

INT.- HUDSON CHEMICAL PRODUCTIONS' LABORATORY, DAY

The lab is a pristine environment, filled with all sorts of test-tubes and instruments, all gleaming as if brand new. The only thing out of place in this otherwise sterile environment are several large, dirt-encrusted barrels, which are stacked in a corner. Two scientists, CHARLES THOMPSON and DUSTIN FERRYMAN, are busy working with chemicals. There is a satisfying little pop from a machine they're working with, and they smile and turn to each other.

CHARLES

So what's next on the menu?

DUSTIN glances at a nearby clipboard, and then at the large barrels.

DUSTIN

We need to figure out a way to safely dispose of those barrels of nitrogen tritrate.

CHARLES and DUSTIN walk over to the barrels and begin examining them visually. Scraping away some of the dirt, they notice a label that says "U.S. GOVERNMENT." Both DUSTIN and CHARLES sigh in frustration.

CHARLES

You know, it's bad enough that we need to figure out ways to dispose of industrial waste. I just hate it when the government dumps their problems on us!

INT.- VAN OUTSIDE OF FACTORY

Several large, burly men begin to pull on gas masks, load magazines into pistols, and so on.

INT.- THE LAB

CHARLES shoves a probe into the top of one of the barrels. They both go over to a computer terminal, which begins to display technical information about the barrel's contents.

CHARLES

Figures. Standard nerve gas. So why are we dealing with it?

DUSTIN

Get with it! Haven't you been reading the Planet lately?

CHARLES

No, why?

DUSTIN

Apparently the government was conducting some sort of testing with this nitrogen tritrate in Metropolis in the fifties. When the government found out that the gas wasn't as effective as they hoped, they just buried this stash and never told anyone. That reporting team, Lois Lane and Clark Kent? They did a big expose on the whole thing when these barrels were dug up in a playground.

CHARLES

And the government didn't tell anyone?

DUSTIN

Not a soul. They finally admitted that they *might* have buried it somewhere in Metropolis after the Lane and Kent article came out.

INT.- VAN OUTSIDE LAB

The thugs are done suiting up. They are all dressed in black outfits, topped with strange-colored gas masks. One of the thugs motions for the others to be quiet.

THUG

All right, people! Let's get ready!

Before he can open the door to the van, a hand, wearing a white glove, stops him. The thug stops, turning to whoever it is.

LEADER (o.s.)

Not so fast, my eager young friend. A heist like this needs the proper....mood music!

Whoever it is giggles slightly as he presses the play button on a tape recorder.

INT.- THE LAB

CHARLES types in some commands to the computer, and a computer graphic representing the chemical bonds of the nitrogen tritrate appears on screen. He turns to DUSTIN and shakes his head in frustration.

CHARLES

This could take us a while. We might as well get started.

INT.- THE VAN

The hidden man swings around the tape recorder, and "The Blue Danube" by Strauss, begins playing.

LEADER (o.s.)

Now we may go!

The doors to the van burst open and the thugs pour out. As they pour through the doors of the laboratory, they beat up and shoot the guards in beat to the music. Their LEADER is in the midst of the chaos, dancing with his back turned to the camera. At the height of the music, he pulls out a small remote control and begins detonating explosive charges, again, in time to the music.

INT.- THE LAB

The explosions rock the lab, causing DUSTIN and CHARLES to fall to their knees. Other scientists rush around in a panic, not sure of where to go. Some dust and plaster falls around them.

CHARLES

What is going on?

EXT.- THE LAB

The LEADER is swaying to the music, humming and swinging along, almost as if directing the ensuing mayhem. Finally, at the very end, he pulls out a large grenade, and, in time to the music, pulls the pin and tosses the grenade through the lab window, startling the scientists. The grenade hitting the floor completes the song. Almost as soon as the grenade touches the floor, it explodes, sending out clouds of a greenish gas. The scientists begin coughing and choking on the gas. But slowly and surely, the coughing turns into giggling and chuckling, which slowly grows into hysterical laughter. CHARLES and DUSTIN hold their sides as they roar with uncontrollable laughter. Finally, all the scientists fall to the ground, dead, large grimaces frozen on their sweaty,

pale faces. The doors to the lab burst open and the thugs pour inside, holding fans to blow away some stray wisps of the gas. The LEADER strides inside the lab, allowing us our first clear look of him. He is dressed in a garish purple zoot suit, complete with black and white spats and white gloves. He looks around the lab through an oddly-colored gas mask, which almost looks like something from a circus. Finally, he turns to a thug named BRUNO and slaps him playfully on the back.

LEADER

You know, that gas grenade was exactly what this drab old lab needed. Don't you agree, Bruno?

BRUNO

Why do you say that, boss?

LEADER

Well, before I chucked that little instrument of death into this place, everyone was about their work in such a serious manner! And now look at them all! Happy as clams! And you know that's what I like seeing....

The LEADER rips off his gas mask, revealing a wild mane of green hair, chalk white skin, and a horrible, grinning mouth. It is the face of the JOKER.

JOKER

Everyone with a nice, big smile!

INT.- DAILY PLANET CONFERENCE ROOM, DAY

PERRY walks into the conference room, rushed as usual. LOIS and CLARK look up from some secret conversation, which JIMMY was valiantly trying to overhear. LOIS tries to stifle a yawn, which CLARK notices. Other reporters look up as well, setting aside notes and cups of coffee.

PERRY

All right, people, let's hear what you're working on. Lois, Clark, you first. What have you found out about that robbery at Hudson Chemical?

LOIS

Not much. The corporate heads of Hudson are being very tight-lipped about what happened.

CLARK

So tight-lipped that not even Bobby Big-Mouth knows what's going on.

LOIS

We were able to learn that they were just beginning to dispose of the nitrogen tritrate we found in that playground.

PERRY

Who knows? Maybe they don't want to talk to you since they're scared you'll write an expose on them as well.

LOIS and CLARK shoot furtive smiles at each other. CLARK looks at his notes and then up at PERRY again.

CLARK

At any rate, what little information we were able to obtain, we found out that all the scientists in the lab were dead.

PERRY

Dead? From what?

CLARK and LOIS glance at each other and shrug.

PERRY

Well, then, what are you sitting there for? Go out there and do what I pay you to do: investigate, dig, probe, expose! I want some progress by tomorrow morning!

LOIS and CLARK grimace slightly and excuse themselves from the meeting. As they leave, LOIS yawns suddenly. CLARK stops short, staring at LOIS with concern. She stops yawning and looks at CLARK blankly.

LOIS

What?

CLARK

What? You've been yawning every single morning for the past week. Have you been getting enough sleep?

LOIS

Oh, what are you now, my mother? I've been getting plenty of sleep.

LOIS tries to look away, but CLARK isn't backing down. Finally she sighs, which blossoms into another yawn. CLARK keeps on glaring at LOIS.

LOIS

All right, all right. I might have gotten four hours last night...

CLARK

And... the night before?

...three and a half.

LOIS

CLARK sighs and shakes his head in frustration.

CLARK

Lois, you can't do that to yourself. You're going to get sick!

LOIS

Well, I couldn't help it! Last night I was up trying to think of leads on this Hudson case.

CLARK

And the night before?

LOIS

I was ... making some coffee.

CLARK

You were making coffee?

LOIS

Well, I thought that you would need some after stopping that mudslide in Peru.

CLARK sighs in frustration. At this point, JIMMY and PERRY exit the conference room amid a swarm of the reporters. They are discussing something, but stop and look up at CLARK and LOIS from across the room. They look as if they are arguing slightly. PERRY chuckles slightly. JIMMY looks at PERRY.

JIMMY

What do you suppose that they're arguing about now?

PERRY

Probably about Lois' health.

Before JIMMY can say something, LOIS yawns again, which touches off another flurry of nagging from CLARK. JIMMY looks at PERRY with surprise.

JIMMY

How'd you know?

PERRY

I'll tell ya, Jimmy, when you've been in this business as long as I have, you learn to recognize what stages a couple's marriage is in. Everyone goes through 'em. Right now, Lois and Clark are at the stage where the slightest cough or sneeze sets off a flurry of concern.

JIMMY

Oh. *(pause)* So what stage comes next?

PERRY

You're better off not knowing, Jimmy. And when it finally does hit, we better both steer clear.

The attention shifts back to LOIS and CLARK again.

LOIS

Clark, this is ridiculous! I'm old enough to know what's best for me! Just because you can fly around on hardly any sleep doesn't make you...

LOIS trails off as a DELIVERY BOY arrives with a large, gaudy bouquet of flowers. It almost looks like a bouquet from a funeral home that's been sitting around for a few days, with some of the flowers half-dead and drooping slightly.

DELIVERY BOY

Lois Lane?

LOIS nods, and the DELIVERY BOY drops the flowers on her desk. LOIS frowns as she looks over

the bouquet. She finds a card tucked into the center of the bouquet and plucks it out. She opens it.

LOIS

"To the best reporter I know. Keep up the good work.
From your secret admirer."

She smiles slightly and looks up at CLARK.

LOIS

Is this your idea of a sick joke, Clark? Maybe I
haven't been taking care of myself, but you don't...

CLARK

I didn't send you flowers.

LOIS frowns and looks back at the card.

LOIS

Well if you didn't, then who did?

CLARK tries to say something, but before he can, JIMMY runs up to them.

JIMMY

Hey, I just got a call from Bobby Big-Mouth. He
thinks he's come up with a lead on that Hudson
Chemical case. He wants to meet the two of you
at the House of Thai in a half hour.

LOIS and CLARK shoot knowing glances at each other.

LOIS

Figures. It's the one place where he won't fill
up that quickly.

CLARK

Look, Lois, why don't you go home and take a nap.
I'll go talk to Bobby.

CLARK begins to leave, but LOIS snares him and stops him fast.

LOIS

Not so fast! I feel fine! I can go talk to Bobby
as...

LOIS' voice trails off slightly as she yawns again.

LOIS

...well.

With that, LOIS storms off towards the elevator. CLARK sighs in frustration and starts after her.

INT.- A WAREHOUSE

The warehouse is almost completely filled with all sorts of insane paraphernalia, almost like a demented child's toy box. In one corner stands a television camera which is dressed up like a clown. Along another wall is a series of gas canisters, each labeled in large, gaudy letters as "SMILEX." Various insanely colored boxes are lined up against another wall. In the midst of this colorful chaos is a small, makeshift lab, where the JOKER stands, carefully pouring chemicals into one of the stolen barrels from Hudson. As he carefully adds another beaker of chemicals to the mix, one of his henchmen walks up slowly.

HENCHMAN

Mr. Joker, sir?

The JOKER jumps in mock surprise, almost dropping the beaker. He "freaks out," going into all sorts of physical contortions to keep from dropping the beaker, which, in another context, would have possibly been humorous. All it does is scare the HENCHMAN, who flinches away, expecting an explosion. Finally, the JOKER catches the beaker safely. He slams it on a nearby table and whirls on the HENCHMAN.

JOKER

How many times have I told you not to do that?
What do you want?

HENCHMAN

You wanted me to tell you when that Lois Lane character contacted Bobby Big-Mouth? Well, I got word that they're meeting him in fifteen minutes.

JOKER

Excellent! So now I can finally show my appreciation to Ms. Lane appropriately. Come, let us away!

The JOKER claps his hands, as if summoning someone. Immediately, five or six THUGs step out of the shadows and follow him out the door.

EXT.- CHINATOWN, LATER

LOIS and CLARK are walking down the sidewalk, trying to make their way through the crowd. LOIS is striding on ahead of CLARK, trying to avoid him.

CLARK

Come on, Lois! Slow down! I can hardly keep up!

LOIS

I find that hard to believe. After all, you're always so healthy! Surely you can keep up with frail little me!

CLARK

Will you settle down? I was only concerned that you might be getting sick! Is there something wrong with that?

LOIS

Of course! Now you'll be treating me like some little kid, coming after me to watch what I eat, make sure I get enough sleep, trying to blow my nose after I sneeze... I've been there before, Clark.

CLARK begins to say something, but stops as his super-hearing picks up a conversation. LOIS doesn't notice this, but keeps on talking.

THUG #1 (o.s.)

You ready?

THUG #2 (o.s.)

Yeah. You take Lane, I'll get Kent.

LOIS (cont.)

I mean, I don't need someone to act like a parent for me! I grew up on my own and was able to take care of myself just fine! I don't need you to start now!

CLARK shoots an annoyed glance at LOIS, and then turns and uses his x-ray vision to look through the wall of the corner they're about to turn. This reveals the THUGS, standing ready to pounce. CLARK grits his teeth nervously and turns to LOIS, who starts forward towards the corner.

CLARK

Lois...

LOIS turns around and faces CLARK, who runs up to her.

LOIS

There's nothing more to say, Clark. You want me to stay healthy, I'd like to as well. But I don't need you to hover over me like some mother hen.

CLARK nods, trying to get her to be quiet. LOIS, however, continues to speak her mind, ignoring CLARK's attempts to hush her.

LOIS (cont.)

So you can just back off and let me take care of myself, okay?

CLARK

Sure. Now can you just hold it right here? I can't let you go around that corner!

LOIS

Oh, why? Am I going to catch a cold from the germs around the corner?

CLARK

No, but you might get hit over the head by the thugs hiding around the corner.

LOIS realizes that CLARK is right and immediately falls silent.

LOIS

Oh.

CLARK

I'll be right back.

She nods, and CLARK rushes off, his body a blur. He rounds the corner, having changed into his SUPERMAN costume, and prepares to take out the thugs. To his surprise, the THUGS are already knocked out and hanging upside-down from the fire escape. SUPERMAN looks up at them in surprise. LOIS comes around the corner, also surprised by the sight of the thugs hanging upside down.

LOIS

You know, this isn't your usual style.

SUPERMAN looks at LOIS in frustration.

SUPERMAN

Come on. We've got to meet with Bobby Big-Mouth.

EXT.- ALLEY

The JOKER pokes his head up from behind a dumpster and sees SUPERMAN take off. LOIS leaves as well. The JOKER hits the dumpster in frustration at the sight of his thugs tied up and upside down.

JOKER

Perfect! All right, boys, time for plan B!

EXT.- HOUSE OF THAI OUTDOOR SEATING

CLARK and LOIS are seated at one of the tables, as is BOBBY. The notorious snitch is busy stuffing his face from one of the many plates that are piled in front of him. Even though it is very rude, he is talking with his mouth open, to the obvious disgust of LOIS and CLARK.

BOBBY

So what was it you wanted to know about? That job at Hudson Chemical?

LOIS

That's right. You said that you had some new information.

BOBBY

Yeah. I got word from the coroner assigned to the case. He's done some toxicology tests on the scientists. I even acquired a copy of the autopsy reports on two of the scientists.

BOBBY holds up a manila folder. When LOIS tries to grab it, BOBBY pulls it away. LOIS looks at CLARK, frustrated, and nods to the waiter, who comes over and takes another order from BOBBY. BOBBY smiles and hands the folder over to LOIS. LOIS immediately rips it open and starts looking it over.

BOBBY

You'll find that the scientists were killed by some sort of nerve toxin. They haven't been able to identify it yet.

LOIS

What's this mean? "The toxin created a form of rigor mortis in the mouths, causing them to be frozen open in a grimace?"

BOBBY

See for yourself. There's even full color pictures in there.

LOIS flips through the file and gasps. She shows the picture to CLARK, who grimaces. It's a picture of DUSTIN, his eyes wide open and his mouth frozen in a horrible grimace. BOBBY just nods, still chewing.

BOBBY

Gruesome, ain't it?

CLARK

Do you have any idea who's responsible for this yet?

BOBBY shakes his head as he continues to eat.

BOBBY

All I've heard is that there might be a new crime boss moving in.

CLARK

Someone with Intergang?

BOBBY

No. Intergang is just as curious right now about that Hudson business. They aren't responsible for this at all.

CLARK looks to LOIS, who simply shrugs. They begin to stand up.

LOIS

Thanks, Bobby.

CLARK

Call us if you find out anything new.

BOBBY only nods, still cramming his face full of food. LOIS and CLARK start walking away.

CLARK

So what do you think?

LOIS

I think whoever is responsible for those deaths is seriously demented. As in psychotic. Hey, wait a minute. Look at this...

LOIS holds up a police report. On it is a little yellow post-it note. CLARK takes it from LOIS and reads.

CLARK

"I was also able to procure this police report on the crime scene. Maybe it will help. Bobby."

LOIS

What's the report say?

CLARK

Not much. They found remains of some kind of gas grenade in the lab. And listen to this: all of those barrels of nitrogen tritrate were stolen.

LOIS

Who would want to steal nitrogen tritrate? That stuff is worthless as nerve gas!

CLARK

Maybe somebody knows of a use for it that we don't.

LOIS gives CLARK a skeptical look. Before she can say anything, CLARK's super-hearing picks up a mugging.

MUGGER (o.s.)

Okay, buddy, hand over the wallet.

VICTIM (o.s.)

Help! Anyone, help me! I'm being mugged!

CLARK turns to LOIS and hands the file back to LOIS.

CLARK

Hold that thought, Lois, I'll be back in a second.

Before LOIS can protest, CLARK has ducked into a nearby alley. A split-second later, there is the customary sonic boom associated with SUPERMAN taking off into action. LOIS sighs, which develops into a sneeze. She looks up, miserable.

LOIS

Great. Not only is he gone, but he's probably right.

LOIS continues on her way. Almost immediately, a MIME appears out of nowhere. He begins to wave at her, all smiles and fun. LOIS just nods to him, and tries to walk around him. The MIME watches her go, and quickly catches up to her. He begins to pantomime playing tug-of-war in her path. LOIS sighs in frustration, and turns to go the other way. She is surprised by the appearance of another MIME, who is pretending to be trapped in a glass box. She ducks between them and keeps on her way. The two MIMEs look at each other, shrug, and follow her again. This time, they begin to climb a mountain, again, right in her path. Finally, LOIS stomps her foot in anger, getting their attention.

LOIS

Look, what do you want?

The MIMEs glance at each other, and the first MIME holds out his hand, as if asking for a donation. LOIS grumbles something under her breath and begins to rummage through her purse, looking for spare change.

LOIS

I swear that you mimes get more aggressive all the time!

Before she can look up, the MIME suddenly puts his gloved hand over her mouth and nose. LOIS immediately straightens up, her eyes wide with surprise. She tries to pry the hand away from her face, but soon, her eyes flicker and then close. She goes completely limp, fast asleep. The MIME pulls his hand away, smiling insanely.

JOKER

I guess you're right, Ms. Lane! We mimes are just too aggressive! I mean, we put chloroform on our gloves! What kind of sick people are we?

EXT.- ALLEY

The MUGGER is holding a gun up to a small MAN, who is completely frozen with fear.

MUGGER

You heard me, Mac, give me all your money and make it quick!

Before the MAN can respond, SUPERMAN lands in the alley. The MUGGER looks away from the MAN, who still stands frozen in fear. The MUGGER recoils in mock fear.

MUGGER

Oh, horrors! The Man of Steel! Whatever shall I do?

SUPERMAN

Well, for starters, you'll be coming with me.

MUGGER

No, I don't think so. Maybe I should shoot at you for a while.

The MUGGER swings around the gun and fires. Instead of shooting bullets, a large, colorful flag pops out of the gun and unfurls to reveal a large "BANG!" The MUGGER laughs and runs away. SUPERMAN watches him run, puzzled, but then turns to the MAN, who is still standing stock still, his arms up in the air.

SUPERMAN

You can relax now, sir, everything is fine.

MAN

Help! Anyone, help me! I'm being mugged!

SUPERMAN frowns, confused. He leans in for a closer look at the man, and sees a tape recorder embedded in the man's chest. SUPERMAN taps the MAN slightly, who falls over, still frozen in the same position. As he hits the ground, the MAN's head pops off. He was only a mannequin. SUPERMAN stares at the dummy in disbelief. He turns to leave, when the tape player in the dummy clicks on and the MAN's voice fills the air.

MAN

This diversion brought to you in part by Superman
Is A Chump, Inc. Thank you for participating.

SUPERMAN looks at the dummy for a split second. Then a thought dawns on him. He immediately

takes off.

EXT.- CHINATOWN

CLARK comes running out of an alley, straightening his tie, looking around frantically.

CLARK

Lois?

There is no response. CLARK continues to run frantically through the crowd, searching for his partner. He pauses every now and then to call out her name.

CLARK

Lois? Lois!

He still can't find her. This only makes him frustrated.

INT.- THE WAREHOUSE

LOIS is lying on a large, over-stuffed, purple, white, and green chair. She is still unconscious. Slowly, her eyes begin to flicker, and then slowly open. She takes a look around her surroundings. The warehouse has been cleaned up considerably. The lab equipment is gone, and in its place, is a circular table, covered with a white tablecloth. A silver candelabra burns brightly. LOIS approaches the table cautiously, and notices fine china set out. A single dead rose lies on each plate. LOIS picks one of them up gingerly, almost as if she expects it to attack her.

JOKER (o.s.)

Well, I'm glad to see that our little sleepy-head finally decided to wake up!

LOIS whirls around, but the JOKER continues to hang back in the shadows.

LOIS

Who's that? Who's there?

JOKER (o.s.)

Why, your biggest fan, Miss Lane! Your writings have literally changed my life!

LOIS

Really? Then why are you hiding from me?

JOKER (o.s.)

Oh, I'm a little shy. You see, Miss Lane, most people find my looks to be comical. For some... odd reason... people laugh at me a lot.

LOIS

I won't laugh. Come on out of the shadows.

JOKER (o.s.)

Do you promise?

LOIS sighs and nods.

LOIS

I promise.

JOKER (o.s.)

Well... all right.

The JOKER steps out of the shadows. LOIS gasps in shock at his appearance. The JOKER's insane grin seems to grow larger. He chuckles to himself.

JOKER

Well, that's a first! Nobody's ever reacted like that to me before!

JOKER turns towards the table. He suddenly pauses, considers something, and then chuckles some more. He turns back to LOIS.

JOKER

Although once I'm done with Metropolis, people will be reacting like that all the time!

INT.- DAILY PLANET OFFICE

CLARK is seated at his desk, on the phone. His shirt is wrinkled and his tie is loosened. It looks like he's exhausted. Whatever he's hearing on the phone, he doesn't like it.

CLARK

Are you sure that she hasn't called, Lucy? ... Uh huh.
Well, you have my pager number if she does. ... Yeah,
I'll talk to you later.

CLARK weakly hangs up the phone. JIMMY trots out of the elevator. CLARK looks up expectantly, but his face falls when he sees JIMMY's frustrated expression.

JIMMY

I did just like you asked me to, CK. I checked down at Pierre's Cafe and at S.T.A.R. Labs. Lois hasn't been to either place.

CLARK sighs in frustration.

CLARK

I've already searched the whole city. Where could she be?

JIMMY

C'mon, CK. Lois has only been missing for an hour! How can you say that you've searched the whole city?

CLARK chuckles to himself.

CLARK

Sorry. Guess I was just exaggerating a little. I'm just so ... worried about Lois.

JIMMY

I know. We all are. Don't worry. If we can't find her, I'm sure Superman will.

JIMMY pats CLARK on the back and goes on about his business. CLARK looks down at his desk.

CLARK

Yeah, I hope that he can, too.

INT.- THE WAREHOUSE

LOIS is still backing away from the JOKER, who is still smiling.

JOKER

Allow me to introduce myself, Ms. Lane. My name is the Joker.

LOIS

And you say that my work has changed your life?
What was it, that circus piece I did last year?

A hurt look crosses the JOKER's face. He looks away. LOIS immediately starts toward him, almost as if she is going to comfort him. Suddenly, the JOKER snaps his fingers and looks up.

JOKER

Oh, that was a joke, wasn't it?

LOIS weakly nods. The JOKER begins to laugh good-naturedly. Soon LOIS begins to laugh as well, totally off-guard.

LOIS

Yeah... it was a joke.

The JOKER continues to laugh, but suddenly and without warning, turns on LOIS furiously, fire flashing in his eyes. LOIS has no choice but to back up, frightened.

JOKER

Nobody makes jokes around here but me! Got it?

LOIS nods. The JOKER is suddenly all smiles again.

JOKER

Good! Now that that is established, we can get down
to business. Garçon!

The JOKER claps twice, and BRUNO appears out of no where, carrying a silver colored tray. BRUNO doesn't look all that enthusiastic, so he just drops the tray on the table. The JOKER sniffs in disdain.

JOKER

Good help is so hard to find nowadays, isn't it?

The JOKER pulls a gun and shoots BRUNO. BRUNO falls to the ground.

JOKER

Well, that takes care of that! On to how you changed
my pitiful little life.

The JOKER pulls the cover off the tray, revealing a small model of a molecule. The JOKER picks it up and holds it out to LOIS.

JOKER

Recognize what this is?

LOIS leans away from it and barely shakes her head. The JOKER shakes his head, disappointed.

JOKER

Shame on you! Don't you realize that this is nitrogen tritrate, that wonderful little government dud you and Clarky dug up a few weeks ago?

LOIS

You're the one who stole all of the nitrogen tritrate from Hudson Chemical?

JOKER

Hey, you're good at this reporting thing, aren't you? Of course I did!

LOIS

But why? That stuff is useless as a nerve gas!

JOKER

Oh, I know that! But it isn't that useless when combined with a few common household chemicals...

The JOKER picks up another molecular model. He snaps this one into the first model.

JOKER

....and viola! You get a potent instrument of mayhem that kills indiscriminately but leaves people with a smile. I like to call it "Smilex."

LOIS

Like how those scientists were killed.

JOKER

Exactly! It's perfect for someone like me! I can cause people to literally die laughing. The problem was, I didn't have a large supply where I come from. I could only get a little bit of nitrogen tritrate here, a little nitrogen tritrate there. It wasn't like I could just go out to a playground and dig some more up! Unfortunately, it wasn't enough for

a steady supply of my Smilex. And then... I heard about Metropolis. The city where you could literally dig up barrels of nitrogen tritrate! Enough nitrogen tritrate to mass produce Smilex! And if it wasn't for the reporting team of Lane and Kent, I would have never learned about it!

LOIS

(hesitantly)

Well ... you're welcome. So why did you kidnap me?

JOKER

Why else?

The JOKER waves at the table dramatically.

JOKER

To properly show you my appreciation! Ms. Lane, you have given my life direction! I know what I have to do now and how I have to do it! And I have you to thank for it!

LOIS

Clark helped out too. Why didn't you kidnap him as well?

JOKER

Well, Clark may be cuter than you, but he really isn't my type. But you, Ms. Lane, you are my type. You are witty, vivacious, beautiful! We are so alike, you and I... except your hair isn't green and your skin hasn't been bleached white by a freakish accident, but hey, those are only details! Besides, people would talk if I had an intimate dinner with Clark. And we don't want that, do we?

LOIS continues to back away slightly, nodding.

LOIS

Of course not.

The JOKER is still all smiles.

JOKER

I'm glad we agree! I'll get dinner ready. Make yourself at home, won't you?

The JOKER trots off, disappearing from the room. The minute he leaves, LOIS is up and moving around the room, examining every square inch, trying to find something she can use. She shudders as she steps over BRUNO's body and gives the canisters of Smilex a wide berth. Finally, she spies a pile of electronic parts. She begins to rummage through them frantically, desperately looking for something she can use to contact SUPERMAN.

JOKER (o.s.)

So tell me, Ms. Lane... may I call you Lois?

LOIS

Sure.

JOKER (o.s.)

How do you like your steaks? Raw?

LOIS shudders again, still looking through the pile.

LOIS

Why not?

LOIS finally spies a cellular phone and picks it up. The back has been pried off of the phone, revealing it's innards. LOIS sucks in an anxious breath and slowly keys it on. She dials the phone and crosses her fingers.

INT.- DAILY PLANET OFFICE, CLARK'S DESK

The phone rings. CLARK is half-way across the room when it happens. He glances around, and seeing that no one is watching, flashes to the other side of the office in a burst of super-speed. The phone is in his hand before it can even finish the second ring.

CLARK

Hello?

LOIS (o.s.)

Clark?

CLARK

Lois? Lois, where are you?

INT.- THE WAREHOUSE

LOIS is clutching the phone close to her ear, talking softly. She continually shoots furtive glances towards the kitchen, keeping an eye out for the JOKER's return.

LOIS

I'm in some sort of warehouse with some crack-pot who's calling himself "the Joker." He's the guy who stole the nitrogen tritrate and killed all those scientists.

CLARK (o.s.)

Where is he right now?

LOIS

Believe it or not, he's cooking a romantic dinner for me, and....

She falls silent as the JOKER backs out of the kitchen, coughing on the volumes of smoke billowing out of the doorway.

JOKER

I hope you like your steaks *flambè*, Lois, because the kitchen is on fire...

By this time, the JOKER has turned around and sees LOIS on the phone.

JOKER

How quaint! Trying to reach out and touch someone, eh?

LOIS

Clark! Help me!

INT.- DAILY PLANET OFFICE, CLARK'S DESK

The phone is already dangling over the edge of the desk, and there is the small sonic boom of SUPERMAN getting into action in the background.

LOIS (o.s.)

Clark! Clark?

INT.- THE WAREHOUSE

The JOKER has crossed the distance between himself and LOIS, violently snatching the phone from her hand. He holds the phone up to his ear. He pinches his nose, giving his voice a nasally sound.

JOKER

I'm sorry. The party you were talking with has been disconnected.

With an insane laugh, the JOKER drops the phone and crushes it under his heel. He gives it a good twist for effect, and then looks up at LOIS, murder flashing in his eyes. LOIS begins to back away from him, desperately searching behind her for some sort of weapon. The JOKER begins to advance on her dangerously.

JOKER

That was a mistake, Ms. Lane. A very big mistake.

LOIS finds a pipe and holds it in front of her, threatening to club the JOKER. The JOKER just laughs at her.

JOKER

Oh, come now! That's no match for me!

The JOKER leans forward slightly, and the colorful flower tucked into his lapel spits out some sort of a liquid that immediately begins to sizzle and sputter as it touches the pipe. Instantly, the pipe bends and falls apart. LOIS drops the other half and continues to scramble away from the JOKER.

JOKER

Come on, Lois! Don't you want to smell the flower?

The JOKER prepares to fire off another shot of acid, when there is a crashing sound and part of the ceiling falls in. SUPERMAN drops to the floor and immediately between the JOKER and LOIS. The acid spray sizzles harmlessly across SUPERMAN's chest. LOIS instantly comes up close behind him. The JOKER backs off in surprise, but his cocky personality is back in full force.

JOKER

Well, well, well. If it isn't Little Boy Blue.
So, have you come to blow your horn?

SUPERMAN

No, but I have come to put an end to your insanity!

JOKER

Oh, come now? You call what I'm doing insane?
Hardly! How many robberies are committed each day?
How many murders? The few crimes I've perpetrated
in Metropolis is just a drop in the bucket! I have
yet to be truly insane, Supes. But don't worry,
you'll know when I do.

SUPERMAN

Tell it to the judge.

SUPERMAN steps forward to grab the JOKER, who backs away, chuckling to himself.

JOKER

You just don't get it, do you? I'm not going with you!

SUPERMAN

Oh yeah? And what makes you say that?

The JOKER smiles slightly and pulls out a gas grenade.

JOKER

This!

In one fluid motion, the JOKER pulls the pin from the grenade, throws it at SUPERMAN, and turns and runs away, laughing hysterically the whole time. SUPERMAN barely shoves LOIS out of the way when the grenade explodes, sending out waves of green gas. SUPERMAN quickly inhales, sucking up the gas before it can get to LOIS. He begins to cough slightly and stoops over, almost as if he were in pain. LOIS immediately comes up to him, concerned.

LOIS

Superman... Clark, are you all right?

SUPERMAN begins to chuckle and looks up. His eyes are wide and wild with mischief. He looks at Lois with a dopey grin plastered on his face.

SUPERMAN

Sure! Hey, Lois. I know! Let's go out and play!

With that said, SUPERMAN takes off and bursts through one of the walls. LOIS watches him go, confused, but follows him out of the hole.

EXT.- DAILY PLANET BUILDING

Traffic is backed up since it is rush hour. One taxi cab, driven by VINNIE ANDERSON, pulls up to the light. VINNIE sighs to himself and looks at his watch. He leans his head out of the window and bangs on the side of his cab in frustration.

VINNIE

Hey! Come on! Let's move it!

He leans back into his cab and shakes his head in frustration. Suddenly, SUPERMAN lands right in front of the cab. VINNIE jumps, startled.

SUPERMAN

Hey, do you want to play?

VINNIE

What?

SUPERMAN

Let's play!

SUPERMAN slaps the hood of the cab, causing the cab to actually flip over and smash into another car. SUPERMAN laughs hysterically as the two drivers scramble out of the wrecked vehicles.

SUPERMAN

Tag! You're it!

JIMMY and PERRY come running out of the building to see what the commotion is about and stare at SUPERMAN as he begins to grab cars and smash them together, the whole time laughing hysterically.

SUPERMAN

I always liked to play with cars when I was a kid!
I especially loved smashing them together!

With that, he smashes two more cars together. He looks over and sees a tanker truck begin to pull up to a gas station. Laughing the whole time, SUPERMAN walks over to PERRY and JIMMY. He claps both of them on the back.

SUPERMAN

Hey, guys! Remember that old hot foot trick?

JIMMY nods, not sure he wants to know where SUPERMAN is going with this.

SUPERMAN

Well, I'm gonna do one better! I'm gonna give all of Metropolis a hot foot!

SUPERMAN turns and directs his heat vision on the tanker truck. The DRIVER of the truck turns to see his tank get red hot. He immediately gives out a shout of alarm as all the BYSTANDERS scatter in fear. Luckily, they all make it to safe distance before the tanker explodes in a brilliant fire ball. SUPERMAN laughs again.

SUPERMAN

Now we're really cooking with gas, huh?

PERRY

Now, Superman, I don't know what's gotten into you, but I think we'd better....

SUPERMAN

And for my next trick, I'm going to make Perry White disappear!

In a flash, both men are gone. JIMMY is almost knocked back by the blast of wind when SUPERMAN returns without PERRY.

JIMMY

Where'd you put the Chief?

SUPERMAN

Someplace safe.

JIMMY

Hey, come on, Superman, I really think you should settle down.

SUPERMAN's mood suddenly darkens, and JIMMY immediately regrets saying anything. SUPERMAN leans into JIMMY threateningly.

SUPERMAN

Are you trying to tell me what to do? Do you know what I do to people who try to tell me what to do?

JIMMY weakly shakes his head, his face frozen in fear.

SUPERMAN

I knock them into orbit!

JIMMY winces, almost expecting the blow to come at any second. Instead, SUPERMAN bursts out laughing. JIMMY immediately relaxes.

SUPERMAN

Settle down! I was just joking!

SUPERMAN pats JIMMY on the back, the force of which knocks him over. Another taxi cab pulls up, and LOIS runs out of it. She starts to approach SUPERMAN, but stops and looks around at the mischief and mayhem he's caused. Finally, she runs over to SUPERMAN, who is laughing uncontrollably as he lazily spins an overturned car.

LOIS

Superman! What is wrong with you?

SUPERMAN continues to laugh, but looks up at LOIS with desperation in his eyes.

SUPERMAN

I... I wish I could tell you! I just can't seem to keep from laughing! Besides... it's kind of fun!

LOIS

You call this fun? Look around you, Clark! People could get hurt if you keep this up!

SUPERMAN looks around and realizes that LOIS is right. People are cowering away from him in fear. He steps away from the car, fighting to control himself, but he can't help but laugh.

LOIS

Isn't there something you can do to stop it?

SUPERMAN

I don't know! Maybe...

Without another word, SUPERMAN takes off straight up into the air. As he goes higher and higher, the air begins to thin, and soon, SUPERMAN is floating serenely in the vacuum of space. He glances back at the Earth, then steadies himself, and exhales. The green Smilex gas erupts from his mouth and immediately freezes before him. SUPERMAN smiles to himself, and begins to descend back to earth.

INT.- LOIS AND CLARK'S LIVING ROOM, LATER

CLARK is dressed in a casual outfit, crumpling up his cape up in frustration. He is on the phone with his parents. LOIS is also in the apartment, watching television.

CLARK

I just don't get it. I... lost control. The Joker just blasted me with that stuff, and I lost control of myself. I don't know what would have happened if Lois hadn't confronted me.

INT.- KENT KITCHEN

MARTHA and JONATHAN are on the two phones, busy preparing dinner. MARTHA stops what she's doing to sit down.

MARTHA

It sounds like you were lucky that Lois was there, honey.

CLARK (o.s.)

Yeah, Mom. I was.

JONATHAN

What are you going to do, son? You'll probably have to tangle with this Joker character again later and he'll probably use that gas again.

INT.- LOIS AND CLARK'S LIVING ROOM

CLARK is hanging up his cape in his secret closet. He lets out a frustrated sigh.

CLARK

I know that, Dad, but there's little I can do about it. I'm hoping that I'll build up some sort of immunity to it, but I don't know. I just can't fly back into space every time that the Joker hits me with it. He could hurt people during that time.

MARTHA (o.s.)

Well, keep in touch. Let us know what happens!

CLARK

Okay, Mom. Love you.

CLARK hangs up the phone and continues to straighten his closet. He starts to talk to LOIS without turning to face her.

CLARK

Did he say anything else while you were with him?

LOIS

Not really. Just that the article on the nitrogen tritrate helped give his life purpose and direction. Whatever that means.

CLARK turns from the closet, about to say something. There is a sudden knock at the door. LOIS gets up.

LOIS

Who is it?

JIMMY (o.s.)

It's Jimmy! I have that criminal record you asked for!

LOIS starts to turn to CLARK, but before she can say anything, there is a whooshing sound in the background.

LOIS

Quick, Clark, you had better get all of your stuff...

LOIS is turned around and sees CLARK seated on the sofa, his secret closet shut and any shred of evidence that he's really SUPERMAN hidden away.

LOIS

...hidden.

LOIS shakes her head in amazement and opens the door. JIMMY steps inside, holding a large ream of fax paper. He steps inside, and automatically rubs his back. LOIS looks at him with concern.

LOIS

Are you all right, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Huh? Oh, yeah. I'm fine. When Superman went on the rampage, he kind of hit me a little hard.

LOIS shoots a dirty look at CLARK, who can only shrug. JIMMY doesn't notice this, and goes down the stairs.

JIMMY (cont.)

Yeah. But I guess I could have had it worse. Poor Chief. Superman actually flew him to New York and left him at the top of the Empire State Building. He wasn't too happy.

CLARK

I guess you can't blame Perry for being mad, but it really wasn't Superman's fault. He was under the influence of that Smilex gas.

JIMMY

Sure. Whatever.

JIMMY plops down to watch the television. LOIS picks up the ream of fax paper and begins to leaf through it.

LOIS

Clark, this is incredible. This Joker apparently comes from Gotham City. His real name is unknown, his age is unknown. He just suddenly showed up a few years ago and made a "dramatic entrance" into the crime scene.

CLARK

What did he do?

LOIS

He almost blew up the city hall. Then he took the mayor hostage and threatened to kill him. He was arrested, but escaped from jail within two weeks by... get this. He requested that a clown come to the jail for his birthday. He then knocked the clown out and escaped by pretending to

be the clown.

CLARK

Incredible.

LOIS

And the list doesn't end there. He's used that Smilex gas in dozens of other incidents, has a whole string of first degree murders, plus hundreds of other "minor" charges, from kidnaping to assault.

CLARK

Sounds like an absolutely charming individual.

LOIS

Oh, he can be. Believe me. This criminal record ends with the fact that he was found mysteriously tied up on the front steps of the Gotham City police station three weeks ago, only to escape from the Arkham Asylum for the criminally insane.

CLARK

Presumably to come to Metropolis to get the nitrogen trictate.

LOIS

But I don't get it. The Joker seemed to be doing just fine in Gotham City! He seemed to have more than enough... Smilex gas there. Why'd he have to make more?

JIMMY suddenly gasps and starts pointing at the television.

JIMMY

Maybe this is the answer.

LOIS and CLARK come around the sofa and gawk at the television in surprise. On the television screen, we see a psychedelic, spinning JOKER face.

JOKER

Hey, kids! What's the newest, the latest, the greatest rage?

The spinning JOKER's head is replaced by the JOKER himself. He grins psychotically, and whips up a hand, holding a large aerosol can labeled "SMILEX" in large, gaudy letters.

JOKER

Smilex Gas! That's right!

The JOKER sidles up to an obvious mannequin of an stern looking elderly man. The JOKER pats the mannequin on the shoulder sympathetically.

JOKER

Those darn politicians getting you down with their lies and tricks? Then take care of those annoying pests!

The JOKER sprays the mannequin with the aerosol can and then slaps a big, paper grin on the mannequin's face.

JOKER

Make 'em smile...

The JOKER then shoves the mannequin over face first.

JOKER

...and then make them die! That's right! Smilex Gas! The best form of pest control there is! Those sleazy lawyers annoying you with constant solicitations? You know, like, "Trust me, Joker, I'll help you get off of that murder rap! All we have to do is prove that you're mentally unbalanced! How hard can that be?" I'll show you, you stinking little cockroach...

During the above speech, the JOKER has become more and more hostile as he walks over to another mannequin of a well-dressed young man. He catches himself, gives a furtive glance at the camera, and smiles widely again.

JOKER

But I digress. As I was saying... Are those lawyers causing you constant headaches? Don't take aspirin to get rid of the headache, get rid of the cause!

The JOKER sprays the mannequin as well, slaps a big smile on its face, and then knocks it over.

JOKER

Now I know what you're thinking to yourself:
"Mister Joker, how can I obtain this miracle of
modern science?"

LOIS and CLARK, who are glued to the television set, give each other an apprehensive look.

JOKER

Well, the answer to that is easy! Absolutely
nothing! That's right, you don't have to do a
darn thing!

The JOKER's demeanor changes slightly. He's suddenly become more menacing and evil.

JOKER

Because unless the Metropolis City Council pays me
a sum of \$1.5 billion in one hour, I will flood the
streets of Metropolis with enough Smilex gas that
everyone will have more than enough! They'll be
dying to give it away!

INT.- DAILY PLANET CONFERENCE ROOM

The television set is still broadcasting the JOKER's insane telethon. JIMMY is trying to flip through the stations, trying to see what the other stations are showing. No matter what channel he flips to, however, the JOKER is on every station.

JOKER

We're starting the countdown now, citizens of
Metropolis! In one hour, you'll all be grinnin'
corpses unless your public officers pay yours
truly \$1.5 billion!

JIMMY turns around and shakes his head in frustration.

JIMMY

It's no use. He's gotten into every channel,
including cable.

PERRY walks into the office, out of breath.

PERRY

Great shades of Elvis! I no more than step off the plane from New York when I find out that there's a city wide emergency 'cause some yutz named the Joker has taken the whole city hostage! Now what is going on...

PERRY stops and stares at the television set as the JOKER reveals a large model of the New York City New Year's globe. He waves at it expansively.

JOKER

This, ladies and gentlemen, is what I like to call my Ball of Doom! When one hour passes, the Ball of Doom will drop, triggering the gas canisters to release their deadly cargo, making Metropolis into a ghost town!

The JOKER laughs maniacally. PERRY tries to shut his mouth, but it hangs open in surprise. Finally, when he recovers, all he can muster is a low whisper.

PERRY

Sweet Jesus! And I thought that the taxi driver was joking.

LOIS

I know that this is a little late, Chief, but the Joker is the person who robbed Hudson Chemical and killed all the scientists.

PERRY

I would have never guessed. What else do we have?

LOIS

This... Smilex gas is some sort of nerve toxin. It causes people to literally die laughing... and it even works on Superman.

CLARK shoots a look at LOIS, and quickly looks to PERRY.

CLARK

Only to a limited degree.

PERRY nods, absorbing the information. Finally, he just stares at the television, where the JOKER continues to laugh hysterically.

PERRY

All right. Everyone who can, get out of here. Try to get out of town before that... that maniac kills us all.

As if he heard what PERRY said, the JOKER suddenly stops laughing and looks at the camera seriously.

JOKER

Oh, and just in case some of you are thinking of trying to "Flee to the hills 'fore that insane clown kills us all!" Well, on that note, we go to one of our remote camera links, just outside city limits.

The television screen frizzes out for a second, and the picture is replaced by serene nature setting. A road dominates the picture, with a sign that reads "METROPOLIS CITY LIMITS" by the road.

JOKER (v.o.)

Ah, nature! So calm. So serene. So... natural! Wouldn't you just love to take your family out to a picnic here? Well, that might not be a good idea today.

There is a slight pause, when suddenly, the road erupts in a violent explosion, destroying the pavement and leaving a big, gaping, smoldering hole in the highway.

JOKER (v.o.)

Talk about your potholes! We really need to do something about those politicians! They're just letting all of our roads go to seed!

The scene shifts back to the JOKER.

JOKER

That's right, ladies and germs! All roads leading out of Metropolis have just suffered a similar fate. Unless you're Superman and can fly out of here, you're all stuck. So sit back, and enjoy the ride.

PERRY slowly sinks into a chair, in a daze. LOIS and CLARK are immediately at his side.

CLARK

Perry? Is there anything we can do for you?

PERRY

No, not really. The only person who might even be able to stop this guy is Superman.

LOIS gives CLARK a knowing look, who just shrugs. They stand up slowly and leave the conference room quietly. LOIS immediately grabs CLARK by the elbow and pulls him to one side.

LOIS

So why aren't you going off and taking care of this?

CLARK

I would, but we still don't know what the Joker's whole scheme is. I mean, do you really think that he'd just threaten to gas the whole city? You saw how he blew up that road. Who knows what else he's done.

LOIS

Well, you should at least be out there looking for the gas canisters. Or maybe the Joker's still at the warehouse. You could go catch him!

CLARK nods, and quickly ducks out of sight. There is a small sonic boom as LOIS turns back to the television. The JOKER is standing around patiently, looking at his watch.

JOKER

Well, well, well. Five minutes have come and gone. Fifty-five minutes left. Oh, well. I guess we all have some time to kill.

The JOKER bursts out laughing at his own joke. LOIS shudders and sits down at her desk to wait.

INT.- THE WAREHOUSE

The warehouse is pretty much empty. Someone is sitting in a high-back chair, illuminated in a single pool of light. SUPERMAN crashes through one of the walls. He glances around at the darkened warehouse and notices the person sitting in the chair. He starts toward the chair slowly. The chair suddenly swivels around, revealing another dummy with a TV embedded in its chest. The JOKER's head appears on the TV.

JOKER

Well! If it isn't the Man of Steel! Come now, Supes, do you really think I would be stupid enough to stay in the same spot?

SUPERMAN

Maybe. So where are you?

JOKER

Oh, let me think about that one. Should I tell the infamous Superman where I am? Hmmmm.... I don't think so. It'll ruin all of our fun.

SUPERMAN

You call gassing an entire city fun?

JOKER

Well, we all have our hobbies. Some people collect stamps, others go fishing. I just happen to cause mayhem on a grandiose scale. What's the difference?

SUPERMAN

You can go to jail for it?

JOKER

Oh, you're such a pessimist! First I have to be caught. And that's going to be a little difficult with all the police dead and you laughing like a madman!

SUPERMAN

We'll see about that.

JOKER

Now who's cocky? But enough about me. Let's talk about you. What do you think of this warehouse? I know you didn't get a good look at it last time.

SUPERMAN looks around briefly, annoyed.

SUPERMAN

It's very nice.

JOKER

You're just saying that. No, I know that it's just a little bland, so I decided to do some redecorating.
Lights!

The lights around the chair light up, revealing pile upon pile of explosives. SUPERMAN's eyes go wide, and he begins to back away.

JOKER

Now I know that you won't be hurt by all this stuff, but it sure will slow you down. Until later, cuddles!

EXT.- THE WAREHOUSE

The warehouse erupts in a brilliant fireball.

INT.- THE DAILY PLANET OFFICE

LOIS whirls around at the sound of a muffled explosion. The JOKER starts laughing on the television.

JOKER

No, that sound you're hearing isn't the end of the world. It's just me doing a little house-keeping. Or house-wrecking. I guess it kind of depends on your point of view, doesn't it?

EXT.- THE WAREHOUSE RUBBLE

The warehouse has been reduced to a pile of smoldering rubble. Slowly but surely, pieces of said rubble are being moved away from underneath until finally, SUPERMAN emerges, covered with dust and soot. He shakes himself off, trying to pat away some of the grime. He winces, and takes off.

INT.- THE DAILY PLANET OFFICE

CLARK enters the office, straightening his tie. He still looks slightly disheveled, although he has been able to clean up most of the grime from his face. LOIS turns and looks at him as he enters. She immediately comes to his side.

LOIS

Are you all right? What happened?

CLARK

The Joker had some fun. What's he been up to?

LOIS

Well, he just got done doing a juggling act. "To help you pass the time," in his words. Actually, he's pretty good.

CLARK

Great. Maybe he missed his calling.

LOIS shoots CLARK a bemused look. Suddenly, there's a loud crash from the television set. They turn to see what's happening, and see the words "SPECIAL REPORT" flashing on the screen. The words disappear, revealing the JOKER sitting behind what looks like a news desk. He is holding a stack of papers in front of him, from which he reads urgently.

JOKER

This just in! This news station has just received word that all brake lines of every bus in Metropolis, both public and school, have been cut! And it's rush hour! All the buses are filled with innocent citizens!

The JOKER throws up the papers in his hands in mock horror and fear. He starts to strike many melodramatic poses.

JOKER

Oh, the humanity! There are over one-hundred buses in Metropolis! How will they ever be stopped? Where's Keanu Reeves when you need him?

LOIS looks at CLARK desperately, who nods and is off again. Just as suddenly, the JOKER's demeanor changes again and he is calm.

JOKER

And in a totally unrelated story, Army Surplus stores have reported that their supply of gas masks have been completely bought in a futile attempt to protect the citizenry. Hate to tell you this, folks. Regular, run of the mill gas masks won't

stop Smilex! You just wasted your money,
and some precious time!

EXT.- THE STREETS OF METROPOLIS

A city bus is starting down on the highway. The DRIVER of said bus is calmly steering around, accelerating to acceptable speeds. Unfortunately, it is the height of rush hour, and traffic is backed up for miles. The bus begins to approach one of those traffic jams. The DRIVER sighs in frustration and taps on the brakes to slow the bus. Nothing happens. He looks down at the pedal, confused, and pushes slightly harder on the brakes. Again, nothing happens. He frantically begins to stomp on the brakes, which begins to panic the riders. Finally, the driver frantically turns to the passengers.

DRIVER

Hang on!

The passengers begin to clutch at each other and to the seats. The driver braces himself for impact... when the bus suddenly screeches to a grinding halt. The DRIVER looks up over the dashboard and sees SUPERMAN holding the bus back.

SUPERMAN

Kill the engine!

The DRIVER complies. He nods to SUPERMAN in gratitude. SUPERMAN nods grimly and takes off again.

EXT.- A STREET CORNER

Two school buses are speeding towards each other. It is impossible for either DRIVER to regain control of the vehicles. The CHILDREN on board are already in a frenzy, screaming in absolute terror. Just as they are about to collide, there is a blur of blue and red, and SUPERMAN jumps in between them, holding the two buses apart. The CHILDREN start to cheer their gratitude. SUPERMAN smiles at them, and takes off again.

EXT.- A CITY STREET

A MOTHER and CHILD are standing in front of a hardware store, watching a bank of televisions, each of which have the JOKER's grinning face plastered on them. The CHILD apparently has grown bored with watching television, and slowly sneaks away from his mother. He starts to wander into the street, where a bus is barreling down the street, unable to stop. Everyone else gets out of the way, but the CHILD stops and stares at the bus in complete horror. Right at the last second, the CHILD is carried to safety by SUPERMAN. The bus skids off the street and comes to a halt by crashing into

a fire hydrant. SUPERMAN brings the CHILD over to his MOTHER, who hugs him close. SUPERMAN is out of breath from all the activity, and is leaning against the wall, trying to settle down, when there is another loud crash from the TVs.

JOKER

From what I understand, Superman was able to stop every single bus! Good for him! I bet that wasn't easy, seeing as he did it in...

The JOKER offhandedly glances at his watch.

JOKER

...only ten minutes. But the fun doesn't stop there.

There is a small whistling sound, that slowly grows louder and louder. SUPERMAN looks up in the sky and gasps. In a flash of blue and red, SUPERMAN quickly whisks the people out of the way. There is a small explosion where they were standing, shattering the shop window. The explosion can barely drown out the JOKER's laughter. Only when the dust settles does the JOKER stop laughing.

JOKER

Do you all remember how the Army reported that their base outside of Metropolis was missing about ten mortar guns two weeks ago? Well, guess who stole them! That's right! And guess what? All ten of them are surrounding Metropolis, and they'll just randomly shell Metropolis over the next hour!

SUPERMAN sighs, and takes off again.

EXT.- OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS

Two HENCHMEN are having fun, readjusting the aim of the mortar. They giggle to themselves as they reload it and fire it.

HENCHMAN #1

I haven't had this much fun in a long time!

HENCHMAN #2

Yeah, I know.

There is a crackle of static, and a walkie-talkie on the mortar comes to life.

JOKER (o.s.)

All right, boys. Look alive! The Man of Steel should be coming any moment now! Do as much damage as you possibly can before he shuts you down! We still have... almost forty minutes to go!

The HENCHMEN glance at each other nervously. They start to reload the mortar again when there is a sudden creak of metal being bent. They look up at the barrel and see SUPERMAN twisting the barrel shut.

SUPERMAN

I think you two have had enough fun for one day.

The two HENCHMEN glance at each other and put their hands over their heads. SUPERMAN quickly ties them up to the mortar. He pauses for a second, panting heavily. He looks at the mortar.

SUPERMAN

Seven down, three to go.

In a flash, SUPERMAN is off again.

INT.- JOKER'S TELEVISION STUDIO

The JOKER is in a large room, surrounded by large bay windows that overlook Metropolis. He is facing the camera, holding up the Smilex gas molecule model.

JOKER

I realize that many of you are probably wondering exactly what the gas that will kill you is made out of. So I figured a quick trip to Mr. Wizard's world would help!

A HENCHMAN appears at the side of the set. The JOKER pauses in what he's doing, and looks off-camera. The HENCHMAN smiles nervously. The JOKER turns to the camera and tries to give the audience a winning smile.

JOKER

If you'll excuse me for a moment.

The JOKER steps to one side.

JOKER

What?

HENCHMAN

We just got the word that Superman took out all the mortars.

JOKER

Already?

He looks at his watch, concerned.

JOKER

That took a shorter time than I thought it would.
Are we ready for the jack-in-the-box yet?

The HENCHMAN shakes his head. JOKER sighs in frustration.

HENCHMAN

We also tried to detonate the bridge charges and poison the water supply, like you suggested, but none of them worked.

JOKER

Okay. I didn't want to do this, but go with the airport plan.

The HENCHMAN nods and quickly disappears again. The JOKER shakes his head in frustration and throws up his arms.

JOKER

It's just so difficult to be the personal conveyor of mayhem and death these days! I tell ya!

The JOKER just smiles to himself and turns back to the camera.

JOKER

I'm sorry for that interruption. Now, where were we? Oh, yes. The molecular structure of Smilex gas.

INT.- THE DAILY PLANET OFFICE

LOIS is seated at her desk, ignoring the television. She is talking to someone on the phone, very heatedly.

LOIS

Look, I don't care if your policy doesn't allow you to release that information! I need to know if someone rented or bought the necessary equipment to... I understand that, but if you don't tell me, we could all die in...

LOIS glances at her watch.

LOIS (cont.)

...less than thirty-five minutes ... Well, the same to you!

She slams the phone down. JIMMY is immediately by her side.

JIMMY

They couldn't help you either, huh?

LOIS

No. I wish there was some way for us to figure out where the Joker is broadcasting from.

JIMMY thinks about it for a second.

JIMMY

You know, I've been thinking. For the Joker to be broadcasting on all the cable channels as well as the regular airwaves, he would have to somehow be able to tap into and block the regular signals.

LOIS

So?

JIMMY

So, he'd probably be in a studio of some kind, right? And there's only one studio that could have spliced into all the cable channels in Metropolis.

LOIS

Rooftop Studios? They closed down two months ago when their parent company went bankrupt!

JIMMY

What better place for the Joker to set up shop?

INT.- AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL ROOM

The AIR TRAFFICKERs are hard at work, trying to regulate the flights out of Metropolis.

AIR TRAFFICKER #1

Can you believe it? All these planes trying to leave at once! This is insane.

AIR TRAFFICKER #2

Can you blame them? If I could, I'd hop onto one of those planes and try to get out of here as well!

The camera begins to sink through the floor, where we see the wires that lead to the radar panels. Two THUGs, dressed in black, are slowly cutting their way through the wires, splicing them into a portable console of some kind. Suddenly, the screen of the console lights up, revealing a green radar screen.

THUG #1

Bingo! We're in!

THUG #2

Okay, let's get at it.

THUG #1 types in some commands onto the console, which responds with a series of beeps.

THUG #1

Taking control of the radars and jamming the radios... now.

INT.- AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL ROOM

Suddenly, all the radar screens in the room go blank.

AIR TRAFFICKER #2

What the ... ?

AIR TRAFFICKER #1 rips his headphones off of his head, static blaring.

AIR TRAFFICKER #1

The radio's have gone dead as well! We can't
direct the planes coming in!

AIR TRAFFICKER #2 looks at him in horror.

EXT.- AIRPORT

Two airplanes are beginning to approach the runway for a landing.

INT.- UNDERNEATH THE CONTROL ROOM

The two THUGs elbow each other and point to the screen excitedly. Two blips, which represent the planes, are moving across the screen. THUG #2 keys on their radio.

PILOT #1 (o.s.)

Metropolis Tower, this is Trans Global Airlines
Flight #781, requesting permission to land.

THUG #2

Roger, Flight #781. You are cleared for landing
on runway... eight.

The two thugs giggle a little as the radio crackles.

PILOT #2 (o.s.)

Metropolis Tower, this is America Airlines Flight
#119, requesting permission to land.

THUG #2

Roger, Flight #119, you are cleared to land on
runway...

THUG #2 consults a runway diagram.

THUG #2 (cont.)

...five.

There is a brief pause.

PILOT #2 (o.s.)

Uh, Tower, won't that cross our path with Flight 781?

THUG #2

That's a negative, Flight 119. You'll both be fine.

The THUGs continue to chuckle under their breath.

PILOT #2 (o.s.)

All right, Tower. If you say so.

EXT.- AIRPORT

The two planes continue to descend. It is becoming more and more obvious that their paths will soon cross with a disastrous result. They continue to get closer... and closer... and closer...

INT.- COCKPIT OF FLIGHT 119

PILOT #2 is nervously flying his plane, constantly looking around for the other plane. His COPILOT is also watching the sky as well.

COPILOT

This is weird! Are you sure that we should be landing on Runway 5?

PILOT #2

You heard the Tower. This is supposed to be our flight path. Just keep your eyes open.

They continue to scan the sky. For a while, it seems like they are going to make it when suddenly, the other plane looms into their view. The PILOT and COPILOT freeze in fear that they're about to collide.

PILOT #2

Hold on!

INT.- UNDER THE CONTROL ROOM

The two thugs are laughing uncontrollably as the two radar blips move closer and closer together. It's obvious they're having the time of their life.

THUG #2

You know, if we have time, we should try and get three planes to collide next time!

THUG #1

Yeah!

They continue to laugh when there is the sound of something moving behind them. They frown, look at each other, and then turn to see what it is. A look of fear crosses their faces...

INT.- COCKPIT OF FLIGHT 119

The PILOTS are bracing for the impact, when suddenly, the other plane dips out of sight suddenly. The two PILOTS look out the window in surprise and realize that their plane is taxiing down the runway, safe and sound.

PILOT #2

What the...

Suddenly, SUPERMAN appears at the cockpit window. He is still out of breath, and looks like he's getting more and more tired.

SUPERMAN

Is everyone all right?

The PILOTS nod in surprise. SUPERMAN nods, and takes off again, headed for the control tower. The two PILOTS sit there for a second, and then PILOT #2 turns to the COPILOT.

PILOT #2

And you said you wanted to find a more exciting line of work?

INT.- CONTROL TOWER

The AIR TRAFFICKERS have pried the panels off of their console and are slowly sifting through the wires, trying to find the problem. All of a sudden, SUPERMAN is standing next to them.

SUPERMAN

What's going on?

AIR TRAFFICKER #1

We don't know. Our consoles suddenly went dead, and we still don't know why. We're wondering if someone hasn't been messing around with the wiring.

SUPERMAN looks toward the floor and in a flash, he has broken through the floor and is looking around. He turns, and he sees the two THUGs, knocked unconscious and hanging from the ceiling by their ankles. He frowns and starts towards them, when his super hearing picks up the JOKER's maniacal laughter from far off.

JOKER (o.s.)

Yoo hoo! Superman! Come and get me! I'm out here by the Daily Planet!

The JOKER bursts out laughing again. SUPERMAN sets his face and is off again in a blur.

EXT.- DAILY PLANET

A large flatbed truck is pulling up outside of the building. On its trailer is a large, multicolored box, shaped something like a jack-in-the-box. Also attached to the flatbed truck is a large screen TV, where the JOKER's face is dancing around in glee.

JOKER

Only fifteen more minutes, Metropolis! Fifteen more minutes to your ultimate demise!

There is a small sonic boom, and SUPERMAN is on the scene. He looks at the crowd that is gathering and then at the large jack-in-the-box.

SUPERMAN

What's this Joker? Your idea of a sick joke?

JOKER

Oh, come now, cuddles! Is that any way to greet me? After all, I'm in such a generous mood right now!

SUPERMAN

And how's that?

JOKER

You'll be happy to know that I've decided that I'm not going to gas the city!

SUPERMAN doesn't believe this. He sets himself, ready for anything.

SUPERMAN

Oh? And what are you going to do?

JOKER

Well, wouldn't you like to know! But, seeing as I am in a generous mood, I might as well tell you. I'm not going to gas the city, I'm going to blow it up. Inside this jack-in-the-box is a tactical nuclear warhead. In one minute, the warhead will be launched straight at city hall!

The large crank on the jack-in-the-box begins to turn slowly, and the faint strain of "Pop Goes the Weasel" can be heard. SUPERMAN tries to use his x-ray vision to see what's inside, but the beams can't penetrate the box.

JOKER

Oh, and did I mention? The box is made of lead. Not only that, but the warhead is wrapped in lead foil as well. Your x-ray vision won't help you here! And in ... forty five seconds, it won't help anyone at all!

INT.- JOKER'S TELEVISION STUDIO

All is relatively quiet. JOKER is still facing a camera, cackling like a madman. Next to the camera is a television set, showing SUPERMAN trying to rip open the jack-in-the-box.

JOKER

Careful there, Superman! Don't break it! You don't want to need to buy that!

The JOKER is so wrapped up with the television that he doesn't notice the back door to the studio opening. JIMMY and LOIS duck inside.

JIMMY

Are you sure this is such a good idea, Lois? I mean, wouldn't it be better for the police to check this out?

LOIS

The police have their hands full with panicked citizens, Jimmy. Besides, we don't have any proof that the Joker was here.

JIMMY

Looks like we do now! So what do we do now?

LOIS

There has to be a triggering mechanism here for those Smilex canisters. If we can find it and shut it off, then we can all breathe easier ... literally.

JIMMY and LOIS begin to sneak around the studio, carefully staying out of sight of the JOKER. Not that it matters. He's still facing the screen, enjoying the feeling of power. He turns to his side and picks up a large remote control labeled "Jack-In-The-Box."

JOKER

I'm getting tired of this song, aren't you, Supes?
Let's change it!

He flicks a switch on the remote, and "Pop Goes the Weasel" is replaced by the theme for "Jeopardy." The JOKER cackles to himself. LOIS shudders slightly.

LOIS

I hate that laugh! Ugh! Let's find the controllers and get out of here.

They continue to crawl along. They come across a large pile of remotes and other technical parts.

LOIS

Maybe it's in here. Start looking.

They begin to sift through the pile, picking up odds and ends and tossing them everywhere. Finally, JIMMY holds up a complicated looking remote with all sorts of buttons and switches.

JIMMY

Maybe this is it!

Suddenly, a gun is placed at the back of JIMMY's head. He looks up sheepishly and sees the JOKER standing over them.

JOKER

Actually, that's the remote to my VCR. The darn thing is so complicated!

EXT.- DAILY PLANET BUILDING

SUPERMAN is continuing to rip through the jack-in-the-box and tries to ignore the JOKER's incessant cackling.

JOKER

You know, this is all so new to me. I've never done anything quite like this. It's kind of ... exciting, don't you think?

All of a sudden, the box top pops open and the warhead is launched out of it by a massive spring. SUPERMAN watches it fly up in horror.

JOKER

Oh, how embarrassing! Premature ejection! Is my face red ... well, not literally, mind you...

SUPERMAN glares at the JOKER and takes off straight up. He instantly catches up to the warhead as it soars through the air and quickly catches it. He flies back down to earth with it. The JOKER snorts derisively.

JOKER

Oh, good idea! Well, guess I'd better arm the warhead now.

As the JOKER says this, the warhead begins to beep softly.

JOKER

You have about two minutes to disarm the warhead, Supes.

SUPERMAN looks at it in horror and starts to rip off the lead foil that is wrapped around it. He finds himself holding a standard warhead with a bright red star on the side. SUPERMAN grits his teeth and begins to unscrew the base of the warhead carefully. As soon as he removes the base, however, black and white snakes shoot out of the warhead in all directions. SUPERMAN drops the warhead in surprise. The JOKER immediately bursts out laughing hysterically.

JOKER

I can't believe it! The old snakes-in-the-nuclear-warhead trick and you fell for it! How naive! How gullible!

SUPERMAN

How psychotic.

JOKER

Oh, now you're getting personal.

SUPERMAN

What's with you, Joker? Isn't it bad enough that you're holding the whole city hostage with Smilex? What's with the buses' brakes, the airport, the mortars? Isn't the gas enough?

JOKER

Of course not, Superman! If I was only threatening to gas the city, that superspeed of yours would help you disarm every single one of my gas canisters within ten minutes! I had to find some way to keep you busy so you would forget about the gas canisters! And wouldn't you know it? It worked! There are only five minutes left before the gas canisters go off, and there isn't a darn thing you can do about it. Sure, you may be able to disarm a few of the canisters in that time, but you'll never get all of them!

SUPERMAN realizes that he's been had. He starts away from the television and takes off, the JOKER's laughter following him the whole way.

INT.- JOKER'S TELEVISION STUDIO

The JOKER is seated in a gaudy, overstuffed chair and smiling at the camera. He smiles cordially.

JOKER

Well, citizens of Metropolis. The hour has come and gone and your greedy, selfish city council has refused to pay me the measly \$1.5 billion I asked for!

The JOKER shrugs slightly.

JOKER

Was that too much to ask so the rest of you could breathe easy? Hardly. So at least you now know who to curse with your final breaths.

The JOKER looks at his watch and gasps.

JOKER

My, my! Time certainly flies when you're having fun!

The JOKER pulls out a multi-colored gas mask and slips it over his face.

JOKER

Well, Metropolis, it's been real! As they say, "B-dee, b-dee, that's all folks!"

Just as he says that, the Ball of Doom begins to slide down the pole. The JOKER turns to the camera excitedly.

JOKER

The ball is dropping!

The Ball hits the base of the pole, sending off a shower of sparks and confetti. The JOKER begins to jump around excitedly.

JOKER

Happy New Year!

The JOKER dances for a second. Then another. Then a few more. Suddenly, he stops dancing and starts stalking around.

JOKER

Something's wrong. A city full of cackling dying people should be louder. You would think that I would hear them from here.

The JOKER goes to one of the large windows and looks out over the city. There isn't even a trace of the Smilex gas at all. JOKER turns back from the window and pulls off the gas mask. His eyes are flashing with pure fury.

JOKER

Superman!

There is a sudden whooshing, and the Man of Steel drops into the studio.

SUPERMAN

You rang!

JOKER

Well, I have to hand it to you, Steely Dan! I never thought you would have been able to disable all of my gas bombs in five minutes.

SUPERMAN

Actually, Joker, I didn't have to disarm a single one!

JOKER

What are you talking about?

SUPERMAN

You must have made a mistake when wiring the timers!

JOKER

That's impossible! I've wired hundreds of those timers before! I've never made a mistake!

SUPERMAN

See for yourself!

SUPERMAN tosses one of the timers to JOKER. JOKER looks over the timer, and a look of genuine fear flashes across his face for a split second.

JOKER

No, it can't be...

But, just as that fear comes, it is gone and the JOKER looks up at SUPERMAN, chucking the timer over his shoulder.

JOKER

No matter! Good thing I left the cameras on! We'll have a good show now!

The JOKER turns to the camera.

JOKER

Ladies and gentlemen! You're in for a real treat this time! Sure, that whole gas-the-city-into-oblivion didn't work out. But the fun doesn't stop there! Let's play a new game.

SUPERMAN

I'm tired of your games, Joker. I'm not interested in playing another one.

JOKER

Oh, but I think you'll want to play this game! Wanna know the name of it? It's called "Save the Chumps!"

A curtain is pulled to one side, revealing LOIS and JIMMY trapped in a glass booth. At the top of the booth is a large container of Smilex gas. LOIS and JIMMY start pounding on the glass desperately when they see SUPERMAN. They try to shout at him, but their voices are muffled.

LOIS & JIMMY

Superman! Help us, Superman!

SUPERMAN looks at them in horror. He turns back to the JOKER, who simply smiles.

JOKER

In five minutes, that glass chamber will be flooded by Smilex gas. There's only one way for you to stop it from happening. You have to get through me first.

SUPERMAN

I need to get through you first? You have got to be joking.

JOKER

Actually, Superman, for once, I'm not. All you have to do is duke it out with me.

SUPERMAN shifts back and forth, uncomfortable with that idea. The JOKER smiles reassuringly and picks up a brown box.

JOKER

Oh, not to worry, Supes! I know, I know, you don't want to hit me because of your super strength! Not to worry! See, I've been working out for the past few weeks for this! I even went out and got a special necklace just for this occasion!

The JOKER opens the brown box. Immediately, SUPERMAN staggers slightly, doubling over in pain. The JOKER begins to chuckle as he draws out a piece of kryptonite on a chain. The JOKER shows it to SUPERMAN.

JOKER

Do you like it? One of my cell mates in prison worked for Intergang and told me about this little bauble. Kind of goes with my hair, doesn't it?

The JOKER hangs it around his neck, walks over to the glass box, and slaps a large button on the side of the box.

JOKER

The five minutes starts ... now!

A small digital display lights up on the Smilex canister, reading "5:00." It immediately begins to count down. The JOKER turns to SUPERMAN and waves for him to attack. SUPERMAN staggers away. The JOKER and SUPERMAN begin to fight, with the JOKER easily gaining the upperhand. Soon, the JOKER is brutally beating SUPERMAN, kicking him while he's down. Eventually, SUPERMAN is so weak, he can hardly fight back. The JOKER smiles sadistically as he suddenly draws a dagger.

JOKER

What a shame! I guess you lose!

The JOKER begins to cackle sadistically as he begins to bring down the dagger. Suddenly, a black boomerang comes out of nowhere and rips the necklace off of the JOKER's neck. The JOKER whips around and watches as the necklace flies across the room and falls out of an open window. The JOKER turns back to SUPERMAN, desperation flashing in his eyes. He knows that at any minute, SUPERMAN will be back to full strength. He tries to bring down the dagger again, but SUPERMAN has managed to roll out of the way and kicks the dagger out of the JOKER's hand. They begin fighting again, but SUPERMAN is able to block most of the JOKER's blows. Finally, the JOKER throws a right punch. SUPERMAN catches his hand. Not to be outdone, the JOKER throws a brutal left. SUPERMAN catches that hand as well. In desperation, the JOKER tries to headbutt SUPERMAN. There is a dull clanking sound, and the JOKER staggers back, dazed. He shakes his head, trying to regain his balance. Finally, he looks at SUPERMAN, who is standing tall and proud.

JOKER

Let me guess. You've got your powers back.

SUPERMAN nods and begins to advance on the JOKER. The JOKER just giggles nervously and stands there. Suddenly, he just waves.

JOKER

Bye!

The JOKER runs towards one of the windows, laughing hysterically, and dives through the glass. SUPERMAN runs to the window to stop him, but sees JOKER drifting away from the building under a parachute (which looks like a giant yellow smiley face). SUPERMAN grits his teeth in frustration, but remembers LOIS and JIMMY. He runs over to the glass booth, where the digital display is reading "0:30" and still ticking.

LOIS

Hurry, Superman!

SUPERMAN nods and rips off the top of the booth, taking the gas canister and timer with it. He then rushes over to an open window, and hurls the canister out the window.

EXT.- OUTER SPACE

The top of the booth goes spinning through space, and suddenly sprays the gas all over the place, which freezes as it comes into contact with the vacuum.

INT.- JOKER'S TELEVISION STUDIO

SUPERMAN opens the door to the booth, and JIMMY and LOIS immediately come to his side. SUPERMAN staggers slightly, and leans up against the booth, exhausted.

LOIS

Are you all right?

SUPERMAN

It's been a long day.

LOIS smiles sympathetically and pats his arm.

EXT.- AN ALLEY

The alley is dark and filled with trash. Suddenly, we can hear the JOKER's laugh as he slowly drifts down to the ground. The minute he touches the ground, he shrugs off the parachute and dusts himself off.

JOKER

Yes! Another perfect get-away, executed flawlessly
by the one, the only, Joker!

The JOKER laughs to himself and begins to walk away, whistling a happy little tune.

VOICE (o.s.)

Joker.

The JOKER pauses at the sound of the low, gravelly voice. He slowly turns around, surprise spread across his face. As he turns, he can see a MAN standing in the shadows, his face obscured. All he can really see is a dark cape draped over the MAN's shoulders. The cape is black and almost resembles a bat's wing. The JOKER begins to back up, genuinely terrified.

JOKER

No! Not you! Get away from me!

The MAN begins to advance on the JOKER, sweeping his cape violently. The last thing we can hear is the JOKER screaming in terror.

EXT.- LOIS AND CLARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING

JIMMY pulls over to the side of the street in his car and LOIS and CLARK get out of the car. CLARK is leaning on LOIS for support.

LOIS

Thanks for the ride, Jimmy. We'll see you tomorrow.

JIMMY nods and waves, and drives off. LOIS turns to CLARK and starts to help him up the stairs.

LOIS

Are you sure you're okay?

CLARK

I'm fine, Lois. I just need some sleep.

INT.- LOIS AND CLARK'S LIVING ROOM

The apartment is darkened, and the drapes by an open window are blowing lazily. LOIS opens the door and helps CLARK walk inside. LOIS immediately notices the open window.

LOIS

Clark, how many times do I have to tell you not to leave the window open?

CLARK looks at the window, confused.

CLARK

I didn't.

LOIS

Well, if you didn't, who did?

MAN (o.s.)

I did.

LOIS and CLARK whirl around, to see the MAN standing in the shadows by the open window. His cape is pulled around him tightly again.

CLARK

Who are you? How did you get into our apartment?

MAN

Relax. I only wanted to talk to you, Mr. Kent...
or should I say, Superman?

CLARK shoots LOIS a frantic look.

CLARK

What ... what are you talking about?

MAN

Don't worry. I'm not going to tell anyone. I kind
of know what it's like to lead a double life. You
just have to be a little more careful when you duck
into alleys to change into your costume to deal with
the Joker's goons.

A look of revelation slowly spreads on LOIS' face as she takes a few steps forward.

LOIS

You're the one that knocked out those thugs at the
House of Thai!

MAN

And the one that took care of the ones at the
airport and disabled a few explosive charges
that you didn't know about, Clark, *and*
disabled all of the Smilex canisters.

CLARK

But why? Why did you get involved?

MAN

I've had some ... dealings with the Joker before.
I'm not about to let him take all of Metropolis
hostage.

CLARK

What about the Joker? Do you know where...

MAN

Relax. He's been handed over to the proper authorities. Now, if you'll excuse me...

The MAN turns to leave through the window. LOIS and CLARK can see a cowl of some kind with two "horns" sticking out at the sides. The MAN suddenly pauses and turns back.

MAN

I must admit I was impressed, Superman. You do good work. Maybe we'll work together again in the future.

With that, the MAN jumps out of the window. LOIS and CLARK immediately runs over to the window and look out it, but there is no trace of the MAN. They just shake their heads as LOIS turns on the lights. CLARK staggers over to the couch and sits down. LOIS goes over to the kitchen and starts to pour some drinks for them.

LOIS

You know, Clark, I was thinking. I was a little hard on you earlier. I shouldn't have yelled. You were just worried about how tired I was. I guess I kind of appreciate it...

She turns to come out with the drinks, and stops when she sees CLARK, collapsed on the couch, and sound asleep. She smiles to herself and comes over to sit by him. She takes off his glasses gently and kisses him on the forehead.

LOIS

Sleep tight, Clark. You need it.

CLARK doesn't respond. He's dead to the world.