admire the ingenuity.

Finally Clark turned to look back at Batman, who had no visible reaction. He might as well have been carved from stone, like one of the smog stained gargoyles that bedecked every tacky gothic revival building in his city.

“How many are there?” Clark asked. “Are we talking half a dozen or an entire clone army?”

“There is, at this time, only one confirmed successful clone.” Batman replied.

“What does that even mean?” Clark had to resist shouting at him. He was slipping over into all out panic and was sorely tempted to shake Batman until he freaked out too.
Batman seemed to sigh without actually sighing.

“It means the data we have is limited. The source I located was not directly involved in the cloning project, they knew that Luthor was coming in to see the progress and if they had nothing to show him he would have been in and out of the lower floors more quickly.”

“Lower floors?” Wonder Woman asked. “When we investigated you said nothing of lower floors.”

“The sublevels had been carefully collapsed, and the hole backfilled. It would take days, maybe weeks to excavate and we had less than an hour to investigate the building. It would have been a waste of time.” Batman replied before continuing. “The best lead we have is the director of this project, Doctor Mark Desmond, who I’m currently tracking down, and the saved data files on this project. Luthor may have scattered his personnel but someone has a copy of this project data.”

Clark was suddenly very tired. He floated back over to his chair he sat down heavily.

“Don’t bother with Desmond.” He said running a hand through his hair, hunching over the mangled table. “He’s already dead. No way Luthor leaves an obvious loose end like that.” Clark sighed before straightening up. “Search for a backup of the files, or the computers they were stored on, and the Fortress might be able to recover whatever data was wiped.”

Batman nodded to acknowledge the statement.

“I’ve already retrieved three of the Cadmus computers, they’re in the workshop.” He said to Clark before addressing the rest of the group. “Meeting dismissed, however all members should be on alert. We don’t know which of the other labs Luthor transferred the clone to or why. Luthor could make his move at any moment.”

The group dispersed quickly, heading back to their own cities before their absence became noticeable. Though most of them seemed to have some colorful sidekick to cover for them while they were here. Maybe Clark would try getting one. He’d ask Batman about it one of these days, Gotham seemed to be teeming with his bird and bat themed mini-heroes.

Clark went to collect the computers from the workshop, all three sleek jet black laptops with no logo or other distinguishing marker. They were small enough to simply grab without loading into a specialized carrier, so within seconds Clark had scooped them up and taken off towards the fortress.
The Fortress of Solitude was as imposing and alien as ever, it always caught Clark off guard when he thought about it. The interlocking crystal spires rose high above the icy tundra, catching light in a way that made you expect to see it refract on the snow in a cacophony of color, and eerily absorbed it instead. They were the standard for Kryptonian End Age architecture, but so different from anything human, especially the warm golds and soft edges that buildings in Metropolis favored. Instead they were cold, clinical, and fitted with all the technological advancements of a highly evolved race.

Clark had a love hate relationship with the fortress for exactly this reason. It was filled with zettabytes of data of Kryptonian innovation everything from ancient agriculture to space travel and it was endlessly fascinating to Clark, he loved to make Jor-El explain “rudimentary” intrasolar space travel or “archaic” methods of exo-planetary resource mining, the kind of things that could change and better life on Earth if he could implement them.

What he hated was how the Fortress was an unceasing reminder that seemed to say “this is where you come from, this is where you belong” and Jor-El only enforced the sentiment. In addition, the fortress wasn’t just a scientific repository, it was also a cultural archive. Clark could spend days devouring the Kryptonian advancements but seeing the people? He couldn’t spend more than a few hours learning about them. Every time he tried to learn about the Kryptonian people, his people, it filled him with a nauseous guilt and sorrow.

It was easy not to mourn them when they were vague entities who had wanted to take over the Earth and commit mass genocide after cannibalising their own planet, but when they were right there in front of him? Elders sitting on crystal benches cradling Kryptonian children and telling them made up stories to remember the alphabet by, couples presenting children at their first year to be added to the family registry, Kryptonian poetry (which was exclusively sung) echoing off the crystalline walls, wedding rituals, and name day rituals, and death day rituals, and mourning rituals all played out in perfect hologram for Clark. And the more Clark saw the harder it was not to mourn a people he had never even known, the harder it was not to think about the fact that it had been less than a single generation since the loss of an entire world and no one was left to mourn it except him… And he didn’t.

As Clark landed in the entrance of the Fortress and he waited for the security to scan him, he took a moment to wonder in awe of it, and then a moment to resent the hell out of it, before moving on to do what he came for.

Clark swept into the main cavern just as it woke up around him, doors opening, lights brightening, and after a few moments Jor-El flickering into existence.

“Greetings, Kal-El.” The AI said neutrally.
“Hello Jor-El.” Clark said, walking over to a bank of crystals secondary to the control panel and setting the laptops down. “I’m not staying long, I just need you to recover whatever data was on these computers before tomorrow. It’s Sunday, so I’ll be back first thing in the morning.”

“I will do so.” Jor-El replied sounding annoyed, or maybe he said “I have become nothing” with deferential formality and joy but Clark thought that was less likely. Jor-El hated interfacing with human computers the same way astrophysicists hated using abacuses, so it was most likely annoyance with having to dumb down the Fortress system to work with the laptops, and not just Clark’s ineptitude with Kryptonian language.

“Great! Thanks!” Clark said, ignoring the AI and taking off again before it could guilt him into something. If he was lucky the laptops would be done by tomorrow and they would know exactly what they were dealing with.

Heading back to Metropolis Clark considered dropping in to yell at Lex but the rolling nausea at the thought of what he had done almost sent him flying into a mountain. Lex could wait until tomorrow when Clark had all the facts, besides twice in one day was probably overkill.

Instead when Clark arrived back in Metropolis he did his normal rounds twice looking for any trouble, but besides a few muggings and a car accident on Main Street blocking traffic, Metropolis was quiet.

It left too much time to think, and everything Clark had been shoving into a box in the back of his head began to leak out.

_Cloned_

Like he was some kind of science experiment to Lex.

Like Lex was trying to what? Replace him? Fight him? Duplicate him?

Clark wasn’t sure which was worse. Was it better if Lex was trying to kill him or add him to his
collection? None of these seemed like good options to Clark, though there was a small, dark part of him that was pleased that Lex thought he was that interesting. It was the teenage part of Clark who used to believe Lex was the definition of sophistication and intelligence and basked in whatever attention he could get. It was the hungry part of him that remembered how Lex used to look at him like he was the only thing worth looking at in any given room, and he would trade almost anything to get that back.

Clark shuddered and shoved that particular sentiment deep back into the box before speeding home to his apartment and into bed. This was a problem for future Clark, he decided hunkering down into the bed and deliberately forcing himself to sleep. Tomorrow would come too soon.

____________________________________________________________________________

Clark woke pre-dawn the next day with a pit of dread sitting heavy in his stomach. As much as he loved to laze around on the weekend it would hard to relax enough to enjoy the day. After a shower and large bowl of sugary cereal, Clark tried watching TV but couldn’t pick a channel, not interested in the Sunday cartoons and unable to watch the News networks speculate on what Lex Luthor’s unexpected press conference today would be about. After giving up on the TV, Clark tried several different books, The New York Times, half the songs in his music library, cleaning the apartment, and finally trying to meditate. He gave up the charade after the third time he checked the clock and it still blinked 9:15 am back at him.

Clark sped up to the roof and into his costume before taking off towards the fortress. If he flew slightly slower and less directly than normal it was because he was keeping an ear out for trouble. It certainly wasn’t because of the jittery anxiety and dread that had crept up on him when he left the house. He felt like Lois looked after three cups of coffee too many, like she would twitch out of her skin any moment. Extreme anxiety aside, he was Superman and sometimes he just had to do things that made him want to crawl out of his skin.

Clark arrived at the fortress sooner than he would have liked, but he couldn’t make an excuse to put this off, it was too important.

Once again pausing to be scanned and heading into the cold crystal halls Clark was surprised to find the lights already on and Jor-El waiting for him looking… pleased. Normally Clark would have to wait a few minutes for Jor-El to come online, not because it took a few minutes for the AI to come online but because inefficiency seemed to be the AI version of sulking.

“Greetings, Kal-El.” Jor-El said, using the Kryptonian tonal for “happy to see you” instead of his normal neutral tone.
Clark paused, slightly suspicious of the AI. He usually got a five minute wait for making Jor-El interface with computers, yet here Jor-El was, on and waiting and… pleased to see him?

“Greetings, Jor-El” Clark replied neutrally. “Have you finished recovering the data from the computers I brought you?”

“Of course Kal-El, displaying now.” Jor-El responded, still in a good mood.

Pleasant and being proactive? Clark didn’t have time to debug his normally cranky AI right now, so hopefully whatever this was it was temporary. Clark took one last look at his strangely behaving AI before turning to read the data Jor-El had put up for him.

It took less than ten minutes to skim everything at super speed, and by the end Clark’s feeling of horror had come back full force.

It wasn’t a clone army. It wasn’t even half a dozen. Batman had been right saying there was only one successful clone, but that one clone was at the end of a long line of murdered children. KN-017. Series K, model N, number 17. There had been literally hundreds of tries before series K, model N, and each and every one had a neat, completed file that ended in the words “Experiment Discontinued”. Clark couldn’t bear to read the column detailing “Reason for Discontinuation” for any of them. It felt wrong, sickening down to his core. These were children for God’s sake, how could Lex have been so mindlessly cruel?

Clark was standing frozen in contemplative horror when Jor-El next spoke.

“Excellent news.” He declared.

Clark’s head whipped around to look at the AI. “What?” He asked hoarsely.

Jor-El seemed almost smug now. “Excellent news.” He repeated. “Now Krypton will live again.”

Clark was lost, what was Jor-El talking about? “What?” He repeated.

Jor-El, for once, didn’t seem to mind having to explain himself.
“This clone is in a position to do what you could not. To take over Earth and transform it into New Krypton. Following which he may use this cloning process and my databases of Kryptonian genes to create a new Kryptonian race. Although he is not a perfect specimen...” Jor-El continued to explain his ‘excellent news’ but Clark had stopped listening.

The horror he felt at the experiments had mixed with his anxiety from earlier. The hairs on his arms raised and a chill went down his spine while his stomach churned and bile burned at the back of his throat like he might be sick. He couldn’t hear over the ringing in his ears, all he could think was ‘Lex is going to take over the world, then lose it’. This was the worst case scenario. This was a villain taking over the world then destroying it. Lex usually wasn’t so stupid, he liked the world.

Clark had to tell Batman.

Clark had to tell the Justice League.

They needed to know about this and deal with this immediately.

Clark launched into flight and out of the top of the fortress at top speed, the boom of breaking the sound barrier echoed across the tundra. When he slowed down he realized that he had overshot Happy Harbour and the Justice League hideout and was instead coming up on Metropolis.

Moments later Clark crashed through the reinforced, lead crystal windows of Lex Luthor’s penthouse to see a sharply dressed and completely unsurprised Lex Luthor already waiting for him.

Chapter End Notes

Omg guys I am so so sorry this took so long D: . I have just discovered that I am crap at writing clark's pov. But I'm back and next chapter is the ever cool and confident Lex.

Let me know what you think of my poor poor neglected Clark. What do you think about Jor-El? is he assholey enough? Do you love the JLA or are they way out there I honestly cannot tell anymore they are so weird already in cannon.

Well anyway, next chapter will be Kon's Debut via the press, the Clark vs Lex moment,
and more.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Saturday- Lex and Conner (post first Superman visit)

If Lex hadn’t been a literal billionaire, there would have been a good chance of Conner eating him out of house and home. Now he understood why the Kents were always on the border of bankruptcy despite being the most popular farm in Smallville.

Lex watched as Conner demolished the huge breakfast spread Mrs. Novak had laid out with stunned awe. Pancakes, waffles, crepes, omelets, scrambled eggs, french toast, regular toast, cinnamon rolls, hash browns, bacon, croissants, fruit, muffins, three different juices, coffee, and milk. Mrs. Novak had put out a buffet of breakfast foods with the assumption Conner would find what he liked, not under the assumption he would eat his way through it all.

“Shouldn’t you stop him?” Mercy asked from his left, seeming as shell-shocked as Lex.

Lex shook his head slowly. “Clark used to eat voraciously when he was younger as well. It must be a Kryptonian trait.”

Mercy looked unconvinced but returned to her cup of coffee. Lex always had breakfast with Mercy and Concord to get the daily security briefing and his schedule. Now they sat and watched as Conner ate.

“What’s my schedule Concord?” Lex asked finally, looking to his right.

Concord, as unflappable and unreadable as ever, listed out Lex and Conner’s day. They would start off getting a suit for Conner to wear at tomorrow’s press conference, then they would head over for lunch at a five star restaurant called Dynasty so that they could get enough public exposure for at least one photographer to get pictures of them together, then when they came back Lex and Conner would split up: Lex to his office to catch up on work, and Conner would go with Mercy to learn how to behave in public.

Lex nodded. “Thank you, Concord. Mercy, what is the security situation for today?” He asked turning to her.
“My teams only concern is the window seat at Dynasty. There are too many angles to cover on the Eastern side. You either need to be farther away from the window or on the Northern corner.” She told him bluntly.

Concord replied before Lex could: “The whole point of sitting on the Eastern side is the angles. We need photos for the press tomorrow.”

Mercy was unrelenting, “The press conference won’t happen if Lex is dead.”

“He’ll be fine as long as you do your job,” Concord replied coolly.

“I am doing my job. That’s why he’s sitting on the Northern side, away from the windows.” Mercy snapped.

Concord was about to reply when Lex raised his hand to silence them both. “We’ll compromise.” Lex said continuing before either of them could interrupt, “I’ll sit on the Northern side away from the windows—” Mercy looked smug “—and we’ll bribe the door staff to look the other way when the photographers come snooping.” Concord seemed content.

Lex looked over to Conner, who had stopped eating suddenly and was instead looking at Lex like he was confused.

Lex smiled reassuringly at him. “I’ll go over it again in the car with you, so don’t worry.”

Conner shook his head slightly. “That’s not it,” he said, “I feel… strange,” he then immediately turned to the side and vomited.

Lex was out of his chair and over to his son fast enough that Concord barely had time to move out of the way. Lex suddenly felt panic shoot through him. He had never seen Clark get sick without Kryptonite involved, and Lex himself hadn’t been sick since the meteor shower had super boosted his healing metagene.

How could Conner be sick? What if he was extremely vulnerable outside the lab? God, what had he been thinking taking his son outside before he checked his immune system? He had just assumed
Conner would have Superman’s invulnerability to everything.

Lex was crouched by his son’s chair internally panicking as he rubbed Conner’s heaving back. Lex was about to call for an ambulance when Conner stopped vomiting and sat up slowly.

“What was that?” Conner asked, sounding a little panicked and looking nauseous still. “Am I supposed to do that?”

A doctor, Conner should see a doctor even if it was just from overeating. Lex’s panic flared up again. He didn’t have a doctor for Conner, and he didn’t trust any doctor on staff to know about Conner until the clone boy had a rock hard identity. What did he do? Did Lex move him to the bathroom, or did they tell you not to move sick people? No that was injured people, Conner wasn’t injured but he might still be sick.

Conner looked at him worriedly, but he didn’t seem ill anymore, just disturbed.

Well at least Lex wasn’t alone in his ignorance. Now that he knew Conner was ok for the moment he stopped to think. Conner’s life had been controlled down to the tiniest detail for optimal health and growth. He’d probably never been given so much as a calorie over his nutritional requirement and here Lex was, letting him gorge himself on sugary breakfast foods.

Conner was still looking at him for answers looking more alarmed the longer it took Lex to reply, which finally snapped Lex out of his silent panic. Reassure Conner first, freak out later.

Lex passed Conner a glass of water, “Drink that to clean out your mouth.” Lex said trying to crush both of their panics. His son looked at him a little dubiously but thankfully drank it.

“Conner,” Lex said seriously, making sure his son was paying attention, “You can’t eat so much food, it might make you sick. What you just did is called vomiting, and it’s not normal and not good for you.” Lex watched his son absorb this information as he drank down the water.

“I’ve never done it before,” Conner said in response, apparently perturbed by having done it at all.

What was Lex going to do with his hapless little clone boy? “That’s a good thing, it’d be best to not do it again.” Lex told him, still rubbing his back.
“But I didn’t mean to do it!” Conner said sounding slightly offended.

“Of course not son,” Lex said placatingly, “I didn’t think you meant to do it, I’m just telling you why it happened, that way we can avoid it in the future.” Conner’s offended look faded. He was a smart kid, despite the gaps in his knowledge base, and he could easily see what Lex meant.

“Ok Father,” Conner said quietly shooting looks at Mercy and Concord as if wishing they weren’t here so he could cling to Lex.

“Alright,” Lex said, as Conner finished the last of his water. “It’s time to get ready to go out now.”

Conner’s mood changed and he began to float slightly off his chair in excitement. “We’re going outside?” He asked, troubling breakfast forgotten.

“Feet on the ground Conner.” Lex reminded gently. “Yes we’re going outside, but first you need to get dressed.”

Conner’s feet hit the ground and he shot off towards his room.

“And brush your teeth!” Lex yelled after him.

Lex stood up from beside the now-empty chair, called for a cleanup crew, and asked Concord to order him some child development and welfare books. He never wanted to feel that panicked and unsure again, he needed time for some serious research.

He then headed to his own room to dress.

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The drive to Lex’s preferred suit maker was almost peaceful. It was a beautiful day out, clear skies and unseasonably warm weather for November. Conner sat by the window across from him in the
town car happily pointing out things he recognized and asking Lex about the things he didn’t.

They arrived and were ushered straight into the fitting room. The seventy-year-old Maurizio himself came shuffling in to greet Lex in Italian, his dry old voice as comforting as ever. He, like Mrs. Novak, had been with Lex since Lex was a child. Lex introduced him to Conner and Maurizio looked him up and down before nodding to himself and ordering Conner to strip down to his underwear. Conner, of course, did so without question and Lex made a mental note to have a talk with his son about boundaries and inappropriate touches.

The measurements were quick and efficient, tomorrow’s suit would be only minimally altered from off the rack but Lex was sure that Maurizio would find a way to make it look up to Luthorian standard.

Lex thanked them both and paid the extravagant cost of the suit for tomorrow but also several custom made suits Conner would need for galas and social events, that they would fit and pick up later.

They left just in time to arrive at Dynasty for their lunch reservations at 1pm. Lex ordered something simple for both of them, he wasn’t sure how Conner would handle spicy food and he wanted to make sure they didn’t have a repeat of that morning.

Within ten minutes of being seated and having their order taken Lex spotted the photographers. Even though they were properly disguised as wait staff, they lacked the wait staff’s ability to disappear into the background and stood out. Lex spent a moment watching them move stiltedly around with his peripherals, one from The Metropolis Harald and one from The Inquisitor.

“Father look!” Conner said, abruptly jolting Lex out of his thoughts. “They have paintings on the ceiling here!” Conner bent backward over the back of his chair so he could see the artwork better.

Lex looked on indulgently and lightly tapped his toes under the table, a silent reminder not to go floating up to get a closer look.

“I bet I could paint that on our ceiling,” Conner boasted, “Cadmus included art lessons in my programming and I bet I could recreate it… but better.” His son looked smug at the idea, and Lex took a moment to enjoy this small bout of competitiveness, a new part of Conner’s personality he was hoping to encourage.

“I think you should,” Lex told him with approval, “the blue room ceiling would be a perfect canvas
if you think you can do better.” Lex couldn’t resist goading him a bit.

The food arrived, Conner chatted about his new project, on his best behavior while they ate, the photographers stayed until they paid and left. All in all, it was a major success.

Lex didn’t begin to worry until the car ride back to the office. Conner would be spending the rest of the day with Mercy, learning how to act in front of the press for tomorrow. This would be the first time they would be separated since Lex had brought Conner home. Admittedly it had only been one full day and Conner had spent half an hour with Mercy when Clark came to talk, but still.

Lex shifted in his seat watching Conner watch the world through the car windows. His beautiful, exuberant son who was so in love with the world. Suddenly Lex understood exactly where Dame Gothel was coming from. He wanted to lock Conner away in a tower and keep the entire world at bay. The world would ruin his son, just like it ruined everyone, but he could protect that innocence he could-

Lex’s train of thought was interrupted abruptly by Conner yanking his sleeve, pulling him forward to look at a bird he had just seen through the window.

Just as well.

Lex took a deep breath and let it out slowly. The nervousness still swelled in his belly and lapped at his throat but he refused to succumb. He was not going to trap his son in a tower, and not just because Conner could fly and would escape. Ideally, he would have used a large complex filled with every luxury, situated on one of the more remote south Pacific islands, oh and properly cloaked, maybe he could have mimicked the cloaking on Themysc- no. No, he was not doing that so no need to plan how he would have done it.

Lex knew how that particular fairytale ended.

Lex would have to settle for putting him in a social tower, built by the Luthor name. No one would dare to touch him once Lex had openly claimed him as his son and heir.

Lex sighed as they pulled into the parking garage, for once not pleased to be home. Conner was already up and out of the car flying loop-de-loops over to Concord who was waiting for them at the elevator. Concord watched the whole display without so much as a twitch, quietly waiting for Lex to join them in the elevator. Lex walked over slowly and a bit reluctantly with Mercy directly behind
On the way up Conner regaled Concord with his adventures, although what he considered the best parts were slightly… different.

Mercy smothered a smile as Conner told Lex’s assistant all about the mirrors in the suit shop that let you see all the way around, and a lengthy description of how the shop smelled and how many wrinkles Maurizio had, but not a single word on his new suits. Dynasty received a similar treatment.

“Guess what Concord! They have paintings on their ceilings, and Father is going to let me paint the ceiling in the blue room because I can do it better. The room was super big and there were lots of windows!” Conner told him, not stopping to breathe or see if Concord would respond.

Lex had the feeling Conner would have continued on to describe all the things he saw out the car window if they hadn’t arrived at the gym and training floor.

“Let’s go Conner.” Mercy said stepping out, “We’ve got a lot of work to do before tomorrow.”

Conner followed her out without question and Mercy grimaced a little. He was too trusting for a Luthor.

“Conner,” Lex called before his son got any further, wanting to shuffle Conner back into the elevator and just forget the whole idea of introducing his son to the world. Lex swallowed thickly, “I’ll see you at dinner.”

Conner beamed and waved at him as the elevator door shut, leaving Lex alone with Concord on the way up to his office.

He spent the rest of the day in a terrible mood. He was overly aggressive with his demands on the Columbia call, aggravated with the R&D and sharp to the Senator.

Each time he was aggravated or restless he had to stop and resettle himself. And each time he did so he had to stop and think about why he was aggravated and restless, which only made it worse. Not only was he reminded that he was worried about Conner, but he was reminded that he was going soft. His son was in the same building, less than a dozen floors down, with Lex’s own head of security. And he had super powers. Nothing was going to happen to him. ‘Conner is fine’ Lex
would rationalize, ‘he’s literally indestructible’. But then, after a moment or so, his brain would switch to playing back all the times Clark had gotten himself almost killed, and Clark was 100% pure, indestructible, Kryptonian.

So Lex spent the rest of the day on edge.

Lex finally stood and nodded at Concord as he walked out of his office towards the elevator. He would go down, pick up Conner, then sequester them both in the penthouse for dinner and maybe introduce Conner to movies. A quiet night with just them, before the whole world knew of Conner’s existence and clamored for his attention.

To his surprise, the elevator doors opened to reveal his son already inside bouncing up and down in place. Lex noted that Conner’s feet remained firmly on the floor despite the bouncing, as he stepped in, but as soon as the doors closed Conner threw himself at Lex. The hug staggered Lex back into the wall hard, but Lex couldn’t bring himself to chastise his son. Conner had waited until they were alone like he had been told, and had kept his feet on the ground like he had been told… and Lex had missed him.

So Lex wrapped his arms around Conner’s shoulders and laid his cheek on top of Conner’s unruly black hair, hugging back.

The rest of the night went quietly by. They had a small, simple dinner with Mrs. Novak, then watched the TV adaption of Warrior Angel until it was time for bed and Lex tucked Conner in in the yellow room and continued where they had left off in the Iliad. After Conner had fallen asleep Lex sat next to him in bed stroking his fringe away from his forehead.

Was he doing the right thing? There was no going back after tomorrow. He could still silence the newspaper but once he gave a press conference it was out there. Conner was out there. The world would know. The Justice League would know. That was supposed to be the point of this though, both the paper and the article. This would cement Conner’s fake history and life with the general population. It was realistic enough that no one would question it, and just scandalous enough that they would eat it up and eventually when the Justice League found out exactly where Conner came from and how it would be too late.

Lex brushed Conner’s hair back one more time before getting up and going to his own room next door.

It may not be what he wanted to do, but it was what he needed to do to keep his son safe and with him.
Lex woke early the next day to the painful and surprising impact of his son landing on him.

“Conner!” Lex said indignantly, sitting up.

Conner slid down to sprawl sideways across Lex’s lap instead of on his stomach where he had landed. The dim predawn light coming through Lex’s windows was just enough to see Conner’s bird’s nest hair and shit eating grin.

“Conner!” Lex said again making a grab for his unrepenting son. Conner slid off the bed with a thump just out of Lex’s reach and gave him the same shit eating grin, now from the floor. Lex couldn’t help the small twitch at the corner of his lips as he suppressed his smile. Conner apparently saw it though, despite the dim light, and his grin grew as he grabbed Lex’s leg and pulled him off the bed, blankets and all.

Lex looked open mouthed at his now laughing son. “Conner Jonathan Luthor!” Lex said scandalized. Conner darted forward and tapped him on the shoulder.

“Tag! You’re it!” he said untangling himself from the blankets and taking off.

Lex sat there on the floor stunned, of all the things to pick up from TV. Luthors certainly never played tag, let alone at four thirty am and in their pajamas. His lips began to curl into a smile despite himself. Luthors certainly never lost either though. Making up his mind Lex threw the blankets aside and took off after his son, Conner may be able to fly, but Lex knew the penthouse layout much better. ‘Old age and treachery will always beat youth and treachery.’ Lex thought as he ambushed his son from the top of a particularly sturdy cabinet.

This is how Concord found them when he walked in at five am sharp, his usual stoic facade slipping momentarily into shock as Conner tackled Lex onto the living room sofa, and they both laid there laughing.

Concord cleared his throat and Lex sat up, patting Conner gently on the head. “Your suits are being sent up as we speak, Maurizio is here to do any last minute adjustments. After you are showered and dressed our PR team will brief you on your prepared statements and hair and makeup will get you both ready for Conner’s first public appearance.”
The next few hours passed in a blur, everything and everyone moving around them with the speed and efficiency of seasoned professionals. Fifteen minutes until the press conference began and Lex was looking at his son all cleaned up. His stylists had trimmed the sides and swept Conner’s slightly shaggy top hair into a messy pompadour. God did he look like Clark, Lex was sure that if he just pulled down some of his bangs it would reveal another connection. He may have been Clark’s clone but even with the iconic curl down Lex doubted anyone would look at his son and see anything but a Luthor, dressed and accessorized as he was. Lex wasn’t sure what Mercy had taught Conner, but the result was almost like looking at a picture of himself in the past. Conner looked confident and relaxed, absolutely untouchable and aware of the fact. It made Lex’s heart lurch a little to see his son casually dispassionate about the world.

Conner displayed his “cool and collected” persona up until they were alone in the elevator, where he dropped it in favor of pressing up against Lex’s side.

“This is scary.” His son said quietly. Lex looked down at him, wrapping one arm around his shoulders. It probably was scary for him, he’s never met this many people at once before and never had to be so careful about his powers before. At the lab people had wanted them on constant display, Lex had only just started encouraging him to hide his gifts and this was a big test to take right out of the gates.

“Don’t be afraid,” Lex told him finally, “I will always protect you, no matter what.” Even if this went south and Conner blurted out that he was Superman’s clone Lex wouldn’t let anyone take him. He’d topple the world before giving up his son. Conner seemed to sense that Lex was being honest and relaxed against his side a moment before pulling away and resuming his nonchalant stance.

The press, set up in one of LexCorp’s larger conference rooms, was settled in and waiting for Lex and his team to enter come on stage and sit down. Most of them were talking quietly to each other, Lex had purposefully timed this conference so that the paper would be out already and the press would have an idea of what was going on. This would be their confirmation that Conner was his son and not an underaged lover or some sort of scholarship student. As Lex and Conner entered the stage, a blinding wave of flashbulbs went off. Conner did well, only freezing momentarily before moving to his seat on the right of Lex.

“Good morning.” Lex began with a cool smile, looking out over the crowd and taking note of who was here. It seemed all the major papers in the country had a representative here, even the west coast papers. Lex had only publicly announced a press conference a few hours ago so they must have pulled their political correspondents from Capitol Hill, and Lex was more than a little smug at the idea. But more important than who was here was who wasn’t. Lex could see Lois Lane front and center looking as sharp as ever with James Olsen on her left, but no Clark Kent on her right. Lex felt some of the tension leach out of him.
“I’ve called this press conference in response to several articles published in this morning's newspaper.” He didn’t bother naming names as they had all read both versions as background before coming. Lex took a moment to savor the dramatic pause as they all waited for his response, “I am therefore formally introducing you to my son, Conner Jonathan Luthor.”

The room burst into a cacophony of noise and the reporters shot to their feet pens in the air, all clamoring to be called on. Lex gestured to the first reporter, Marla Manning from the Gotham Gazette and the crowd quieted.

“Mr. Luthor, who is the mother and why have we never heard of your son before?”

Lex fixed his face in a neutral mask, “Conner’s mother is my ex-wife, Helen Bryce, as for why you’ve never heard of him it’s because I had no idea he existed until recently.”

A ripple of sound traveled through the crowd, like wolves smelling blood. The questions came fast and furious after that.

“Is this what Dr. Bryce’s alleged death fifteen years ago cover for?”

“Is Dr. Bryce still alive?”

“Did Dr. Bryce deliberately keep your son from you?”

“Will Conner be your successor in LexCorp?”

“What about Lukas and Lena?”

“Where has Conner been all this time?”

These were what they had predicted would be asked, and Lex answered them with ease.

“I can’t speak for Helen’s motives but from Conner’s records it does appear so.”
“No Helen died recently in a car accident which is why Conner was revealed to me.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Neither Lukas nor Lena were ever set to inherit my company; the discovery of Conner and my naming him as my heir makes no difference to that.”

“In France, where Helen went after faking her death.”

Lex could practically see the headlines ‘Luthor Bride Prefers Death Over Shared Custody’, ‘Secret Luthor Heir Revealed’, ‘Daddy Warbucks? No. Daddy Luthor’. His only worry was Ms. Lane who seemed to be biding her time, waiting to ask her questions.

After a few more inane questions about Helen, Lois decided the time was right.

“Mr. Luthor if I may, I’d like to ask Conner some questions. Assuming he’s not just decorative?” She said with a joking smile and tilt of her head. The rest of the journalists chuckled and Lex cursed her in his head. She was as slick as ever. He could hardly say no, and he had brought Conner along so he could answer some questions. Lex had just been hoping it would have been one of their people Concord had planted in the press to start him off easy.

“Of course, Ms. Lane.” Lex said turning to his son.

Conner cleared his throat and gave the crowd a nervous grimace of a smile before focusing on Lois.

“Hello Conner,” She said smiling at him.

“Hello Ms. Lois Lane,” Conner replied, which was either his son’s first power play or his natural awkwardness. Either way, Lois now knew that Conner had been briefed specifically on her, and would have to think twice about how she tried to trap him.
The smile didn’t falter, but her eyes flickered momentarily over to Lex before settling back on Conner. “How are you today?” She asked, starting off easy.

Conner stifled the urge to shift and instead returned Lois’s smile. “I’m well, thank you.” He told her.

Another wave of flashbulbs went off. The press had apparently realized that Conner’s smile was going to sell.

“And you?” Conner asked back, forgetting himself and shifting in his seat nervously. The press was charmed already, Conner had spoken only half a dozen words so far and they were ready to eat him up. Lois Lane, of course, being the exception.

Her expression hadn’t changed, she had the poker face of a general and probably learned it from one. “I’m very well, thank you,” She said smiling slightly brighter “is this your first press conference?”

Conner’s brow wrinkled “Yes, uh, I wasn’t really famous before this. More, um... normal?” A murmured laugh went through the crowd and Conner darted a glance over to his father. Lex only smiled encouragingly. “It’s harder than it looked on TV,” Conner said after a moment.

“Well, you’re doing great,” Lois said encouragingly. “Do you find America to be very different from what you’re used to?”

“Um yes very,” Conner answered. He’d be carefully briefed on the details of his life in France but it was best to avoid the topic all together if possible.

“What is the strangest part?” Lois was just getting warmed up, she didn’t expect Conner to trip up here she was simply building up to whatever crafty trap she would lay.

“Well, having a billionaire for a father is new,” Conner said smiling a little slyly as the crowd again laughed. Lex was so proud, his little boy was already learning how to play them like a fiddle.

“Do you like Metropolis so far?” Lois’s questions were getting slightly quicker, even though her smile still didn’t change.
“I haven’t had the chance to see much yet, to be honest, everything has been such a rush since my mother died.”

“Did your mother ever bring you here to visit? She was after all born here.”

“No, we made several trips to the US when I was younger but mostly to the west coast.” Conner answered smoothly even as Lois’s questions got more pointed.

“Did she keep you away from Metropolis to protect you from her bad relationship with your father, or to protect you from your father’s feud with Superman?”

Conner’s brow wrinkled in confusion and Lex’s gritted his teeth. She could have implied something worse, but not much, seeing as Superman was the end all authority on good and evil these days. He could interrupt at this point, denying it, but Lois would be able to pull up a dozen examples off the top of her head, and he’d have to end the entire press conference in order to stop her from telling Conner. No, the best course of action was to answer the question himself.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about but-” Conner started before Lex gently touched his arm to signal he would take this question. Conner nodded but still looked perplexed. Lex would not be as kind to Lois as Conner had been.

“Ms. Lane,” he began, “You know better than most that this is a dangerous city to live in,” Lex’s smile had gone slightly sharp and dangerous, “Even people on the best of terms with ‘The Man of Steel’, such as yourself, still get caught up in the wide path of destruction that his enemies wreak around him. And while he would never directly harm my child, it’s not exactly safe to live in a city with Superman smashing through walls while tangling with intergalactic threats, now is it?” Lex’s smile was sharp enough to cut glass now and he could see Lois gearing up to fight.

“Any further questions from the floor?” Lex asked, clearly dismissing her before she could give her Superman’s Number One Fan speech.

The rest of the press conference went smoothly, with Lex taking back control. Most of the questions about Conner had petered out and instead they took the remaining time to ask him about ongoing projects and upcoming events while they had him on the spot. Lex answered them quickly and thoroughly all the while keeping tabs on Conner out of the corner of his eye. His son has gone from looking perplexed to sullen as time went on, settling on staring at Lex intensely while he finished answering questions.
Finally, Concord signaled the last question and Lex and Conner stood to leave. Despite being displeased with Lex, Conner still smiled and waved at the press as they took their final wave of photographs.

Conner was thankfully silent until they had entered they entered the elevator, but as soon as the doors slid closed he turned to Lex. “Do you have a feud with Superman? Is he going to come after me? Does he hate me?” Lex turned to his son and opened his mouth to respond with a quick denial, but something in Conner’s expression stopped him. He would know. Lex didn’t know how, but if he lied to his son right now Conner would know. Lex swallowed down the denial like a bitter pill and turned to face the doors of the elevator.

“Superman and I…” he started, unsure how to explain without making Conner think he was the bad guy. For once he wanted someone to believe in him without any reservation or second guessing. “We used to be friends… Best friends, but he… I… we kept so many secrets. He was the first person who ever looked at me and didn’t see my father first and I… well…” Lex sighed. Fuck, this was not going well. Fucking Lois Lane.

The elevator chimed as they reached the penthouse and Lex stepped out, Conner following him reluctantly to the living room, but stopped at the door instead of following Lex in.

How does he explain to his son that he wanted to know everything about the strange country boy who looked at him and saw him? That he wanted to know so badly that his curiosity had morphed into an obsession to the point where Lex resorted to some dirty tactics to try and find out everything about him. How to explain that the obsession had never ceased and that Lex would swallow Clark whole if he could. Half his criminal history is directly linked to Clark.

“We fell apart,” Lex said finally sitting down heavily in the living room armchair, “we spent half our time together fighting and the other half lying to each other’s faces.”

“Superman lied to you?” Conner asked sounding begrudgingly intrigued. His son didn’t look convinced, but he was curious enough to wait for a further explanation. It would be easy for Lex to forget that underneath Conner’s happy go lucky attitude was superpowered brain and an implanted killer instinct.

“But Superman never lies!” Conner said, firmly suspicious now, “He’s all about ‘Truth, Justice, and The American Way!’.”

Lex smiled wryly at the cliche, “Well firstly, I knew Superman before he was Superman, when he was still young and hiding the fact that he was an alien. Secondly, don’t believe everything you hear
about how good and pure he is. He lies all the time just like everybody else.”

Conner looked shocked now, and a little outraged. Conner’s mouth dropped open, no doubt to deliver a biting retort when the room erupts into chaos as Superman himself comes crashing through the living room windows.

Conner’s face goes from outraged to dumbstruck in an instant, but Clark doesn’t seem to notice him, his gaze is furious and locked on Lex like he’s the only thing in the room. Flattering, but stupid of him. Lex can thankfully already see Mercy pulling Conner out the door, the boy too shocked to resist, as Clark stalks forward. Lex does nothing but smiled blandly at him even as Clark reaches down and hauls him up by his suit jacket. As confrontations go, this one was going to be a doozy.

Chapter End Notes

Heya~ sorry it took so long but this chapter IS so long, twice as long as a normal chapter is at least.

Tell me what you think of the press conference that was the hardest part for me to write and let me know if you like more spaced out long chapters or quicker updated with shorter chapters.

Thanks as always to my glorious beta itsoktobemarty for tolerating my terrible first second and third tries.

shout-out to my commenters, who are literally the only thing that keeps me from dropping this fic like it's hot.
Lex took a moment to appreciate Clark’s control. Even as angry as he was Clark was carefully holding Lex still by his jacket where he wouldn’t cause any damage with his iron grip. Lex could take it, in fact, he was one of the only meta-humans capable of surviving Superman at full force, not that he intended to push Clark that far.

“You realize this is assault, don’t you Superman?” Lex asked detachedly as if he wasn’t dangling two inches off the floor.

Clark looked like he was caught between shaking Lex and skipping straight to the shouting accusations part. Thankfully he decided that shouting was priority and Lex’s suit was saved.

“Alexander Joseph Luthor!” He shouted, “What have you done?!”

“Well, Mother, I’m afraid you’ll have to be-” Lex started only to be cut off by Clark.

“No! I don’t want to hear your bullshit Lex! I want you to explain how you could murder, in cold blood, over a thousand children!” Clark accusations were tinged with desperation and the slightest bit of pleading. That’s how he always got Lex, Clark’s words always said ‘You dastardly villain!’ but his face and tone said ‘Tell me it’s not true!’. It was emotional whiplash.

“Oh don’t exaggerate,” Lex drawled only to be interrupted once again.

“I read the files, Lex! You labeled them all like some sick lab experiment, like, like they were meaningless products with serial numbers for sorting convenience!” Clark had backed them up until Lex was pressed against the wall next to the windows and had it been another time, Lex would have been more than happy for Clark to press him against a hard surface, even considering the circumstances a thrill ran down his spine. As it was he snapped, he was sick of this endless game, going around in an infinite cycle of accusation.

“You didn’t read shit, Clark!” He yelled right at the other man’s face, “You skimmed half of the documents, at superspeed, then came crashing through my window with endless accusations, just like you always do!”
Clark released Lex and stepped back, looking like Lex had punched him while wearing his Kryptonite ring, but Lex wasn’t done.

“You never change, do you? Yet I’m always the bad guy aren’t I? You’ve been the same since you were sixteen, and so desperate to hide your secret that anyone who got anywhere close to finding out became collateral damage!” Lex shouted. This fight had been a long time coming, and Lex couldn’t maintain the emotional distance for their usual cat and mouse anymore.

“Everyone who got close to you for five years ended up in mortal peril,” Lex continued, even as Clark rallied to respond, “half the time I was the one cleaning up your messes, and still ended up being blamed for them!”

“Don’t act innocent Lex! You caused half of those incidents!” Clark yelled back, fists balled by his sides and glaring at Lex from a foot away.

“News flash Clark! I’m not my father, despite what YOUR father said! And I’m not responsible for his actions!”

“No, but you are JUST LIKE HIM!” Clark yelled, then immediately regretted it.

The sudden ringing silence was almost more deafening than the earlier shouting match.

Lex slowly straightened and re-buttoned the jacket of his suit, face wiped blank.

“Lex I didn’t mean-” Clark started quietly, reaching out towards the older man.

“I think that you’ve made your meaning perfectly clear.” Lex said, sidestepping Clark and walking farther down the wall he had been pressed against. “After all we both know exactly what kind of person my father was, and well if I’m just like him,” pausing Lex pressed a panel in the wall revealing a hidden compartment lined with lead, “then I must be,” he said with emphasis pulling out a ring and a gun, “beyond even your help, hmmm?”

Clark, who was close enough to feel the effects of the Kryptonite as soon as Lex had opened the compartment, staggered. Suddenly busting in without telling the Justice League first seemed like a
bad idea.

Lex stepped forward and Clark collapsed a little more, once more grabbing onto Lex’s suit jacket, only this time it was to hold himself up.

“I think,” Lex said, with the kind of deadly calm Clark had only ever directed at Lionel, “that this little game we’ve been playing is over.” This close, Clark could see how pale Lex had gone, he imagined he was about as pale with how close the Kryptonite was, minus the green veining that would be creeping up his face. Lex was serious.

“Let me make this very clear,” Lex started raising the gun high enough that it caught Clark's eye and caused him to stagger pushing Lex back into the wall, “If you presume to come crashing into my home again-”

Lex’s threat was ironically interrupted by a crashing sound. Lex only sighed, of course the Justice Friends had to interrupt, the only surprise was that they came up the elevator instead of through the gaping whole in Lex’s living room. Only when Lex turned to see who had come to the rescue, his blood ran cold. It wasn’t the Justice Lackeys at all, it was Conner sprawled across the broken glass remains of the living room coffee table bleeding with green veins climbing up his face.

“Conner!” Lex shouted knocking Clark aside and starting towards his son, only to have Conner flinch away from him, curling up into himself. Lex froze for a minute his panic overtaking his common sense before he bolted back to the still open hidden compartment and shoved both the gun and ring inside and slammed it shut.

Clark heaved a relieved breath that Lex ignored in order to run back to his son.

“Conner, Conner, Conner, Conner,” Lex repeated on the edge of frantic, collapsing onto the floor regardless of the glass and pulling his son into his lap. Lex ran his hands over Conner looking for the source of the blood only to find the cuts already healed into thin pink lines.

Conner looked up at Lex with wide frightened eyes. “What was that?” He sounded so afraid, “I saw him attacking you, and so I started flying towards you only, only when I got close I felt sick, and I-” Conner pulled in a heaving breath, “I couldn’t fly, I couldn’t, I just crashed, why couldn’t I fly?” Conner panicked.

“Shh, shh shhh...” Lex shushed him as he brushed his son’s hair away from his forehead, “It’s okay
“It’s not ok!” Conner said pushing at Lex’s hands and trying to sit up, “What was that?!”

It was reassuring in its own way when Conner succeeded, because it meant that he had recovered his super strength, though that meant that-

“Funnily enough I figured if you were going to create a clone to kill me you would have weeded out that particular flaw,” Clark said standing up from where he had been slumped against the wall, “after all you had thousands of tries to practice on.”

Lex shot him a dirty glare, “Don’t think so highly of yourself Superman, I wanted to kill you you’d be dead. As for your ‘thousands of tries,’ it was just over a thousand, and most of them ended unsuccessfully in the DNA stage.”

“What do you mean?” Clark said suspiciously.

“I meant what I said. This was groundbreaking work, the first thousand tries or so didn’t work. This kind of work has only been successfully done once with humans, by my father as you recall, so adding a literal alien element to it made for an extraordinary challenge.” Lex said venomously.

“You wouldn’t have done it if it wasn’t guaranteed Lex, I know you.” Clark replied folding his arms across his chest looking like his mind was made up, “You’re a businessman through and through, and there’s no way you would have spent this much time and money if it wasn’t going to work.”

Lex sighed through his teeth, the air coming out in a hiss of frustration. Honestly, it was like arguing with a brick wall. A brick wall who had already made his mind up. “If you think that then you have a fundamental misunderstanding of both business and science work.” Lex knew Clark wasn’t stupid, those basics only escaped him when Lex was involved, “Business is all about risk and reward, nothing is ever guaranteed and the higher the risk the higher the reward, and scientific advance is always a risk. The beginning of any new scientific endeavor is marked by exponential failure, this project was no different.”

“Well if you didn’t do it to kill me why take the risk?” Clark asked looking unconvinced.

“Because I wasn’t the one taking the risk,” Lex said smoothly, “The US government was more than
happy to pay the price for this particular project.”

“You’re lying,” Clark pronounced with a hard stare, “The US government has an official stance of friendship with me.”

Lex smiled rather nastily at him, “Yes, officially they do, however; unofficially you are the biggest potential threat they could possibly imagine.”

“I would never-” Clark started only for Lex to interrupt.

“Oh please,” he said rolling his eyes, “Even if you could promise to be the same goody two shoes for the rest of your life how many other ways could you be turned against them?”

“I-”

“Mind controlled? Check.”

“That’s not-”

“Red or Black kryptonite? Check.”

“I can avoid-”

“Blatant manipulation by a bad guy? Check.”

“Hey!” Clark objected, looking flustered, “I’m not that easy to fool!”

Lex just gave him an unimpressed look.

Clark paused to pull himself together. “Well even if they condoned it, it’s still human experimentation-”
“Alien-” Lex chimed in, but Clark spoke over him.

“Human experimentation using children. Even if most of them didn’t work what about the ones that did? What about that thing?” Clark said pointing to where Conner was sitting in stunned silence next to Lex. Lex inhaled sharply, he had forgotten in his anger that his son was sitting right next to him taking in all the unsavory details of his creation. Clark continued, “Surely that’s not the first one that worked, you wouldn’t have taken it out of the lab if it wasn’t perfect.”

“That’s not true, I-” Lex objected but it was Clark’s turn to interrupt.

“There must have been several full grown ones before this series that you decided weren’t quite good enough,” Clark said floating off the floor and blazing righteously. “Just because they didn’t meet your standards doesn’t mean they weren’t children and didn’t deserve to live.” Clark continued.

Lex swallowed against the dryness in his mouth and the lump in his throat. He had never given much thought to the models before Conner, Dr. Desmond had called them unstable in the series before so he had dismissed them an in-viable. But Conner was seventeenth in his series, KN-017, which meant that there were sixteen other little boys with Clark’s face and Lex’s eyes.

Lex turned to his son, his wide-eyed, horrified son. “I didn’t know I would-,” Lex tried to explain, reaching out to Conner.

“You didn’t know what Lex? That you would develop a conscience?” Clark said furiously, and Conner flinched away, flying up and towards Superman instead.

Lex stood, “Conner wait, I can explain-” he started, but stopped as Conner shook his head back and forth with growing vigor.

“I thought- I mean- you were there to rescue me, you rescued me, except-” Conner had reached Clark’s side and reached out to grab his arm like he usually did to Lex when he wanted attention. Only Clark flinched away. Conner then turned his lost look full on at Clark, and Lex would admit he was selfishly relieved when Clark made it worse by floating away looking like he was waiting for Conner to attack.

“Stay over there,” Clark said, voice hard and authoritative. The look he was giving Conner made Lex’s blood boil. He had just spent the last ten minutes yelling at Lex about how the clones were
children, but now he was looking at the child in front of him like he was an abomination. Clark ignored Conner’s further wounded look and instead turned back to Lex and floated over to him.

“Lex Luthor, I’m taking you in for your crimes.” He said, reaching for him.

“Just fucking try it,” came the unexpected but unbelievably welcome voice of Mercy who was standing just inside the doorway flanked by Hope and Charity and outfitted to the teeth in shieldable kryptonite weapons. Unlike Lex’s own gun, which was meant as a temporary show of force, his bodyguards carried lead lined cartridges to avoid the long-term effects of kryptonite exposure. They could, and would do some serious damage to Clark if he tried anything.

“Conner come here.” Mercy said with absolute authority.

“I don’t-” Conner began to object until Mercy turned her eagle-eyed glare on him.

He quickly floated over and the security team opened up to encompass him revealing Justice and Chastity positioned just outside the door.

Clark sighed annoyed, “Ms. Graves,” he greeted, “we both know you can stop me with force, but I’ll just leave and come back with the police force and The Justice League.”

Mercy gave him an unrelenting stare, “You don’t have any hard evidence, Superman, the police won’t be able to get a warrant, and as for The Justice League, I think we can handle them.”

Clark gave her a hard smile, “I reckon a judge will take my word for it Ms. Graves, and I doubt even your team can handle the full force of The Justice League.”

Mercy returned Clark’s smile with a cutting one of her own, “Just try it Mr. Kent-” she emphasized, the T coming out hard and crisp, and Clark flinched away, “-and I’ll blow your secret identity sky high.”

“My secret identity isn’t something you can use to blackmail me with in order to keep me from doing justice, it’s not worth-” Clark said gathering himself up into a righteous rage.
“Your secret identity may not be worth sacrificing justice for, but consider this,” Mercy said walking forward until she was standing slightly in front of Lex, “No legitimate court of law would convict Lex Luthor with your word and your word alone as evidence, and no illegitimate court of law would convict Lex Luthor at all,” she said staring Clark down, “You are, of course, more than welcome to sacrifice your secret identity and expose everyone you know and love to your enemies on the off chance that Lex will get a slap on the wrist for bad ethics while working on a government contract, but you won’t be taking Lex with you now. So you might as well leave.”

All joking aside, this kind of fierce and ferocious loyalty was why Lex employed Mercy. Looking back at his security team who stood at the door looking like they wanted nothing more than to have a go at the most powerful being on the planet all Lex could feel was an overwhelming gratitude.

Clark, as stubborn as he was, was apparently not stupid. He hovered in place for what seemed like an eternity. He looked like he was carefully mulling over every angle he could think of. Mercy hadn’t been just bragging, with the amount of manpower Lex employed in his security plus the technology they were equipped with, they could go toe to toe with The Justice League and hold their own, which would reflect badly on the league. The police in Metropolis, while nowhere near as bad as, say, Gotham, were still not above sway from Lex’s money and connections. Overall it was a bad idea and Clark knew it, if he was going to start a full force league battle with Lex he needed more than a spur of the moment decision to confront him, he needed to talk to the league first.

Finally, Clark seemed to make up his mind and with one last disapproving look at Lex flew out the gaping hole he had crashed in through earlier.

Mercy did a quick perimeter check, trotting around the edges of the room, before returning to Lex’s side and holstering her gun, “Well fuck,” she said, “that couldn’t have gone much worse could it?”

Lex just gave her an exhausted look, thinking of his son and his betrayed looking eyes, and sighed, “No. No, it fucking could not have.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello my lovelies~ You guys are honestly the best! All of your fantastic comments have SUPER motivated me so as a reward here is the next chapter at lightning speed! A million thanks to my beta itsoktobemarty for editing this so quick.

Let me know what you think of this argument, who is in the right? and poor poor conner, I know you love that sweet and happy little boy so what do you think of me being a little mean to him?

Anyway thanks for all the love~ It's amazing to see people enjoying this fic! <3<3<3
Chapter 7

Clark flew circles around Happy Harbour, which he figured was the Kryptonian version of pacing around the hall before entering a room. He messed up. He messed up and no one would be quick to forgive him, not the Justice League and certainly not Lex. He should have read the files all the way through, or sent them to Batman to be analyzed; and definitely should have asked the Justice League for backup. The list of mistakes was honestly a little daunting but if he was honest with himself (which he tried to be) telling Lex he was just like Lionel took the cake. Lex would forgive the window breaking, the accusations, and the attempted arrest, but not the comparison to Lionel.

Clark was coming up on a lap above the mountain.

He should own up to his mistakes and tell the Justice League about confronting Lex as soon as possible… or in ten more minutes, it wouldn’t make that much of a difference. Just as he started a new lap above the mountain a golden rope whipped out and caught his ankle. Diana was standing on the peak and she had apparently lost patience with his pacing.

He could keep going and take her on a ride with him, but so far Diana had proven that she could take him in a fight with him, and make it hurt for him. Clark gazed out at the harbour with longing before reluctantly floating down to meet Diana.

She raised an eyebrow at him looking unimpressed. “You are making the citizens of the harbor anxious of impending attack with your hovering, and making the Batman increasingly irritable.”

Clark sighed, “I didn’t think Batman could get any more irritable,” he said as a sad attempt at lightening the mood. If the look Diana gave him was any indication it only made her more concerned.

As they walked down the mountaintop toward the hangar opening Diana watched him out of the corner of her eyes.

“Does the news of the clones truly weight upon you so heavily, Man of Steel?” She finally asked, after what seemed like a weighted silence.

Clark grimaced and considered just saying yes. That’s the thing bothering him, the only thing. After
a moment however, he decided Diana would catch him out in an instant and this was his opportunity for a practice round before Bruce. So he confessed, “I broke into LexCorp and confronted Lex...and it...didn’t go very well.” in one quick breathless rush.

Diana only looked at him consideringly. Her thoughts on Lex were a puzzle to him, she herself didn’t adhere to the laws of man and so rarely saw why they thought he was in the wrong. It made him defensive because she didn’t know Lex like Clark did, but with that thought came the memory of Lex’s rant, then the memory of Lex’s face going blank popped into his head… maybe he didn’t know Lex as well as he thought, he only knew him enough to hurt him.

Despite his surety that he was at the very least mostly right, Clark felt guilt swell in him.

Diana just watched him think, letting him wrestle with his thoughts and emotions without interruption. She remained silent all the way until they reached the hangar but stopped him just before he went in.

“I am unsure of what in your past makes Luthor your enemy,” she said gripping his shoulder, “but nothing in his present, even this incident, seems worth such great animosity from you.”

Clark stared at her, mouth gaping. Was she serious? Lex had literally cloned him! He’d conducted dozens of illegal experiments, destroyed lives, and probably did some other nefarious things that Clark hadn’t found out about. But Diana just calmly walked away, and despite his immediate outrage, the overwhelming feeling after that initial surge was guilt, as Lex’s voice echoed back to him, ‘I’m always the bad guy, aren’t I?’.

Clark shook his head and walked into Secret Sanctuary. He would think about this later, now he had to face the music.

When he arrived he found everyone already assembled, which was strange since it hadn’t been enough time since he left Metropolis for Batman to find out about the break-in and gather everyone. Before he could consider it further Batman spoke.

“Everyone knows why we’re here,” he said.

Clark certainly didn’t.
“Lex Luthor has played his hand where the clone is concerned, so now we strategize how best to handle the situation.” Batman made serious eye contact with each member, or eye to mask contact really.

What could Lex have done in the last half hour or so? Clark knew he was quick to move when necessary but he preferred to prepare if he could. He had plenty of time to do so if he wanted, after making it abundantly clear that Clark couldn’t touch him.

Batman continued, “I have compiled files on all the released information on the clone boy, they have been sent to you for your own files.”

Here Clark interrupted, “Released information? Why would Lex release information about the clone?”

The rest of the league turned to look at him, while Batman paused.

“Why did you think we’re here Superman?” Batman asked, giving nothing away.

Clark was tempted to squirm in his seat but answered clearly none the less, “Because I broke into LexCorp to confront Lex and it went badly and you found out about it.”

If Batman were the type to allow personal tics he would have been pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Is that not why we’re here?” Clark asked.

Batman pinned him with a look that said ‘I’ll deal with you later’ before explaining.“I called the league together in light of this morning’s press conference where Lex Luthor announced the debut of his ‘son’ Connor Jonathan Luthor.”

Clark immediately flinched, Lex had stolen his dad’s name for a science experiment.

Batman ignored him and continued on, “This, of course, puts a spotlight on the boy and adds credibility to him.”
Green arrow scoffed, “Please, who would every believe Luthor had a kid, let alone a good looking one.” He said the last part with a wink directed at Clark, but all Clark could think of was how good looking Lex was when they were younger. Between the too tight shirts and the perfectly tailored pants he always knew Lex leaned more towards a 10, even with the baldness. People would definitely believe his son would be attractive. It had certainly led to more than one awkwardly timed teenage hard on on his part.

Batman answered, “The world will believe it, especially since he practically announced it as a scandal. The general public will eat the story up just for the entertainment value. Not only that, but Lex has produced a solid background for the boy, I have Oracle looking into it but if it maintains his usual pattern of work we won’t be able to break it.” Here Batman paused looking almost annoyed at Lex, for being consistently thorough.

“So then what are our options?” Aquaman asked, “Do we confront him with the evidence we have while the story is still new and unstable, or wait until we have enough evidence at the risk of letting Luthor build his own defenses?”

Batman nodded at the question and looked to Clark. “Have you retrieved the information from those drives?”

Clark nodded, “They contain mostly journals detailing the cloning attempts and progression as well as why they were killed. There wasn’t, however; any information on how, when, where, or who did the experiments. We only know it was Lex because we caught him mid cleanup, and we’ve seen the clone.”

Batman frowned, like realizing that on its own it proved only the number of clone attempts.

Flash slouched in his seat and sighed.

Clark glared at Flash before snapping, “It’s better not to know how he did it, so people don’t try it again Flash!” he couldn’t believe the man would be so insensitive.

Flash sat up straight and gave him a look like he was crazy. “No, it’s not!” He said. “This is groundbreaking research that could change an entire branch of science!”

“You’re not even allowed to clone humans!” Clark argued back, “It’s against the law!”
“So is being a vigilante,” Flash snapped back, “and I wasn’t talking about cloning humans, I was talking about the splicing of DNA, successful cell growth, incubating a fetus outside of a womb! This could change everything for people who can’t have kids, or for babies born prematurely! You just don’t get it Superman!” Flash was now standing hands planted on the table glaring at Clark. “For every illegal experiment Lex Luthor does, he also manages to patent and utilize legally almost every aspect of that research. It’s groundbreaking for whatever area of science it’s in!”

Clark was standing too now. “That doesn’t make it right!” he yelled

“No!” Flashed yelled back and waved his arms dramatically, “It doesn’t! But science always takes whatever data it can get despite where it came from! And if we don’t like how it was done, or don’t approve the ethics we prevent that method in the future!”

Clark glared at him, but he had nothing to say. He could still remember learning about the medical advances made by Nazi death doctors in concentration camps. He could also still feel the sickening slimy feeling that made the knowledge feel tainted despite the good it did now.

“That’s enough,” Batman said staring at both of them until they sank into their seats, “we aren’t here to discuss Luthor’s questionable research techniques. We need to decide what actions we could take against, what could be, a weapon of mass destruction. Superman, you went in this morning, did you see how they interacted?”

Clark looked to the side to think about it. Lex had snapped and was about to do God knows what to him until that clone arrived. Then he had seemed...frantic, not in the cold, furious way he was when a project went awry, but in the panicky way he was when he had lost the watch from his mother. Like the clone was something important and fragile. He definitely tolerated it when the clone flew off away from him and towards Clark so either he wasn’t very strict or it wasn’t worth the effort to command him at the moment. Clark could see the heartbroken expression on his face as clearly as if he were there still. Clark had assumed it was from his accusations beforehand but it could just be...

“I’m not sure,” Clark answered, eyebrows knitted together. “He admitted he made him as part of a government contract to stop me… but the way he acts… I don’t know.”

“Did he specify what agency he had a contract with?” Batman asked.

“No,” Clark replied, “do you think he was lying about the contract?” He added hopefully.
“No.” Batman told him outright.

“Then why did you want to know?” Clark asked, a little miffed.

Batman did not look impressed. “Because then I would know who to hack to get more information on the project.”

“That makes sense, I guess.”

Aquaman cleared his throat, “As interesting as this additional information is it still doesn’t help us decide whether to act now or to wait.”

“We should act now,” Clark said without hesitation. “We know he’s guilty.”

“And risk him sliding through our fingertips when we take him to court with no evidence? No way, we should wait.” The Flash said.

“If we give him any more time the slimey bastard will find a way to slip out regardless of the evidence, just like he always does.” Green Arrow added harshly.

“It is in his tendency to escape justice and he will try to do so either way. The only thing to be gained with speed, in this case, is to prevent possible damage he could cause.” Aquaman said.

“Yeah, that’s kinda the point of being a superhero.” Green Arrow said snidely.

“Yes, but I suspect Luthor will not stir up trouble with the clone boy until his cover story is concrete, and in that time we can learn much about this clone’s powers and Luthor’s plans for him.”

There was a slight pause while everyone considered.

“I agree with Aquaman in this,” Wonder Woman finally spoke, “Luthor will reveal his plans in time,
and trying to spring his traps before they are ready has only made him more sly and vicious in the past.” She said.

Green Arrow flinched and bared his teeth. It was typical for the man to be over eager to get at Lex after just such an instance he had almost cost him the life of his sidekick, Speedy. The wound was still fresh and he was unlikely to forget or forgive anytime soon.

Wonder Woman was right though. Most of the time Lex didn’t bother antagonizing them unless they disrupted his plans for something.

Batman nodded in agreement, “Then it’s agreed, we will build our case against Luthor before anyone” Batman stared straight at Clark, “goes after him again.”

Clark didn’t remember agreeing and by the look on Arrow’s face neither did he, but he also couldn’t come up with a better solution… and he was already in trouble for acting without thinking it through. Maybe what he needed in order to figure out this situation with Lex was some time and space. Even if saying it like that made them seem like an arguing couple rather than arch nemesi.

As the members scattered Batman gave Clark one last hard look as if reminding him not to do anything foolish before disappearing up to the hangar and the Batplane.

Clark sighed and remained seated after everyone left. Here was as good of a place as any to get some thinking done, and he needed to think. He felt like a child, scolded by everyone about Lex. They didn’t have the same history with Lex, he thought, pensively. But maybe that was the problem, he had too much history. Too much personal bias. Lex had been doing questionable things in his youth… though actually most of those were his father’s projects and Lex was kinda supervising, except the ones that were hidden.

Well, that was most of the projects actually, Lionel was a sneaky bastard. So maybe it was more the people Lex hurt. Lana, Chloe, Pete, Lois, his parents, him.

Lex wasn’t that way at the beginning though. Clark could still remember how Lex was early on in their friendship, wary but hopeful. He used to look at Clark like he couldn’t believe he existed but he was glad none the less, and Clark knew he used to look at Lex like he knew all the answers. Thinking back on it Lex had been so young . Twenty-one and basically exiled to the middle of nowhere with no friends and no one to help him. Sure he had seemed grown up but Lionel’s method of pushing Lex into adulthood was closer to the Spartan method than the Kent’s. He had probably never learned how to properly interact with people, just learned how to hide it better.

Clark let out a deep sigh of frustration. Lex did have his good points. He had helped Chloe out of
half of her shenanigans for The Torch when they went downhill fast. He had also rescued Clark from a few tight spots, and stayed friends with him despite what some people in Smallville had said about it… what everyone in Smallville had said about it, actually.

There was that guilt again welling up in him with the remembered frustration of trying so hard to convince his dad that Lex wasn’t like Lionel, of hearing the townspeople still gossip about Lex after he had saved the plant and all their jobs, the anger and shame of doing nothing to stop Lionel when he wiped Lex’s mind to protect his own secret.

So he had regrets. But that didn’t mean Lex was innocent. He may not have started out a villain but he certainly gave people valid reasons to believe he was. It was in his nature to sneak and deflect (thanks Lionel). He kept secrets and told lies. He obsessed over Clark in a way that got worse each year. That room, the room, with all the creepy things Lex had collected about Clark and his life.

He went too far with everything, even when he was trying to help.

Over the year Clark had caught him at dozens of different crimes, but to be honest most of them were white collar and affected no one but other multi-billionaires, which itself was enough to irritate Ollie and Bruce who were clearly made of money. Lex had some more serious crimes as well though.

What he did to Speedy was a harsh reminder that he was dangerous and could deal serious damage, and it wasn’t a lesson for the sarcastic sidekick but for his mentor. Oliver had gone after Lex with no holds barred one day and Lex had let it seem like he was cornered before he tipped everything on Ollie’s head. He had found out their secret identities and while they had been undermining him in costume he was undermining their costumeless counterparts.

Roy still wouldn’t talk about it, but Lex had somehow manipulated him into taking drugs. In the time they were working at cracking Lex, Roy got worse and worse and when he fell apart Lex made his move against Oliver’s company. He lost billions, almost had to give up the company, and while he was running around trying to save everything Roy had to recover alone. Oliver lost Roy completely and nothing he had said or done in the last two years had made the boy willing to listen. Now Roy was some rebel vigilante running around with Bruce’s rebel son and another girl, and Ollie considered it a vendetta.

Lex had also been implicated as a connection to the gun trade in Columbia, and the insurgents in Libya. He could argue government contracts and world politics all he wanted but some of those were just plain power plays.

Clark sighed and spun his chair in place. Lex’s voice was still ringing around in his head.
‘I must be beyond even your help, hmmm?’

‘...came crashing through my window with endless accusations, just like you always do.’

‘Half the time I was the one cleaning up your messes, and still ended up being blamed for them!’

‘I’m not my father, despite what YOUR father said.’

It was a mess, and Lex definitely caused some of it, but maybe not as much as Clark had thought.

Lex was wrong about the cloning though. Even if most of them were smears of DNA, but some of them lived past that. Some of them were kids that he at best, cared nothing about, and at worst deliberately threw away. Maybe Clark could forgive the whole ‘stole my DNA to do it’ part, but not the kids.

Clark finally got up, pushing his chair back to where it had been at the table and walked towards the exit. Only time would tell with this whole clone thing, so Clark would wait and see. Maybe Lex really was beyond saving.

Chapter End Notes

AHAHAHAHAH SORRY about that. Its taken way longer than usual but I've just moved to a different state and started a new job hunt (wish me luck). So here is some indecisive Clark let me know what you think will be his deciding factor if Lex can be saved or not.

hopefully the JL isn't crazy ooc, I'm never sure how to write them. Next section in Lex dealing with the fallout of Conner finding out he wasn't a ~Love~ baby. Def let me know your thoughts on these two hot messes.
Lex was stuck, standing in front of a door. After Clark had left he had immediately rushed down to the security team’s floor but had ended up pausing just before bursting in. How exactly do people explain their mistakes to their kids? How do you tell them you were wrong and you’re sorry when you know they don’t have to forgive you? God, he should have read more of those parenting books, he just hadn’t expected to fuck up quite so spectacularly this early on. Clark had helped (as he usually did), but much of this was Lex’s own doing. So Lex continued to be indecisive. His own father had certainly never attempted such a thing with him, so he had no frame of reference for this kind of conversation... What would it even sound like? Well, despite what people thought of him, he hadn’t come out of the womb a business tycoon and criminal mastermind; he got there through practice, and if he could practice world-conquering at age ten then he could practice apologizing now.

Lex cleared his throat and smoothed out his suit, “Conner, I know what I did was unforgivable, but I need you to understand that no matter how or why you were born I still love you.” Lex tried out to the door.

“Conner your father and I have a long and convoluted past, and I need you to understand sometimes he isn’t right about me,” Lex looked exasperatedly at the ceiling and shook his head. He sounded like a petulant child even to himself.

He guessed he could try outright honesty. “Conner, it’s true I’ve done some...less than savory things in my lifetime but honestly, most of them weren’t that bad... and half of them were only to distract your dad so I could get some real work done without him busting in. And he always wreaks havoc in my labs even when I didn’t do anything illegal because he’s so determined I’m a villain that he doesn’t bother to check if I’m actually being bad!” He said in a rambling rush. By this point Lex was pacing in front of the door. “I’ve definitely made mistakes... but most of the ones in my younger years were to cover his ass! So they don’t really count... Admittedly in recent years I have dipped into some more... unsavory business deals,” he grimaced, “and some of my recent research was fueled by less than charitable thoughts…” Shit this was going terribly, he’d need decades to practice at this rate. Could he sound any more stilted and unsure?

Why was having a kid so hard? Is it because he didn’t ease into it? No nine-month grace period, no good at parenting? People adopted all the time though, did they fuck up this badly just trying to apologize?

Where was he going wrong? Maybe as much as Lex wanted to explain away his actions he couldn’t. This was an apology. He was trying to show he was sorry not say he shouldn’t have to be sorry. Lex
sighed, right back where he started, still standing in front of the door and no closer to his son. Total brutal honesty, that’s what he needed to go for.

Lex stood for a moment silently considering. Being honest didn’t come naturally to him… likely because honesty was never Lionel’s priority when raising him. Lex was not going to inflict that on his son though, he wouldn’t let it become another Luthor tradition. So Lex stood and thought. What had he wanted from his father before? What did young Lex desperately want Lionel to say to make things better after he screwed up?

Lex cleared his throat again, “Conner, I’m sorry. I know you’re disappointed in me and that- that crushes me because I never wanted you to feel that way. What Superman said about me, about my past, is… mostly true. I’ve made mistakes and I have done things I’m not proud of, but Conner-” Lex choked on the words, closing his eyes, why was this so hard… “You are not and never will be a mistake. You are- you are a gift. One I didn’t expect, and certainly don’t deserve but one I am lucky enough to have anyway…” Lex paused, there were so many things he needed to apologize for he risked monologuing. Lex sighed. Biggest first. “You are not a weapon Conner, you’re my son. And just because you were made a little… differently, and just because your father is less than perfect doesn’t mean you are worth any less than anyone else on earth. I may not have made you for the right reasons, but I do love you… and if you give me a second chance I can do better, I promise. I love you no matter what you decide.”

Yeah that was the version. As good as it would get without another ten years of practice at least. Lex nodded to himself and stepped forward to--

The door in front of him opened suddenly.

Conner was standing in front of him looking both hurt and uncertain. Lex felt his guilt well up in him, sticky and unfamiliar, when he realized Conner had been crying. The tear tracks made him want to reach out to his son, to wipe his face and hold him close. Instead he froze, he waited. Waited for Conner to make the first move, to say something, do something to either forgive or damn him.

Conner stood looking at Lex for a moment longer before addressing him. “I heard you apologizing… or practicing apologizing, I guess.” Conner started voice scratchy.

Lex shifted, “Ah,” he started embarrassed, “I thought the soundproofing…” he trailed off.

Conner nodded, “The security cameras picked it up,” he said pointing to the ceiling.
Lex suddenly remembered that he had been pacing outside the security team’s rooms, and that they had all probably watched him have a mini breakdown. Lex cleared his throat, “...I see…” he drifted off, unsure if he was relieved at only having to make the sappy speech once or embarrassed about being caught practicing.

Conner just watched him for a moment more as the tension built. It was clear he wasn’t sure if the multiple botched apologies helped or not either.

Finally Conner broke the silence, “Do you love me? Really love me?” he asked.

“Yes. Absolutely yes,” Lex answered without hesitation, “I have loved you since the day we met and… I… may not be the… best parent,” Lex conceded, “but that will never change.”

Conner nodded, eyes dropping to his shoes, clearly thinking.

Lex had a moment to wonder at how his son would puzzle through this. He was young, and new to the world, and the only person he knew and that he loved was Lex. He was so young. Conner might just forgive Lex because Lex was all he knew and had nothing else for comparison. On the other hand he could withdraw into his laboratory training, and the philosophy lessons (regardless how hated) could come into play. Conner could be weighing his lies with Kant and dissecting his past with Plato. He was surely brilliant enough to know that by any moral standard Lex fell far short of Superman. All he could do was wait while his son thought it out.

Conner’s lips thinned as he seemed to come to a decision, and Lex felt dread run up his spine then settle in his throat, a thick clot of immovable fear.

“I want the whole story. Then I’ll think about it some more.” He said firmly, nodding. Conner looked up at him determined, before stepping up to him and wrapping his arms around a statuesque Lex. “I love you too, but I need- I need to know.”

Lex wasn’t sure how to feel, relief mixed heavily with trepidation maybe. The only thing he was sure that at this point was that to keep Conner he would give him just about anything… including the truth.

Conner stepped back inside and Lex followed after him, relieved and grateful to find the hallways and the common room empty of his security team. They really were the best… even if they were probably watching this unfold like a primetime telenovela from the cameras.
Conner stopped and sat down on one of the couches in the common room, and after a moment of hesitation Lex sat across from him in an armchair.

Lex cleared his throat. “So…” he started, “What would you like to know?”

Conner fidgeted for a moment before looking straight at him, “Why don’t you start at the beginning. How did you and my… How did you and Superman meet?”

Lex considered, just for a second, telling him just what he asked. The first time he had met the costumed superhero that the Daily Planet had dubbed ‘Superman’ was when he came crashing through the walls of his tower to confront Lex with some imagined dastardly deed. Lex quickly but regretfully dismissed the idea, it wouldn’t be a lie… but Conner wasn’t a business rival he was trying to outfox, and he deserved the full truth.

“When I first met Superman, it was before he was Superman. I was twenty-one and it was on a riverbank in Smallville, and he had just saved my life.”

Conner looked interested but didn’t interrupt so Lex continued, “I was in a car accident, I swerved off the road and through the rail of a bridge and I... may or may not have hit him as well.”

“May or may not have?” Conner asked skeptically.

Lex smiled a bit, “Evidence points to yes, and the man himself adamantly says no.” Lex explained.

Conner’s skeptical look remained.

“You can take a look at it later, I still have the car and the computer simulation of the crash.” In fact he still had everything from his obsession room in Smallville, plus some newer more damning additions.

“Regardless of if I hit him or not he saved my life, pulled me out of the car then the water and performed CPR until I was breathing again. That’s how we met.”
Conner nodded, filing the information away. “You said you had a long past with him, what did you mean?”

From there on Conner grilled him on anything and everything between Superman and him.

Everything from “What kind of truck?” to “Why did you kill your father?” to “What do you remember from the asylum?” and by the end of what was a several hour long interrogation Lex was physically and emotionally drained. They hadn’t gone over their entire history in Smallville but Conner had managed to weasel out every major event and follow its impact.

At the end Conner took a moment to think before nodding. He looked up at Lex and Lex held his breath. “I think for how you guys started you were both at fault, so I won't hold it against you.” For some reason it felt like the ultimate judgment, and all Lex could feel was dizzying relief at not being cast the villain by his own son.

Lex nodded back a little stunned, but remained quiet waiting for either further explanation or more questions.

Conner looked at him seriously, “He should have told you, but you shouldn’t have pushed, in the end that’s what all your friendship problems came down too.”

Lex almost wanted to laugh. Over a decade of conflict boiled down into one sentence, as decided by his 15 year/2 week old.

“I still have more questions… about your ‘unsavory business deals’… but I think I’ll wait until tomorrow. It’s late and I’m tired.

Lex nodded in agreement and sent a quick note to Concord to clear his morning. Lex followed as Conner headed upstairs then split off to change and brush his teeth, going about his own nightly routine while lost in thought. Lex was so caught up in thought that he didn’t realize what he was doing until he found himself on the threshold of Conner’s room with The Odyssey in hand.

Lex froze looking carefully at his son, already tucked into bed, waiting for some cue to stay or go. For a long moment it seemed they just stared at each other. The tension between them grew until Lex considered just backing away, and he had already taken a step back to that effect when Conner made his own move. His son wiggled slightly to the side, making enough space for Lex to come and sit on the bed if he wanted.
Lex felt relief crash through him. If Conner still would tolerate him for this he wasn’t as doomed as he thought. It wasn’t as easy as it was before, and Conner was much more reserved towards him, but he could work with this. He would do his utmost to earn his son’s trust back, and he would start with moments like this. Lex opened the book to where he had left off last night and began to read. And despite his scratchy sore voice and the unspoken tension between them the routine was soothing.

Once again Conner drifted off to Lex’s voice detailing sea monsters and man’s hubris.

After Conner fell asleep Lex tucked him firmly in and dropped a soft kiss in his hair. Despite how exhausted the day had made him Lex knew he probably wouldn’t be getting much sleep. Instead of trying he made his way out into the living room. The broken windows had been covered and the shattered glass had been swept up but the room still felt like there was a gaping hole in it and that it was destroyed. Clark had literally and metaphorically demolished his home today. He came in, out of nowhere with no warning and… who was he kidding?

Lex sat down in his favorite armchair. The same one Clark had confronted him in the first time. Lex was expecting this, anticipating this. This was how the game went between the two of them. The only difference was that Lex cared who got hurt this time. Lex cared who could have been torn apart between them. Lex now had something to lose in this game.

Wind whistled against the patched windows making Lex shiver. Lex sat and looked at the windows then the space where the coffee table used to stand, and finally at his hidden compartment of kryptonite. Today’s fight was different… and Lex couldn’t just shake it off. As much as Lex wanted to forget or dismiss Clark’s accusations he couldn’t quite bring himself to let it go. Clark had been right. As much as Lex hated it. Not about the cloning or the scientific work at the beginning, but about the KN series… about growing a conscience…

During the fight, he was going to say that he hadn’t expected to love the little clone boy, but Clark was right. He hadn’t expected to even care, to feel anything at all. He had walked into that lab with the same mindset and Dr. Desmond, that all of this was purely scientific.

Lex swallowed back bile. He should have checked more often. He should have been on top of this from the start, so that when they had produced the first viable clone he would have been there and he would have stopped them from going farther. God, it would have crushed him. Even if that first little clone boy hadn’t had his mother’s eyes like Conner, he would have loved them anyway. Lex knew enough about his past with Clark, was honest enough about his feelings about Clark, to know he would have loved a perfect clone of him. Lex felt the guilt weighing him down. He didn’t even know how long that first clone boy had lasted. Maybe it would have only been long enough for Lex to feel eerily upset at his death. Maybe it would have been the next one who only lived long enough for Lex to be attached, then heartbroken at his death.
Maybe, maybe, maybe. What if, he should have, he could have, why didn’t he?

He couldn’t change the past, and as selfish as it was he was secretly glad. Glad that he didn’t know any of the little clone boys before KN-017. Relieved that he didn’t have to watch them destabilize and die. He couldn’t change their fate, but he would repent for it by doing everything in his power to make Conner happy. He couldn’t fix his past mistakes at Cadmus but he would prevent something similar at his other labs.

Clark was right. He hadn’t expected to grow a conscience, but here it was. Rearing its ugly head at him. Lex was going to do something about it.

With that last determined thought Lex went to get dressed and went down to his office. If he wasn’t going to sleep tonight then he could at least work. He would begin to compile a list of projects for review, the exact kind of projects Conner would probably ask about tomorrow. Lex shot off a quick and concise note asking Concord to compile a list of their ‘sublevel’ projects as soon as possible.

While he waited Lex caught up on work. As easy as it was to tell Concord to clear his schedule, it left more of a mess than it was usually worth. Lex ruthlessly and methodically dealt with issues and general information from the past few days. He managed to complete a larger chunk than he normally would have (probably due to no one bothering him outside normal work hours) before Concord arrived with a laptop and a thick binder. Quick work considering how carefully he hid these projects.

Surprisingly Mercy followed Concord in and joined him sitting in front of Lex’s desk.

“Here are the files you requested Mr. Luthor.” Concord said crisply, not a hair out of place despite Lex waking him at odd hours.

Lex looked at the laptop and the binder now sitting on his desk. He should dismiss them both and get straight to business. He needed to either end, bury, or legitimize almost everything on the lists Concord had brought and he wasn’t one to keep unnecessary personnel on while he worked, but… this would be different. Regardless of how tonight, and more importantly tomorrow, went they would both be at ground zero for damage control.

“What’s the plan here Lex?” Mercy said, breaking the tense silence that had fallen.
Lex tapped his fingers rhythmically on the binder’s cover as he thought. Finally he spoke, “There is going to be a change in company policy Mercy.” Leaning forward he braced both elbows on the desk and looked at them over his interlocked hands. “If today has proven anything it’s that we can no longer keep playing the same game as before Conner.”

Lex gestured at his computer and the half-finished work he’d been catching up on. “I realized as I was working tonight that I can’t just go back to how things worked a few days ago.”

Concord shifted uncomfortably, “You had a moral epiphany?” he asked sounding politely shy of skepticism.

Lex huffed out a breath of laughter, “No, god no, don’t be ridiculous,” he replied. “I may have become more in touch with my conscience than I’m comfortable with but this is only mildly related.” Lex reached out and turned his computer monitor towards them, showing the work he had been catching up on, still unfinished.

“There is going to be a certain amount of moral ground I’ll give to make Connor happy but in large part the changes will have to do with my involvement as a whole,” he explained to an unconcerned looking Mercy and an eagle-eyed Concord. “I have a son, a son I’m not willing to foist off on some nanny or servant. Connor is therefore going to be a significant time investment on my part. Time I now don’t have for the company.”

Concord pushed his glasses up his nose looking like he wanted to interject.

“There are two issues at hand that I need to solve,” Lex said, “One, the issue of time management. I need to step far enough back from being CEO that I can raise Conner but be close enough to keep everything under control. Two, the issue of these-” Lex gestured broadly across the desk, “-projects.”

Both Mercy and Concord were silent. Mercy had been with Lex long enough to know that this company was more than work for him. He was a brilliant, brilliant man, who was also driven, competitive, and overly obsessive and being a business mogul both suited and sated his ambitions. She had watch Lex grow this company from the literal shit factory he had started with to what it was now. She had been the person in his shadow as he and Clark fell apart. Mercy would follow Lex into retirement if that’s what he wanted… but if she was honest retirement, and even this “stepping back” seemed more like it would send him into true supervillainy out of boredom. The cuckoo Joker kind of evil.

Concord, on the other hand, was silently reeling. The very thought of trying to detangle Lex from any part of LexCorp, let alone multiple parts at once was migraine inducing. Not only that but major
changes to their sublevel project was always ten times the workload of a normal project.

Lex nodded at both of them as they stared at him, both hiding different levels of horror.

“We’ll start with these,” Lex said pulling the binder towards himself and flipping it open, “I’m assuming this is information too sensitive to trust an electronic copy?”

Concord nodded. When pesky supers came snooping they usually overlooked the old paper stacks, not enough time to sort through them he figured. Therefore Lex’s most nefarious programs were relegated to scattered paper files, which Concord gathered into this single binder. It would be destroyed immediately after use.

“From what I recall, most of these will need to be phased out as quickly as possible. Draw up a timetable of how long it would take to do a total phase-out, flag anything that takes longer than 5 years and we’ll figure out how to deal with it.”

Instead of leaving as Lex had expected, Concord pulls out a sleek matte black laptop and sets it on the desk and begins to work.

Mercy seemed in a similar mood, because instead of returning to work or her bed she stayed sitting at his desk, looking at him for a moment. Lex could feel an itch build beneath his skin, and he had to mindfully quash the urge to run his hand over his scalp— an old nervous tic.

“You’ve addressed the projects existing but what about future projects?” she asked. “Specifically what about your research into kryptonite?”

Lex knee-jerk reaction was to cancel it. Tell Mercy to load their whole supply into a rocket and launch it at the sun. The still fresh memory of Conner flinching away from him felt like a physical repulsion...but. What he said to Clark had been true. There had already been enough incidents where Superman became a weapon instead of a shield, there was not only no guarantee it wouldn’t happen again, but high statistical probability that it would. Leaving the earth with no way to defend itself was not an option. So he had to keep at least some of the massive kryptonite stockpile. As for canceling his scientific research...

He didn’t want to. Yes, the thought of Conner being exposed to it twisted his stomach into knots and set his teeth on edge, but stopping all his research? He really didn’t want to. It was one of the few parts of LexCorp that Lex was deeply and personally involved in, because it was one of the most
interesting things Lex had ever encountered. Kryptonite was alien in every way, the way it interacted with life on earth was unique and telling. Not only that but he had personal stake in kryptonite. Lex’s hand ghosted over his scalp as he thought.

He had been changed by his exposure, as had many of the Smallville residents, and while he had cursed the effects in his youth he had grown to realize their amazing potential. Kryptonite was a wild card in every field of study. The innovations they had to make just to study it had pushed chemistry, physics, and biology forward at an astounding rate. Giving it up for just one person… but that person was his son… who would benefit from this in the future… if it didn’t get him killed…or it could save his life! Well fuck. Lex was waffling, going around in circles. Wishy washy back and forth. Kryptonite was pure potential either way. He could spend all night arguing with himself and not get a satisfactory answer and by the look on Mercy’s face that what she was expecting.

“You should talk to Conner about it.” She suggested suddenly, breaking his line of thought. “He’s the one who will be most affected by it either way.”

Lex said nothing in response. Talking to Conner about it was ‘the right thing to do’ he supposed, but he couldn’t help but dread it. If Conner wanted it shut down he’d either have to lie and keep it open… or actually shut it down… Just thinking about it made a small bubble of something tight and angry settle in his stomach. Resentment was something he was familiar with and he didn’t want to feel that way about his son. He loved Conner, and he would put him first, but if that meant destroying everything he worked for? Everything he’d built so far? He could already feel it dark and sludge like coating his lungs with irritation. He would choke on it if he wasn’t careful, just like he had choked on his friendship with Clark and his relationship with Lionel.

Lex sighed, his breath coming out a hiss between his gritted teeth.

“How do I make him understand how important it is to me? How important it is for the world?” He asked Mercy. He was usually more adept at handling people but this was different.

“You explain it” She replied, bluntly. By her grin she knew she wasn’t being particularly helpful. He had apparently surpassed her patience for his melodrama.

“Quarterly review?” He asked, just to poke at her.

“Excel spreadsheet.” She shot back.
“Pie chart of good and evil.” He replied, lips quirking.

“Venn diagram of property damaged by you and Superman in Metropolis.” She was smirking at him, no doubt remembering them both destroying different sections of the science museum multiple times.

“Pros and cons of corporate empires.” He said finally.

A polite cough brought them both back as Concord looked first at Mercy disapprovingly and then at Lex with his general infinite patience. “Connor is exceptionally bright despite his age and life experience. Lay out all the information for him and present him with the solutions you have come up with. Then let him decide if he thinks there is a better way. I doubt he will dismiss the whole research area out of hand.”

Lex took a moment to consider what that would mean conversation wise. Should he bring a full research docket to his son or give him the quick summary? The docket would take to long to go over but a summary left to many openings for miscommunication. Perhaps Conner could read at super speed like his… like Clark. Though despite superspeed reading Clark never seemed to properly read everything when he was in a rush, mostly just skimmed.

Lex spent the next few hours pulling together a docket on LexCorps Kryptonite research, he would do both he decided. He would summarize the information he thought relevant and provide supplemental material and data for Conner to peruse.

Morning came too soon for his liking. Lex almost resented the clean air and sparkling architecture of Metropolis that meant his son would be up at sunrise. He would have had a few more hours at least if they lived in the smog layer of Gotham.

Lex sighed and rose from his desk. He would face Conner head on.

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When Lex finally wandered up to the penthouse it was to find it quiet and still. I was the first time since he had brought Conner home that his son wasn’t up before him. It seemed wrong. The lack of his bright, curious, little(ish) boy made the spacious living room seem like a gaping baren cavern. Lex settled into his favorite armchair (his ‘cooly waiting for Superman to come crashing in’ chair) and stared at the temporary window covers. The metal lockdown shutters had been dropped by security and Lex almost resented that fact that he couldn’t brood dramatically to the sound of the
wind howling against the broken windows.

Lex looked away. He knew he was being a bit overdramatic. The house was a cavern, he wanted howling winds, next thing he knew he’d be standing on the roof of LexCorp dressed as a giant bat yelling “I am darkness! I am the night!” He refused to be such a drama queen. Instead Lex got up to get a book, not looking to see what he had picked before returning to his armchair… before getting up and changing armchairs, because apparently that armchair was his melodramatic seating.

Lex held the book in his lap but ignored it to gaze out the unbroken window now beside him. The early pre-dawn light didn’t show him much. It was it’s own hazy dream world. Lex couldn’t help but trace the outline of skyscrapers on the Metropolis skyline, naming the buildings he knew in a pointless but rather soothing game. It seems all of his seating was a bit melodramatic.

Lex was rescued from his drama and solitude by Conner, gently and silently floating in. He looked tired, worn down, and worst of all, unhappy.

Lex wanted to reach out, to fold him into a hug and tell him everything would be alright. The only thing stopping him was the fact that he wasn’t sure it would be alright. He wasn’t sure it would work out and that more than anything kept him weighed down and silent in his seat as his son came over.

“Hey Dad,” Conner said, quiet and subdued, a far cry from yesterday morning’s enthusiasm.

Lex swallowed thickly and responded with an equally quiet, “Good morning Conner.”

Conner settled down across from him and just stared for a moment.

The pre-dawn light threw everything into a strange sort of unreality, where both he and Conner were caught in a grayscale world.

“So,” Conner started taking a deep breath and looking unsure what to say. He was sitting elbows on knees, hands clasped, and shoulders hunched and as he spoke he focused on his hands instead of Lex.

Lex let the silence linger a bit longer, mostly because he wanted Conner to continue. He wanted Conner to tell him what to do to make it better, what hoops to jump through to make him stay. Instead the silence just lingered waiting for him to break it.
Lex finally cleared his throat, “I know you wanted to talk business today, so I spent last night preparing everything...” he said.

Conner glanced up at him and nodded for him to continue.

“We talked about how things weren’t always black and white between me and Clark… to be honest, my business is... rather similar.” Lex ran his hand over his scalp, the nervous tic beyond suppressing. “There are some projects I’ll admit are… bad… and I’m willing to shut down immediately, but for the most part, it’s not quite that simple.” Lex hedged.

“What do you mean?” Conner asked a flicker of his usual curiosity coming through, muted, but there.

“Well, the ones that I can shut down immediately are mostly in-house or under direct supervision from me...while the ones that can’t be shut down, or have to wait a given amount of time aren’t.” Lex replied.

“But you’re the boss,” Conner insisted, “so if you wanted to you could.”

“It’s not that simple-”

“You already said that.” Conner interrupted. “It doesn’t matter if it’s complex you just have to explain it to me.”

Lex sighed, Conner was right he just didn’t want to explain. Lex was sure the more he talked the worse it would go….but he made a promise to be honest with his son so that’s what he would have to do.

Lex slowly and painstakingly went over the list of projects ongoing in LexCorp. Explaining which he could cancel immediately and reassign personnel, which were contracted (for how long, and to whom), which had too much capital sunk into them to withdraw from, and finally which projects he personally thought were important for research.

Conner helpfully responded with “Cancel those”, “The government really pays you for those?”, “Well then find something else to do with those”, and “I guess we’ll negotiate on those” respectively.
At the end of it Lex felt… better and worse. Conner looked less troubled then he had coming in, and was surprisingly willing to compromise on certain things. What most surprised Lex was that Conner proved to be more understanding about his ongoing Kryptonite research, although he did immediately try to nix all anti-Superman weapons projects.

The weapons had caused the biggest contention between them. Lex argued that most were not only *legal*, but *government funded*, in addition, each one came with a long-term contract that benefited the company overall and had significant capital invested. Conner obviously balked at letting them run their full terms. That ended up being his line in the sand, and when Lex geared up to argue his case Conner had asked him quietly, “What if they used them again *me* Dad?” and Lex had folded like wet cardboard.

Conner’s face had immediately gone smug, and Lex couldn’t even call him out on the manipulation, caught between pride and the residual panic of what the weapons he had already made could do his son. The issues after that flowed much more smoothly with Lex more willing to bend and Conner more confident in defending his stance.

Concord had come to bring up the relevant files, followed by Mrs. Novak bringing them breakfast but other than that they had spent the morning undisturbed. The grayscale had turned back into the glittering kaleidoscope that was Metropolis in the day and Conner sat across from him with files scattered on the floor marked with their combined notes and finally Conner sat back and sighed.

“Ok.” He said staring at Lex like he’d made his final decision, “Ok this is good so far…”

“I’m detecting a ‘but’ coming.” Lex encouraged.

“Buuuuuut,” Conner dragged out, “I’m not a businessman. Sure I’m super smart but most of this jargon is flying over my head. I need time to learn the business and I think until I do… I want someone to make sure you are following through on this.”

Lex had to hide his flinch. That was about as clear a statement of distrust as Conner could give him. ‘Hey Dad I don’t believe you’ll stick to your word so how about a babysitter?’ It was both practical and fair, but it hurt nonetheless.

“Who did you have in mind?” Lex asked coolly.
“Uuuuhhh,” Conner shifted uncomfortably, “Superman, I guess?”

Lex looked helplessly at his son. He had spent hours yesterday explaining why exactly he and Clark didn’t get along and Conner had decided that Superman was still the best person for the job. He was going to have spend however long Conner liked arguing the nuances of the color blue to a man who only saw things in black and white. And he was already resigning himself to it. Honestly, the things he did for his son.

Conner smiled, like he knew what was flying through his father’s head, “Don’t worry. I’ll make sure both of you learn to compromise.”

Chapter End Notes

You guys are the best motivators ever not gonna lie, I bask in any and every attention you throw this poor mess's way.

Let me know what you thought of Lex's apology! I thought maybe too shmoopy? but i cant tell anymore~

Who can see where Kon is going with this? hmmm any guesses?

Next chap is probs ssssuperman take a guess at what poor poor clark will think

EDIT 28/3 - Thanks for all the comments and kudos! I can't believe this fic hit 500 kudos!!! I thought I'd let you know the end is in sight, there are only 2-3 chapters to go with the ending all planned out. I should finish chapter 9 in the next week or two so keep an eye on that. Thanks for all the support! I means a lot to me, and really motivates me to write! Luv ya all!
Clark putzed around his apartment in the early morning of a sunny and peaceful Sunday. He was going stir crazy. It had been a week since bursting in on Lex, a week since the Justice League meeting, and a week since he promised to take some ‘time away’ from Lex. Which... even in his head made it sound like they a troubled couple. He was taking ‘a break’ to ‘reassess their relationship’. Which while technically correct, still made him feel like one of Lois’s soap opera stars. The last thing he needed was for Lex to get amnesia, to only remember when they were friends, only to fall in deeply and desperately in love with him! But then his evil twin Alex would appear! Only to break them tragically apart and restore Lex’s memories, and Lex would leave Clark because he lied to Lex out, even though it was out of desperation and love and-

Clark cut off the thought suddenly, standing in the middle of his kitchen and sighing, aggravated.

A quick look at the clock informed him that he just spent the last ten minutes imagining Lex and himself a la Dyas of Our LIves, and it had been the quickest passage of time today. It was more than slightly worrying that it was so easy to slip into drama with Lex (though it might have been helped that Lex HAD been an amnesiac, and HAD had an evil twin, and he HAD lied to Lex about his memories). Diana was right. Even in a fantasy world his relationship ended in betrayal.

Not only that but he was more than a little obsessed. One week into avoiding Lex and he realized that: he always tuned into the sound of Lex and Mercy’s heartbeats when they left a protected area together (they had gone out less than half an hour ago), he usually circled above LexCorp Tower while patrolling (to be fair it was the tallest building in the city), and everyone in the Daily Planet brought him their tips on Lex and LexCorp. He thought he had broken ties with Lex years ago, only to find himself entangled more deeply than ever.

Stepping back would be good for him. The Justice League could handle anything nefarious Lex came up with without him, so he would take this time to untangle himself from Lex. Once that was done, and only then, would Clark try and sort out his actions regarding his best-friend-turned-arch-nemesis. He could do it, he would do it. It couldn’t be that hard really. He just needed to continue avoiding Lex and it would be easy. The distance would give him plenty of time to clear his head and work through his issues. Clark nodded to himself and strode over to the coffee machine with purpose. He was decided. He was firm. He- was interrupted from making coffee by a knock on his door.

It was early yet for Lois to barge in on him but as she liked to say, “The news never sleeps Smallville, let alone stops for you to read the morning paper!” Clark skipped the coffee maker and made two quick cups via heat vision before opening the door.
“Mornin’ Loi- oh.” Clark’s dry greeting and extended coffee offering were met not by his high energy partner but rather by his high energy clone and Lex Luthor… who he was supposed to be avoiding.

“Good morning Clark.” Lex said, as if they greeted each other every morning. Clark froze, giving the little clone boy the opportunity to dart into his apartment and zip around while he was stalled, staring at Lex Luthor. Lois always told him he was gonna regret always opening the door without checking who was on the other side, but up until now he always thought it was because someone would try and stab him. Instead, he was faced with the last person on Earth (literally) he wanted to see this morning.

Though what a sight he made. At first glance, Lex was as impeccable as always, dressed impeccably in a dark blue, bespoke suit that probably costs more than Clark’s yearly rent. He looked like he had just waltzed off of a GQ cover and into Clark’s building, and maybe a little tired. Tired superstar was still a good look on him, however, a second (more thorough) look at Lex showed him to be very tired. He was wearing concealer under his eyes and his cufflinks weren’t aligned properly. A quick x-ray scan showed he’d also missed a button on his shirt. Nothing huge or that a normal person would have noticed, but for someone who both knew how to look and what to look for, Lex was a bit of a mess. It was odd, and more than a bit unsettling. Lex Luthor didn’t do messy.

“What are you doing here?” Clark asked, ignoring the Mini-me floating around his apartment.

“I thought I’d drop by and say hello, you know- for nostalgia’s sake,” Lex said two shades away from dry. “I even brought coffee.” He said offering up one of two paper cups with no logo. Clark stepped back to set down his own quick made coffee, letting Lex step into his apartment, and then accepted the proffered cup (good manners overriding common sense in his confusion).

He wasn’t ready for this. Clark thought, eyebrows furrowed and lips turned down, absentmindedly sipping the coffee while staring at Lex. It was almost nostalgic, except for the key difference that Lex didn’t look overly pleased to see him, and he didn’t feel glad to see Lex.

Neither of them spoke as Clark watched Lex with a thousand yard stare and Lex’s eyes… seemed to follow the clone boy as he floated around the room. Never quite settling, and never making eye contact, like he was-

“You’re nervous!” Clark blurted out suddenly startling Lex into eye contact, “Why are you nervous?”, he accused, “What did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything! Why do you always think I’ve done something!” Lex snapped back.
“You’re always doing things!” Clark defended, “Plus, if you’re not doing something why are you nervous?” he tacked on.

“I’m not nervous.” Lex snapped, eyes flashing away.

“Yes, you are! You’re not making eye contact, your heart rate went up, you shifted your weight slightly to your left, and your hand twitched like you were about to rub your scalp.” Clark listed matter of factly.

“I’m not doing anything.” Lex refuted, but with less vigor and more begrudging.

“But you are nervous.” Clark insisted.

“Well I’m standing in front of one of the few people in the world who could kill me, why wouldn’t I be nervous?” Lex shot back, eyes narrowing.

Clark bristled at the implication (despite knowing Lex was just needling him) and was gearing up to respond when a voice interrupted.

“He’s nervous because he has to ask you for a favor~.” Came sing-songed, directly into his left ear.

Clark jumped. He had completely forgotten about the clone boy while talking to Lex.

Clark stepped away from both of them and raised an eyebrow, “A favor?” he asked, incredulous. They had done each other a few favors since becoming enemies, but usually they were more… ‘the world is ending and you’ll die with it if you don’t help’ kind of affairs. No time to be nervous, and they certainly didn’t have coffee first.

Clark squinted at Lex and told him, “I’m not helping you do anything nefarious.” It was best to cover these bases right off the bat (excuse the pun).

Lex hissed out a breath and gave his clone a pointed but indecipherable look. “I’m not doing
anything nefarious, honestly, who even uses that word?” Lex told him, impatient and irritated.

“You do!” Clark said incredulously, pointing at Lex, “I learned it from you in high school, when we were learning Shakespeare. I hated Romeo and Juliet so you took me to see Julius Caesar and you called his murder a ‘nefarious plot!’’ Clark’s mouth responded, apparently overriding his brain to mouth filter.

Despite not meaning to respond, the comment seemed to knock the building aggression out of the conversation. What it left behind was a memory gone bittersweet, and suddenly Clark couldn’t meet Lex’s eyes either. Clark was suddenly remembering past accusations he had thrown at Lex’s feet and the look he had gotten back, a silent but clear ‘et tu brute?’. If Lex was ‘an ambitious man’ in this parallel, did that make him ‘an honorable man’?

Suddenly Clark felt so tired of it all. He had been honest when he told Diana that he needed to reevaluate how he looked at Lex, and maybe this was a good starting point.

“What’s the favor?” Clark asked quietly, sighing.

Lex cleared his throat, once, then twice (he really was nervous) before responding just as quietly, “I would like to consult you regarding the... ethical implications of several of the current LexCorp projects and their... implications regarding Kryptonians specifically.”

Clark looked up surprised, then squinted at Lex, “What?” he asked skeptically. Of all the things he expected to be asked, to discuss ethics really hadn’t been one of them. Not remotely.

“We want to borrow your moral compass because my dad got a little lost.” A chipper voice sounded from above them.

The both startled and looked up to see the clone boy sitting cross-legged on the ceiling.

“Feet on the ground please Conner.” Lex chided automatically.

“Aw but Dad! He can fly too! It’s no big deal!” The clone… Conner, whined.

“There are windows in this apartment someone could see you through Conner. Feet on the ground please .” Lex insisted.
“Fine.” The boy sighed floating down and settling at Lex’s side, like he belonged there. Like it was natural for Lex to chide and worry over him like some kind of doting parent. Like he was used to Lex’s overbearing form of caring… but Lex didn’t care about people, not anymore, so maybe…

“Are you sick?” Clark’s mouth asked again without permission, it was on a rebellious streak apparently.

Lex raised a perfectly shaped (perfectly artificial) eyebrow, “You know I don’t get sick Clark.” Clark did know that. It was Lex’s ‘gift’ from the meteor shower and he’d never been sick as long as Clark had known him, not from anything natural at least.

“Where did you get this coffee?” Clark asked, aiming for casual.

Lex rolled his eyes, “Concord made it. I have not been poisoned either, Clark.” He said exasperatedly. As though it was so out of the question.

A quick scan of the earth revealed only Lex’s heartbeat right in front of him, no Lex split into good and evil, and no alternate universe version of Lex so…

“Why are you doing this Lex?” Sometimes straightforward really was the best way to go.

Lex paused for a moment, years of experience gave it away as him weighing pros and cons, deciding how much honesty he would give in his answer, “I have a son now Clark,” Lex paused again, a little stilted, “I can’t just keep doing things the way I have been. He could get hurt.” Lex finished.

“A son?” Clark repeated slowly. Clark’s eyes drifted over to Conner.

“Yes. My son.” Lex reiterated firmly, laying a hand on top of the clone’s head.

Clark stares at them both, blinking owlishly.

“Will you do it or not?” Lex asks after a moment, impatience winning out.
“Huh?” Clark asks, still stuck on the fact that Conner was considered... a son? And not a project or something.

Lex tsks and turns on his heel walking out.

Conner sighs and gives Clark a long look, using Clark’s own face, which is disconcerting at the least. “It took him a whole week to work up to asking, so you better say yes.” The boy tells him sternly handing him his business card, this kid certainly acted like he’s Lex’s son.

“Besides, you’re all about saving people right? So you should definitely be able to save your best friend.” The boy smiled and zipped out the door before Clark can respond, leaving Clark’s indignant “We’re not best friends-” hanging in the air of his empty apartment.

On one hand: this is a monumentally bad idea. On the other: the kid is right, he should be able to save Lex. He should have done it years ago, and not doing so had been one of his biggest regrets since. He wanted to do it, but his instincts had always proven to be dangerously off when it came to Lex. So this time… he’d get a second opinion.

Clark was only going to call Bruce, for tactical advice, of course, but ended up in a conference call with both Bruce and Diana asking for advice. Honestly, what was it about Lex that made him act like the teenage girl in a 90s sitcom, ‘Hello Debby? Kimmy? You’ll never guess what just happened!’ it was ridiculous, however; it didn’t stop him from blurtling out “I think Lex wants to be good now and I think I kinda want to help!” when there was a click on the line.

“Very good master Kent... I’ll fetch master Bruce shall I?” Came the even reply from one Alfred Pennyworth.

“Yes please,” Clark said a little strangled. He should have known better, Bruce had never answered his own phone.

Clark was saved from wallowing in his own embarrassment when a second click added Diana to the line.

“Hello Clark, unusual for you to call on the unofficial line.” She remarked, sounding intrigued.
“It’s not league business. I don’t think at least?” Clark replied, slightly unsure. It could easily become league business he guessed.

Diana hummed lightly in response, “Bruce won’t like you calling him at home,” she told him just as they heard a rustling on the other end.

“You shouldn’t be calling my personal contact.” Bruce’s deep baritone said, half an octave above Batman but still enough to make Clark feel chided.

“It’s not league business!” Clark told him defensively.

“Any contact between us should be on the secured lines, league business or not. There is no logical reason for Clark Kent to have the personal contact information of Bruce Wayne, let alone call him.” Bruce told him bluntly.

Clark rolled his eyes and took a deep breath, honestly, he’s met screaming children who required less patience than Bruce Wayne. “Fine. I’ll keep it short.” He almost snapped. “Lex Luthor came to my house and asked me for my ‘ethical input’ on some of LexCorp’s projects. Apparently now he wants to be good because of the little clone boy.”

“Did you learn anything else about the clone?” Bruce asked, ignoring the obvious issue here.

It was usually easier to work with Bruce if you let him do it his way (easier being a comparative term of course). “He called him his son, ‘Conner’” Clark told him.

“We already knew that.” Bruce prodded.

“Uh, he can fly, and definitely has super speed,” Clark trailed off, trying to remember if Conner had done anything else while he was there. Clark wished he had paid more attention to the clone in hindsight.

Bruce hummed noncommittally down the line.

“Did he look happy?” Diana asked, curious.
“I guess,” Clark replied, “I mean he floated around the room a bit, but he stood next to Lex when he told him to come down so…” Honestly, Clark didn’t know the kid, and he’d spent 5 minutes with him, he had no idea.

It was Diana’s turn to hum at him and Clark felt his exasperation build.

“I think you should go for it,” Diana told him suddenly.


“Yes,” She replied firmly, “It’ll be good for both of you,” she said and promptly hung up, apparently having said her piece.

“Bruce?” Clark asks chagrined.

There’s silence on the other end for a moment while Bruce thought, and Clark knows he’s carefully weighing the possible outcomes.

Bruce sighed loudly down the line and Clark can just see him on the other end pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Do it.” He said finally. “Worse case scenario this is a trap to capture and use you, in which case we’ll monitor you a bit more carefully and know exactly where to start.”

Clark grimaced and asked, “And best case scenario?”

“Best case scenario it is what he says it is and Lex is trying to reform and in that case… You make the world a much better place. You’re minus one supervillain, who not only stops taking up our precious time and resources but may eventually become an ally. The most likely scenario is somewhere in between, of course.”

“You really think Lex Luthor as an ally would be the best case scenario?” Clark asked
incredulously.

“‘We’ve worked with him a few times before when he’s proven himself both useful and dependable.’” Bruce reminds him.

“‘Yeah but that was—’” when the world was literally about to end, Clark thinks.

“‘Regardless of past circumstance, I’d rather not have to waste any more resources on Lex Luthor if there is any possible way to avoid it,’” Bruce tells him firmly. “‘I suggest you do your best to set him on the straight and narrow.’” He concludes before he, too, hangs up.

He’s surprised. Clark had expected them to both tell him to stay well away from Lex (especially after the mess he made of it last time) but instead, they seemed determined to make him face Lex head on.

Clark pours his now cold coffee down the sink instead of reheating it and considered the business card in his hand. It was a crisp, texturized, and weighty paper with the name “Conner J. Luthor” emblazoned across it in gold lettering. Underneath it was a single phone number for Clark to consider.

He was caught between the urge to shred the card and ignore the offer and the urge to launch himself head first into this. He still hadn’t decided where he stood with Lex and he doubted Lex would wait around for him to make up his mind (he certainly had never done so before).

Clark turned the card over and over in his fingers as he thought.

Clark blew out a long aggravated breath and picked up his cell phone and dialed the number listed. He was probably going to regret this later.

“Hello Conner,” he said when the boy picked up, “I’ve decided to do it.”

Chapter End Notes

heeeeeeeyyyyy guuuyyyyyssss long time no see..... sorry
this one is up, i'd say it's short but it's 8 pages...so it just feeeeeeels short
I always love to hear from you guys it is, in fact, the biggest motivator to my writing (I am apparently VERY needy)

there should be 2 more chapts after this (if i don't go super long and have to split) so wish me luck and prepare yourself

Also did you know putz is also Yiddish for penis? I did not, but apparently my beta (mia pianetina~ itsoktobemarty) had a moment of confusion

let me know if you spot a typo

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