

"THE PLANET"
Episode 1.01
Act II

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ACT II

INT. LOIS'S OFFICE - DAY

Lois hovers over her laptop, turning back and forth between it and her printer, her cellphone at her ear in one.

LOIS
Yes, Sheriff Vaughan? It's Lois Lane-Kent. I never heard back from you. Yes, were you able to get over to the farm?

The printer feeds out some papers, which she grabs and begins quickly marking up with a red pen.

LOIS (cont'd)
Oh, it's no problem. I know you're busy. Was there anyone there?

She clicks on the laptop mouse pad once again.

LOIS (cont'd)
No? No cars on the property, but was there anyone in the house?

It prints another set of pages, the by-line being:

LOIS (cont'd)
Not that you could tell. Okay.

"by Clark Kent."

LOIS (cont'd)
Thank you, Sheriff.

She grabs the pages and quickly exits the office.

EXT. DAILY PLANET ROOF - DAY

CAT GRANT(31) stands smoking a cigarette, overlooking the city, she covers her chest with her arms to keep warm, the wind blowing her hair and big hoop earrings.

Cat is a lifestyles columnist. There is a heavy tabloid focus to the job, but Cat often chooses the wrong people to focus on.

She glances to her right and then does a double take --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There's a shoe... a large shoe on the floor of the roof. She walks slowly toward it, realizing what it is and then picking it up to examine it.

She's a bit confused by it and even more so when she notices a pair of pants a few feet away, in the corner.

She walks over and picks them, something falling out--

It's a cellphone -- Clark's cellphone. The screen is completely shattered.

Cat picks it up. What the hell?

INT. 7TH FLOOR NEWSROOM - DAY

The elevator doors open and Lois bursts out, walking straight over to Clark's desk.

KEVIN

Lois--

LOIS

Oh, Kevin -- here.

She hands him the print-outs. KEVIN NORMAN(30s) is apart of Clark's metro staff. He's an honest guy who loves his job, but deserves way better.

LOIS (cont'd)

Clark told me to give you his notes and--

KEVIN

Where is he? He hasn't returned any calls or texts. I need his part on the Berkowitz interview.

LOIS

I have that right here.

Rae lurks in the background, slowly making her across the floor.

KEVIN

He gave this to you?

LOIS

Yes, he said to just go ahead and send it over to Foswell and Armstrong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN
Is everything alright?

LOIS
Um, yeah. There was just an emergency
Clark had to take care of. In Kansas.

KEVIN
Oh. Well, I hope everything is okay.

LOIS
It's fine.

KEVIN
Will he be back tomorrow?

LOIS
We'll see--

Lois turns around to leave when she is confronted by Rae.

RAE
Lois.

LOIS
Rae--

RAE
Todd told me you came up here. I need
those notes on the seventy-fifth day
story.

LOIS
I'm sorry, Rae, there was an
emergency with Clark and I needed to
fill in his team.

RAE
Is everything alright?

LOIS
It's fine. Um, let's go back to my
office and talk.

The two walk to the elevator bank and Lois presses the
button. Rae seizes the opportunity.

RAE
So that source that's connected to
the investigation into Flight 40's
crash--

Lois does not want to discuss this here. She nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE (cont'd)

Yeah, so he mentioned that Superman was sighted flying erratically somewhere over Indonesia during the time of the crash.

LOIS

Let's just take the stairs.

Lois enters the stairwell with Rae right behind her--

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

The women begin down the stairs, Rae adhering to Lois like glue.

RAE

Several security cameras captured him in flight -- one of which got quietly leaked to Youtube the other day. Apparently there was an update on Superman Sightings Live the day after the crash. The post's status went from unconfirmed to confirmed to the whole thing just disappearing altogether. The Youtube video, too. But it's viral now. It's making its way around social media.

Down the two flights and they exit through the door marked with a "5" on it.

INT. 5TH FLOOR NEWSROOM - DAY

Rae is like a mosquito circling Lois's backside as they cross the newsroom toward her office.

RAE

So I emailed the site's administrator who confirmed the posting and went on the record to say that it was taken down because the erratic flight pattern in the footage disproves that Superman was, what he calls, "the UFO" captured.

They enter Lois's office--

INT. LOIS'S OFFICE - DAY

Lois walks around her desk and takes a seat. Rae stops and stands facing her, now finished with spiel.

LOIS
So, what's your angle?

RAE
Angle? I'm sorry, I must not have been that clear -- Superman was caught on camera over Indonesia at the time of Flight 40's crash, three weeks ago. He's been MIA for three months and the world is turning upside down!

LOIS
But the footage proves that it isn't Superman.

RAE
I've seen it -- it's totally him! Even Anonymous has gotten involved! They've dissected some of the frames from the footage. It's a man in the sky, no doubt. But it also appears like he was naked. Completely!

Lois is not amused.

LOIS
It's thin, Rae.

RAE
Lois, you need to see the footage--

LOIS
I've seen it. It's not a man. It's not him -- it looks like a bird or a plane.

RAE
It's Superman, Lois. It's him!

LOIS
Rae, there's no story. We can't print conspiracy theories about Superman flying around nude. It's outlandish.

RAE
Why? Because the Planet always has to kiss his ass?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lois is infuriated. There's a BEAT.

LOIS

If you haven't read my work or the stories this department has put out prior to your working here, then you clearly weren't paying attention in your journalism courses, Rae. Congress is holding an investigative hearing into Superman's disappearance, next week. Do not bombard me or waste my time with stories that are as thin as you are and then stand there and question my journalistic integrity. This is the Daily Planet, not Vulture. Get a new story and get out of my office.

Rae turns and storms out of the office.

Lois shakes her head and turns to her laptop.

Once again, ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN, she checks the Superman Sightings Live website--

INT. 5TH FLOOR NEWSROOM - DAY

Rae checks her cellphone -- a live feed of Lois's activity straight to the palm of her hand.

She crosses the floor.

INT. LOIS'S OFFICE - DAY

Lois reaches for her cellphone.

ON CELLPHONE:

She opens up the text message thread between her and Clark--

Since this morning, she has sent over ten texts in various forms of, "Where are you? Contact me ASAP."

CAT

(O/S)

Lois?

Lois looks up to see Cat Grant standing in her doorway, holding up Clark's broken cellphone.

EXT. LUTHOR TOWER - DAY

A 1929 Rolls Royce Phantom II pulls up in front of this exquisite glass skyscraper.

INT. LUTHOR PENTHOUSE - DAY

Lena exits the elevator into a luxurious penthouse where THE BUTLER greets her. She doesn't acknowledge him at all, immediately removing her mink coat and passing it to him.

THE BUTLER

May I get you anything, Ms. Luthor?

She doesn't answer and the doctor -- DR. VICTOR FRIES (50s), pale skin and hair so gray it almost has a tint of blue. He appears with his thick accent--

DR. FRIES

Ms. Luthor, how do you do?

She sends a message on her cellphone.

LENA

Busy. Shall we?

DR. FRIES

Yes, of course. Come.

The doctor leads her through the extravagant penthouse.

LENA

Has my brother or sister been here?
Have you contacted them?

DR. FRIES

We could not get into contact with
your sister and your brother said he
could not make it at this time.

LENA

Did he say why?

DR. FRIES

No, ma'am.

They stop before a large, golden frame of a Vincent Camuccini painting -- *Death of Ceasar* (1798).

LENA

My father's in his room?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She proceeds, but the doctor stops her--

DR. FRIES

Uh, I must warn you, Ms. Luthor, your father does not look like himself. He's lost all of his hair and he cannot speak very well. Please try to remain calm--

LENA

I'm not here to shed tears, Dr. Fries. Excuse me.

Lena passes him and knocks on the door.

INT. LEX LUTHOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room is bright and vibrant, big windows and lots of natural light shooting in.

LENA

Daddy, it's Lena. Can I come in?

She enters to see her father -- LEX LUTHER(78) lying in a hospital bed, attached to various tubes and wires. A NURSE at her father's bedside is checking his vitals. Lex is at the end of his life, now. His legacy still dominates the world, now in the hands of his prodigy.

LENA (cont'd)

What are you doing?

NURSE

Oh, I was just checking his vitals.

LENA

No, I mean the blinds--

Lena rushes over to the windows and drops the blinds, shrouding them into a dark cave of a room.

LENA (cont'd)

My father hates the sun.

She turns to him--

Lex stares over at her.

LENA (cont'd)

He always has.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE
I'll remember that, Ms.--

LENA
Luthor. Thank you. I'll call for you
if you're needed.

The nurse nods and quickly leaves.

Lena moves across the room to her father's bedside, sitting on the bed and switching on the lamp on the side table.

Lex already looks dead -- bald, frail, colorless and bony. He wears an oxygen mask at all times.

LENA (cont'd)
I'm here, Daddy. Just me. Alex and Natalia couldn't be bothered, of course. But I came right away.

Lex doesn't respond. He just stares, menacingly.

Lena looks a bit uncomfortable, though determined to hide it -- she cannot lose control of this situation.

LENA (cont'd)
I know it's been quite a while, but I'm sure they've been taking good care of you.

Only the sound of the machines fill the room a BEAT.

LENA (cont'd)
Have you been following the news?

Doesn't look like it.

LENA (cont'd)
It's done, Daddy. Mankind is about to step foot on an asteroid. What we started is done.

Lex groans, slightly.

LENA (cont'd)
Are you in pain, Daddy?

She shoots up and speeds to the door, where she stands, speaking out into the hallway--

LENA (cont'd)
Excuse me, is my father's pain being properly managed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. FRIES
Why, yes. Of course.

Dr. Fries rushes in behind Lena as they approach Lex's bedside.

LENA
He's moaning and groaning -- he's in pain!

The doctor listens--

DR. FRIES
I don't hear anything. Mr. Luthor, are you in pain?

Dr. Fries pulls off the oxygen mask.

DR. FRIES (cont'd)
Let's take this off for a while. Mr. Luthor, are you feeling any pain?

LEX
No.

Lex's voice is weak, low and incredibly raspy.

DR. FRIES
He said no. Is there anything I can get you, Mr. Luthor?

Everyone must wait patiently for Lex to form words.

LEX
(mutters)
A time machine.

LENA
What did he say?

DR. FRIES
He said, "a time machine."

Lena's eyes interlock with her father's.

DR. FRIES (cont'd)
Here, sit close, Ms. Luthor.

Lena sits beside her father.

LENA
Is that your way of apologizing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The doctor and nurse exit as Lex clears his throat.

LENA (cont'd)

Here.

Lena holds the straw in a cup of water up to Lex's mouth, allowing him to take a sip.

LEX

Don't disrespect me.

Lena rolls her eyes.

LEX (cont'd)

A Luthor never apologizes.

Lena snickers, but restrains herself, quickly.

LENA

"Only to their daughters," is how I remember the rest of that saying going. But come to think of it, most of your rules for being a Luthor could be followed up with something like that. "A Luthor never jokes... only with their daughters." I think you've said that one before. Or how about, "a Luthor never lies?"

She gives him the "eh?" look.

LENA (cont'd)

Or wait, what am I thinking? The most obvious: "a Luthor never steals." Only *from* his daughter. Right, Daddy?

Lex stares on with as much of a smug expression as he can muster so close to his time.

LENA (cont'd)

But the past is for moving on. Which I have.

LEX

You got your revenge.

LENA

You're right. You always were.

Lena glances down and smiles evilly.

LENA (cont'd)

Except about Superman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lex groans again, loudly.

Lena laughs, sadistically.

LENA (cont'd)
I bet you could use some more of that
morphine now, huh, Daddy?

Lex's agonizing expression transforms into a satisfied
smirk.

LENA (cont'd)
Look at you. Not a single regret.
Dying proud. Aren't you?

LEX
Very.

LENA
Well, I guess you have every right to
be. I always took your every word
over gold. Now look at me. I run a
multi-trillion dollar company. I'm
the richest person alive, providing
the world with life-saving,
groundbreaking technologies. They
write books about me. A real Luthor.

She shrugs with a "it is what it is," expression.

LENA (cont'd)
And I only apologize to my daughter.
Remember Lori, Daddy? Lori -- you met
her two or three times, at least.

Lex mumbles something, inaudible.

LENA (cont'd)
What was that, Daddy?

LEX
Pictures?

Lena pauses, nervously and then pulls out her cellphone.

LENA
Ya know, I had one in here--

Lex puts his hand on Lena's. She stops.

She let's his hand rest there for a BEAT before it gets too
intense and she pulls away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENA (cont'd)
Ya know, I guess I should--

Lena stands.

LENA (cont'd)
I don't want to intrude on you--

LEX
Wait--

She pauses and stares down at what's left of the most powerful man, er... human on Earth. Empathy infects her.

She sits, reluctantly. She leans in--

LENA
Yes?

His wrinkled, spotty and bony hand touches hers, once again. She doesn't pull away, but her heart instantly races.

LEX
A Luthor never dies.

A tear begins to escape from Lena's eye--

LENA
I guess you're not a Luthor then,
Daddy.

She wipes it and abruptly stands, walking over to the door.

LENA (cont'd)
Do Luthors go to hell, Daddy?

Lex just stares.

LENA (cont'd)
I'll be seeing you, then.

She nods and leaves.

INT. LUTHOR TOWER LOBBY - DAY

Lena steps off of the elevator buried in her cellphone once again, as she passes through the lobby toward the exit.

DOORMAN
(O/S)
Ms. Luthor, you have guest waiting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lena's eyes shoot toward the waiting area--

Sitting comfortably on the couch is Lana Liang. Lana doesn't move, just nods to Lena.

Lena steps over.

LENA
Thank you for coming.

LANA
How is your father?

Lena smirks and takes a seat.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The conference room is surrounded by front pages of the Daily Planet past.

One distinct one shows the headline: "LUTHOR RESIGNS, BUSH 44th PRESIDENT OF US." Dated, September 17th, 2002.

FOSWELL
(O/S)
Menschen has been missed, to say the least.

ARMSTRONG
(O/S)
Eh, I don't miss him, in particular.
In fact, I think I miss Superman more
and I've never been a big fan.

SAM FOSWELL (62) and DIRK ARMSTRONG (57) -- they're worker bees and two of the hardest working ones. They're long time managing editors at the Planet. Almost polar opposites.

FOSWELL
It's definitely been chaotic around here since the both of them have been gone.

Across from them is Perry White and Franklin Stern.

STERN
How is Lois Lane holding up the SMD?

FOSWELL
Fine. But she is still claiming she hasn't heard from him since early August.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STERN

Yes, her op-ed was... entertaining.

ARMSTRONG

It's bullshit.

PERRY

Well, we had our highest numbers in web traffic, ever, after that article went up. Dirk has never let the theory of that affair go.

ARMSTRONG

She's holding out on us.

FOSWELL

Dirk--

STERN

Perhaps he has his sources. Do you?

ARMSTRONG

I, uh... never looked fully into that.

STERN

Hm. Too bad.

PERRY

Lois's track record of objectivity concerning Superman has spoken for itself the last twenty years. She deserves the benefit of the doubt.

ARMSTRONG

I was apart of that standing ovation when she awarded the Pulitzer. Never said she wasn't good at her job.

FOSWELL

Yes, despite her questionable methods.

PERRY

Anyway, the Superman thing is our main angle. Has anyone spoken to Troupe, recently?

ARMSTRONG

I spoke to him a couple of days ago. He was adamant about staying in China for a few weeks longer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PERRY

I couldn't get a hold of him. His piece in today's edition was great stuff.

STERN

I agree.

Perry and Stern trade an "insider" glance at one another.

FOSWELL

China's really out to spread the word; WMD's are back in style.

Behind Foswell is one framed, hanging cover page in particular:

"UN PASSES SUPERMAN NUCLEAR ARMS SWEEP"

Superman stands before the United Nations council with a big smile on his face. The article is dated, MARCH 7th, 2005.

In a smaller font under the headline: "CHINA SAYS IT WILL REFUSE TO COMPLY."

ARMSTRONG

(O/S)

The longer Superman remains MIA, the more lenient the UN Security Council has been about China's military and trade sanctions.

STAY on the cover--

FOSWELL

(O/S)

No country will alienate China. The sanctions were ridiculous to begin with.

BEHIND THE FRAME is a WIRE -- a small listening device mounted in the corner--

PERRY

(O/S)

It really is escalating by the day, isn't it?

EXT. METROPOLIS - DAY

An ELEVATED TRAIN speeds through the buildings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMSTRONG

(O/S)

The Congressional hearings next week should be a good show.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Rae is sitting between a woman wearing a traditional African dress on one side and a man wearing a Metropolis Sharks jersey on the other.

ARMSTRONG

(O/S)

SMD is making it their primary focus.

Headphones in and connected to her phone -- she's listening to the conversation going on in the conference room at the Daily Planet.

STERN

(O/S)

Good.

She rolls her eyes.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back in the conference room:

STERN

You both have been real troopers since Menschen's retirement. I just wanted to let you both know, personally, that it has not gone unnoticed.

ARMSTRONG

We've been wondering when this discussion would come up.

Foswell shakes his head -- he believes Armstrong to be too straightforward.

Perry chuckles and looks to Stern.

STERN

You both should have a solid idea of the financial state of the Planet, at this time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOSWELL

It's the industry. Our online content has been sustaining most of our revenue through ads.

Perry nods in agreement.

STERN

Our subscription rates are fifty percent of what they were in 2000.

ARMSTRONG

Does it show.

STERN

With that said, we do have a substantial bonus to offer--

ARMSTRONG

And that's how you choose to segue into this conversation.

The room grows awkwardly quiet to all except Armstrong.

STERN

There is a raise in this contract we have, here.

Armstrong reaches over the table and snatches the folder from Perry. He sits back down next to Foswell, both looking over it.

STERN (cont'd)

(stammers)

With that comes a proposition--

Neither look thrilled, but both were expecting much worse.

Perry hides his mouth and chin with his hand. He can't look at them.

ARMSTRONG

A proposition, huh?

STERN

We have a new plan for the future of the paper... Um...

FOSWELL

Sorry, sir, may I ask, have you decided yet, on whose going to be joining our team?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMSTRONG
We're desperate out in that newsroom.

STERN
I was just getting to--

Perry cuts in. He has to--

PERRY
We're thinking about offering the
position to Ron Troupe.

Perry doesn't even look at Stern, who stops himself from speaking up.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The train is in the station, Rae is stepping off, stopping at what she just heard--

FOSWELL
(O/S)
Troupe?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Armstrong is excitedly surprised.

ARMSTRONG
Ron? We expected it to be Lane.

FOSWELL
I was sure it would be.

ARMSTRONG
Well, thank god.

PERRY
Lois is too important to the SMD. We want to expand our horizons and bring a newer vision into the fold. A different perspective. Younger... he-hem.

Stern is completely pissed off, but silent.

ARMSTRONG
You want to add some diversity to the managing staff. I get it. Hey, I'm in total agreement with this move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOSWELL

If this is the direction we're going, then I am, too. Troupe is one of, if not, the best reporter we have.

ARMSTRONG

This is a bold move.

FOSWELL

I'd just worry about how Lois will take this.

PERRY

We'll worry about that, Sam. Obviously, we haven't had a chance to speak to Troupe, yet.

STERN

Who knows if he'll accept the offer?

Stern laughs, nervously.

ARMSTRONG

He'll accept.

EXT. PIER - DAY

Rae stands on a pier smoking a cigarette, her earbuds still in. She's finally got some good stuff. She stares out at the skyline.

ARMSTRONG

(O/S)

He'd be stupid not to.

Rae smiles sadistically. She can't believe what she just heard.

A FACELESS MAN approaches Rae from behind. She turns to him--

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Ron sits in a tiny, cramped window seat. His laptop rests on the retractable surface, Huang's notebook open, he translates the Chinese characters from page to screen. The whole plane is dark around him.

END OF ACT II