

Clark remembered old Mrs. Wu complaining about how the house was always cold, which is why he chuckled when a massive oil truck rumbled past him.

I'd bet money that truck's heading for —

Clark inhaled sharply. Instead of slowing in front of Tina's house, the truck was bearing down directly on the home.

Did the driver pass out? If the truck hits the house . . .

But he had no time to think, no time to consider whether anyone would see what he was about to do. He churned his legs in an amazing burst of speed, going into Clark time. . . . Clark took a mighty leap up and through the driver's side window. Razor-sharp glass shards flew in all directions.

SMALLVILLE™

Speed

Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld

**Superman created by
Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster**



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

New York ~ An AOL Time Warner Company

For Steve Korté, keeper of the super hero flame

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CHAPTER 1

"It looks great," Clark Kent said, peering over Lana Lang's shoulder at the stack of flyers she was holding. He and Lana had just parked in the student lot and were heading for Smallville High, where they planned to post the flyers in the hallways.

"It does, doesn't it?" Lana agreed. "Chloe told me she hit up someone on the *Torch* to design it. Whoever he is, he's a terrific artist."

They stopped for a moment to regard one of the flyers. It featured a cartoon border of children of every nationality, size, and shape; the kids were tumbling and dancing around a rainbow-colored ribbon. The center of the flyer read:

SMALLVILLE MULTICULTURAL DAY CELEBRATION

— Fun, food, crafts, and entertainment
to celebrate the diversity of Smallville—

Underneath the main heading were details about the town's multicultural festival slated for the following Sunday, including the time and place of various events.

"It's so cool that Smallville is doing this," Clark said as they continued on their way into the school. "How many small towns in America have a multicultural day?"

"Oh, probably as many as have a Lex Luthor available to underwrite it," Lana replied.

Clark laughed and held the front door for her; they entered the cool, fluorescent-lit corridor. School had let out an hour before. "Come on, Lana. You don't really believe that Lex is the only reason we're having this festival."

"I concede it's not the *only* reason," she allowed, pulling a roll of masking tape from the pocket of her jean jacket. She ripped off pieces and handed them to Clark, who began to tape

flyers along the wall and on classroom doors. Principal Reynolds had given them permission to put the flyers up anywhere they wanted.

"Anyway," Lana continued, "I'm the last person to complain about Lex's generosity. If it wasn't for him underwriting my enterprise, I wouldn't be running the Talon." She handed Clark another piece of tape.

"Hey, it's not every teenage girl who's the boss of a restaurant," Clark teased, taping a flyer to the door of Mr. Ballister's room. He was their American History teacher, much loathed by their friend Pete Ross. Clark wasn't all that fond of him, either. Mr. Ballister had a volatile temper.

"That's just it," Lana said. "Because Lex owns the Talon, it's as if he owns me." She looked thoughtful for a moment. "I guess sometimes all the power he has kind of weirds me out. He seems to know everything about everyone, but I never really feel like I know the truth about him."

"Well, he's always been honest with me." Clark taped a flyer to the bulletin board outside the main office. Next to it was a trophy case filled

with sports trophies Smallville High teams had won over the years. Last year's trophy for their football team was prominently displayed. And engraved into the gold plating was the name of the team's most valuable player, Whitney Fordman.

Lana's boyfriend, Clark thought as he taped up another flyer. *Even though he enlisted in the Marines and he's far away from Smallville, it's like he's still with Lana all the time. I'm here, Whitney's not, and I still can't have her.*

"Whitney's trophy," Clark pointed out, hoping to sound casual. "The Crows missed him this season. Not as much as you do, though, I'm sure."

I'm just fishing to see what she'll say, Clark admitted to himself. *So I'm not perfect. I'm only hum —*

Clark had to stop his own train of thought because it almost made him laugh out loud. *I'm only human* is what he'd been thinking. Except that he wasn't human. He was from another planet, far, far away. As much as he was a part of Smallville, he could never fully belong the way everyone else could. It was a secret he could share only

with his adoptive parents, Jonathan and Martha Kent, and he'd have to live with it for the rest of his life.

He looked over at Lana, wondering what it would be like to tell her the truth. Would she fear him or loathe him? Her luminous face was reflected in the glass of the trophy case. She'd already experienced so much sorrow in her life, losing both of her parents when she was only three. But although the sadness was a part of her, it didn't define her, and Clark admired her for that.

I would do anything to make her happy.

Clark's feelings for Lana went way beyond the usual high school crush or passing romance. It was a connection, Clark was sure, that transcended time and space. He didn't have any words for it, but didn't really feel that he needed any. No matter where he was or what he was doing, Lana was always in his heart. And more and more often, he found himself thinking that she shared his feelings.

But then, there's Whitney. There's always Whitney.

"Whitney writes to me a lot," Lana said, handing

Clark another piece of tape. "He always asks how the Crows are doing. I wrote back that we had yet another new coach, which doesn't exactly lend itself to team spirit. He misses football a lot. He misses . . . well, everything."

"That video you made for him was killer," Clark told her, taping a flyer to the office door.

The week before, Lana had made a new videotape for Whitney. She'd taped all Whitney's old friends sending him greetings, and she'd included Clark in it. When the camera was on him, Clark had tried to be upbeat and friendly. But he'd felt weirdly disloyal, knowing that he and Whitney were in love with the same girl.

"So, he loved it, right?" Clark asked.

"Um . . . not exactly." Lana ran her thumbnail along the ragged edge of the tape roll, her eyes so downcast that all Clark could see was a curtain of glossy hair.

"Um?" Clark echoed. "How could he not like it?"

Clark had learned that Lana had added a personal section at the end of the tape. Evidently, it had been pretty intimate — Lana's telling Whitney how much she missed his kisses, being in his

arms, et cetera, et cetera. Although Clark hadn't seen this part, one of his best friends had — Chloe Sullivan. And Chloe was only too eager to fill Clark in about it. Chloe had also told Clark that Lana wasn't going to trust the tape to the post office. Instead, she was going to send it overnight to Whitney's military base.

Lana looked up at Clark sheepishly, her eyes sad under knitted brows.

"Actually, Clark, I have a confession to make." She bit her lower lip. "I feel monumentally stupid telling you this."

"Telling me what?"

She hesitated. "Well, the truth is . . . I never sent it to Whitney."

Clark was floored. "Why not?"

"I wish I knew."

She leaned her back against the glass trophy case. "The thing is, I added all this personal stuff at the end, and . . ."

Clark mumbled something ambiguous. He didn't really want to tell her that Chloe had already relayed that information.

"Well, I thought about just erasing that part,

and then sending it," Lana went on, "but it didn't feel right. So I taped over it with something else, and I hated that, too. So I tried again. But it still wasn't any good. That's why it's still in an envelope at home."

Clark knew it was wrong, but happiness tap-danced across his skin. He could think of only one reason why Lana wouldn't want to send the personal messages of love she'd recorded to Whitney: She wasn't really sure if she loved him.

Which might mean that Lana and I —

Clark came crashing back to Earth as he recalled Whitney's last words to him before he got on the bus to leave for basic training: "Take care of Lana for me, Clark."

And Clark had agreed. Not wholeheartedly, but at the moment, right before the spring formal last year, he didn't see another way out.

What kind of person moves in on a girl after that?

"Well, I'm sure you know what you're doing, Lana," he said, careful not to meet her eyes.

"Actually, Clark, when it comes to my personal life, I don't know what I'm doing at all," Lana confessed. "I've given it a lot of thought. There's

a reason that I couldn't commit to him before he left."

"What is it?" Clark asked.

This time her gaze was so direct that he couldn't escape it. "You know how they say the truth will set you free, Clark? Well, the truth is —"

"Yes?" he prompted.

She sighed and glanced away for a moment. "You know, sometimes it's hard for the person telling the truth to know if she's ready to tell the total truth. Like, did you ever tell anyone that you would do something, because you didn't want to hurt them in the moment, but the truth was that you weren't ready to do what they asked you to do at all?"

Clark swallowed hard.

More than you know, Lana.

Lana looped her hair behind her ears and offered him a crooked smile. "Sorry. I'm not usually so cryptic. Why don't I start putting up flyers in the other hallway? I've got another roll of tape." She pulled it from her pocket, took a pile of the flyers, and disappeared around the corner.

Clark scuffed a shoe against the linoleum in

frustration. What had Lana been trying to tell him? That her feelings for him were stronger than her feelings for Whitney?

What did she mean when she said, "The truth will set you free"?

He was lost in his own musings, but suddenly something made him go on full alert: the smell of smoke. Clark whipped around, gasping at what met his eyes. All the way down the hall, every single flyer they'd put up was now on the floor.

And all of them were on fire.

CHAPTER 2

So the flyers caught fire, then they burned out, and that's the end of the story. Right, Clark?" Chloe asked Clark, as she pulled into a spot in the municipal lot downtown. "Frankly, it's barely worth a paragraph in the *Torch*. Now, if the sprinkler system had come on . . ."

Actually, I super-spiced down the hallway and crushed out each fire with my bare hands before the sprinkler system even came on, Clark thought. That's probably worth more than a paragraph. But I guess I'll leave out that part.

It was the next evening, and Clark couldn't get the weird fires out of his mind. There had been no damage because he'd put the flames out so quickly. A fire engine did show up, but there was nothing for the firemen to do. Clark and Lana

gave statements to the chief, but neither had any idea how the fires had started.

Now, Chloe and Clark headed down Main Street toward Smallville's town hall, where they were due for a meeting. "I'm surprised at you, Chloe," Clark said. "Aren't you the girl who has a woo-woo theory about everything weird that happens in this town?"

"A few little baby fires set by vandals is hardly Wall of Weird-worthy, Clark."

"I'm talking about twenty flyers we'd just put up," Clark emphasized. "All of them were on the floor, and all of them were on fire. Twenty separate fires burning simultaneously, Chloe. If that's not Wall of Weird material, then how do you explain it?"

The Wall of Weird was a bulletin board in the office of the school newspaper, the *Torch*. Chloe herself had put it together; on the Wall of Weird were newspaper and magazine clippings of all the strange and peculiar things that seemed to happen in Smallville.

Chloe shook her head. "Nope. This time, it's

just a bunch of jerks playing with your mind. Ten kids following you, pulling down the flyers, lighting them with matches."

"We were alone," Clark maintained. "And we closed the doors behind us."

"They came in through the window, then," Chloe said. She stood on tiptoe to kiss his cheek. "It's sweet that you're trying to find Wall of Weird material for me, Clark. *Asante*," she added, thanking him in Swahili.

"*Je! Iko namna*," Clark replied.

"Showoff. Care to translate?"

"Literally, 'Is there a way?' What it means, though, is: Something suspicious is going on."

Chloe rolled her eyes. "Honestly, Clark, you memorize things faster than is humanly possible. You could probably read *War and Peace* in Swahili by now. Or maybe you're fooling everyone and learning Russian, too."

"*Nyet*," Clark joked. "Only Swahili."

It's because my supermemory is developing right along with the rest of my superpowers, he thought. But of course, some things were best not discussed.

“You’re the one who gets straight A’s in French,” he said instead.

Chloe checked her watch. “We’d better hustle. We’re already late.”

At least they were late for a good reason. He and Chloe had made a quick trip to the main library in Metropolis to do research for a paper they were writing together for American History class. Chloe’s car had gotten a flat soon after they’d left the city. She’d insisted on helping him change the tire. With her standing by his side, he’d had to change the tire the old-fashioned way — minus his superpowers. Which meant it took thirty minutes to do what he could easily have done in thirty seconds.

“You ought to consider race walking in the Olympics, Clark.” Chloe was taking three steps to every one of his just to keep up with him.

“I can carry you faster than you’re jogging.”

“I guess that means my odds of winning the next Metropolis marathon are between slim and none. And if we weren’t here already, I’d take you up on your offer,” Chloe quipped.

When they reached town hall, a bright red-on-white banner was stretched across the front, from one white pillar to the next, announcing the multicultural festival. They pushed through the double doors. "Wouldn't you think that a town large enough to hold a multicultural festival would have earned the right to call itself 'Mediumville'?" Chloe asked.

"I like Smallville named Smallville, thanks," Clark said as they reached the meeting room. The door was still open; both he and Chloe were happily surprised to find that the meeting hadn't yet been called to order.

"Yo, Clark! Chloe!" Pete Ross called out, waving to them. Pete was near the front of the room, sitting with Lana and their new friend, Shaaban Mwariri, who had recently moved to Smallville with his parents from Tanzania in East Africa, and another friend, Tina Wu. It was Shaaban, who was named for a famous Tanzanian poet, who'd been teaching them Swahili.

"We were wondering where you were," Tina said, scooching over so that Clark and Chloe could

join them. "My grandmother has already come over three times to ask about you."

Clark looked across the room at the elderly Mrs. Wu, who caught his glance and smiled broadly at him, bobbing her head up and down. "Why would she do that?" Clark asked.

"Because she has a massive crush on you," Tina explained. "I'm completely serious. She says you are almost as nice as the boys she knew in Singapore. Trust me when I tell you that's her concept of a high compliment."

"I guess we'll have to start planning your dowry, Clark," Lana teased, and then she changed the subject. "I was just telling them about the fires. I still can't figure out how all those flyers ignited at the same time."

"Honestly?" Chloe began. "Compared to some of the truly bizarre stuff that goes on in this town, that was small potatoes."

"Yeah. Now if Ballister's American History classroom had burned down . . ." Pete began. He looked at the front of the room and scowled. Mr. Ballister was on the town council, and was seated be-

hind a table on a small raised stage with the other bigwigs.

"You'd do anything to get out of his class," Tina said, laughing.

"The man hates me," Pete maintained. "It's personal. I'm serious."

"Why would he hate you?" Tina asked, looking utterly unconvinced.

Instead of answering, Pete posed another question. "How come he doesn't go to the church Clark and I go to? It's only a block from his house."

Shaaban scratched his chin. "I have no idea what you're driving at, man."

"Maybe our church is a little too interracial for him," Pete suggested. "That's why he's going to the church over in Jaspar. It's all white."

"Pete, I think you're making a mountain out of nothing. Ballister has taught American History at Smallville High forever," Lana pointed out. "He was my Aunt Nell's teacher. I doubt that a racist would be teaching American History."

"Not to mention the fact that he's on the multicultural festival committee," Clark added.

Pete sighed. "Forget it," he mumbled under his breath. He looked at Clark. "So, where were you guys?"

"We got a flat coming back from Metropolis," Chloe explained. "Wouldn't you think that the library here would have the right archival materials on Smallville history so that we wouldn't have to schlep to the city?"

Shaaban's dark eyes twinkled. "Who are you kidding, Chloe? You'd make any excuse to go to Metropolis," he teased, in his musical East African accent.

"Okay, so I'm not a small-town girl at heart," Chloe admitted.

"Neither am I," Lana said. "Once I graduate, it's on to college and out of here."

Clark nodded. He knew that Chloe had lived in Metropolis until just a few years earlier, when her dad had brought the family to Smallville so he could go to work at the Luthorcorp fertilizer factory. He understood how she might still long for the bright lights and the big city. But Lana was a different story. She'd lived in Smallville since she was a toddler.

Maybe she wants to get out of Smallville for a different reason.

Lana had been just three when she and her parents had come to Smallville from Metropolis for a day of fun. Little Lana had put on her favorite fairy princess outfit and stayed with her Aunt Nell so her parents could go to the annual Smallville High School homecoming game.

It was on that day, twelve years ago, that the spaceship carrying Clark had plummeted to Earth in a massive meteor shower. One of those crashing meteorites had killed Lana's parents before the little girl's horrified eyes.

Something like that scars you for life. How could you ever feel at home in a town you'd only been visiting, where such an awful thing happened to your parents? And how could you possibly not hate the guy responsible?

Clark shuddered. Whenever he daydreamed about confiding in Lana, he tried to avoid thinking about the part where he'd have to tell her that the death of her parents was — in a way — his fault.

Shaaban's lilt pulled Clark out of his musings.

“It just so happens that Smallville is a very progressive little community,” he said, trying to keep a straight face. “For example, every dwelling has indoor plumbing.”

Tina clunked him playfully on the head with her notebook. Shaaban and his parents hailed from the capital of Tanzania — a place called Dar es Salaam. Shaaban’s father was a renowned expert in the agriculture of underdeveloped nations, and Lex Luthor had brought Dr. Mwariri to Smallville to help develop a master plan to expand Luthorcorp markets in that direction.

In the brief time he’d been in Smallville, Shaaban and Clark had become good friends; their two families had also gotten acquainted. Along with Pete Ross and his parents, they all attended the same nondenominational church. After having talked to Shaaban’s dad, Jonathan Kent had confirmed for Clark that Dr. Mwariri was indeed an agricultural genius.

Dr. Mwariri was also a born storyteller, spinning the wildest tales of his travels around the world and into the heart of Africa. Dr. Mwariri

grew up in a tiny mountain village, near the border with Kenya, that didn't have electricity or plumbing, hence Shaaban's plumbing joke. But Clark knew that at Shaaban's home in Dar es Salaam, they had the same modern conveniences that his friends had in America.

"What's holding up the meeting?" Chloe asked, peering around the room.

"You see a rich, bald guy in the vicinity?" Pete asked rhetorically, meaning that Lex Luthor hadn't yet arrived. Pete disliked Lex intensely — he was sure that Lex's dad had taken advantage of Pete's own father years before in a business deal.

Pete didn't try to hide his loathing for Lex. It was problematic for Clark, who often felt stuck in the middle, since Pete and Lex were his two best friends. Clark often tried to point out that it was unfair to blame Lex for the sins of his father, but Pete wasn't buying it.

"Personally, I think Lex Luthor is hot," Tina said, folding her arms.

"Last week you told me that you thought Justin Timberlake was hot," Chloe reminded her.

"We won't even mention the lame factor on that one."

"Don't worry, Tina, a case of boys on the brain isn't fatal," Lana assured her.

Tina shrugged. "According to my grandmother, I'm not allowed to date until I'm married," she joked. "And I'm only allowed to marry a boy from Singapore . . . though she might make an exception for you, Clark."

Clark chuckled. "I'm honored."

"Let me just go check that out with your grandmother," Chloe said, pretending to get up. Tina laughed and tugged her back down to her seat.

"Pete, I still don't understand your dislike for Mr. Luthor," Shaaban said. "He treats my family very well. And the multicultural festival was his notion, after all."

"Hey, if money can buy it, so can Lex," Pete said darkly. "Anyway, I should be home catching up on my homework. Whose idea was it for us to be on this committee, anyway?"

"Yours," Chloe reminded him. "We're getting extra credit for American History, remember?"

Which kind of undercuts your theory about Bal-lister being a racist, come to think of it. I think the real problem is that right now, you've got a C in his class."

Shaaban clapped Pete on the back. "No need to frown. I guarantee that after this meeting, you're in for one of the best meals of your entire life."

Clark smiled. Shaaban's parents had invited them all over to their home after the meeting for a traditional Tanzanian feast.

"Bring it on," Pete said, brightening. "I can't wait to taste that . . . what'd you call it again — ugle?"

Shaaban laughed. "*Ugali*. Ooh-GAH-lee."

"Ugly," Pete joked, and they all laughed.

"So sorry all," Lex Luthor apologized as he strode into the room, immediately taking his place behind the long table on the stage. "I was unavoidably detained."

With Lex on the scene, the meeting quickly got down to business. Ms. Parson, a middle school teacher whom Lex had selected to cochair the event, gave her progress report. She'd been Clark's

teacher in eighth grade, and the Parsons had been in Smallville for many generations. That her family had always been leaders of the community was one of the reasons Lex had selected her. She spoke quickly about the various activities that would take place at the community gathering set for Sunday in the high school gym. At the main event, there would be cultural presentations and food from all the countries and cultures represented in modern Smallville. She finished by looking directly at Clark and his friends.

“And now I’d like to call on our teen committee to report on their performance this Sunday,” Ms. Parson said, nodding in the teens’ direction.

Clark nudged Tina. “You’re on.”

Tina stood and cleared her throat. “The teen committee plans to offer performance art representing twelve different cultures,” she reported. “There will be dance, music, drama, and poetry, all representing the cultural diversity of our high school.”

There were appreciative nods around the room.

“Question, Ms. Wu,” Mr. Ballister called out sharply. Everyone knew he had badly wanted Ms. Parson’s job as head of the festival. But, though he was two decades Ms. Parson’s senior, Lex had passed him by. Lex had told Clark that for the first multicultural festival, he wanted to have a woman in charge, because that also would send a message that times were changing. “Will members of these different cultures be performing solo?”

“I don’t understand why it matters,” Tina responded matter-of-factly.

Mr. Ballister tugged on the side of his silver moustache. “My point being, while it’s very nice to expose our students and the community to these performances, the learning curve seems limited unless the maximum number of people participate.”

“Yes,” Tina agreed. “That’s why we plan to have many other students involved, also. For example, all the teens on our committee have agreed to do an African dance performance with Shaaban. In native dress.”

What? Clark thought. *When did that happen?*

He looked at his friends. Clearly, they were also taken by surprise.

"And we'll have groups involved in performances and demonstrations that represent cultures other than their own," Tina added emphatically.

Even Mr. Ballister couldn't find any fault with that idea. Ms. Parson lavished praise on Tina before turning the meeting over to Lex.

As soon as Tina sat down, Pete leaned close to her. "Since when are we doing African dance?" he hissed.

"So I got carried away," Tina whispered back loudly enough so that Clark could hear.

Mr. Ballister looked sternly in the kids' direction. They stopped whispering; Lex flashed Clark an enigmatic smile.

"As I was saying," Lex continued, "Smallville is the new face of America. Just as America is changing, so is Smallville . . . and with tremendous speed. We can embrace this as progress, or we can live in a narrow-minded little box. America has always

opened her arms to those from different cultures. I'm proud to see Smallville embracing these sons and daughters, just as I like to think that you've embraced me as one of your own."

Pete stifled an incredulous guffaw and poked Clark in the ribs. Lex finished up by thanking everyone for working so hard on the festival, and then passing out some T-shirts he'd had made. Clark couldn't help noticing that Pete was the only person in the room who didn't take one.

CHAPTER 3

Shaaban's house was within easy walking distance from downtown, so everyone left their cars where they had parked them and strolled the few blocks to the Mwariris' house.

"You guys, we all have to do the dance with Shaaban," Tina pleaded, "or I'll look like a liar."

"If the shoe fits," Pete pointed out.

"I wasn't lying, I was anticipating," Tina corrected him. She put her palms together as if she were praying. "Please-please-please-please."

"I think it'll be fun," Lana said.

"Bless you," Tina cried, grabbing Lana's arm.

"Yeah, I'm in," Chloe agreed, albeit reluctantly.

"Guys?" Tina turned to Pete and Clark.

Pete shook his head. "I am not getting on stage in some strange costume and dancing around in front of the entire town."

"But you're African American," Shaaban pointed out.

"Well, of course," Pete replied proudly. "And my family has been in Smallville as long as anyone's. I'm down with the Africa thing, too. But the dance is out. I'm sure my man Clark feels the same way I do."

Tina gave Clark a puppy-dog look. "Clark?"

What flew into Clark's mind was the time he'd been cast as Cyrano de Bergerac in the school play. He'd never in a million years thought he could do it, yet he'd managed to overcome his stage fright.

Not that I actually got to play the part, he recalled. I had to fight off an invisible girl bent on destroying the theater. Why is it that fighting evil always seems to interfere with the rest of my life?

"Clark-ie," Tina sang. "You're not going to fail me, are you?"

"Clarkie's sticking with me," Pete insisted.

"I don't know . . ." Clark wavered. Acting was one thing; African dance in "native dress" was another.

"Oh, come on," Shaaban said, nudging Clark's elbow. "What are you afraid of, man?"

"Looking like an idiot in front of the entire town comes to mind," Clark said.

Shaaban nodded. "Okay, here's my offer. After dinner, my father and I will show you the dance I have in mind. You'll see how cool it is. All the modern hip-hop moves have been borrowed from African dance."

"Yeah, but they don't wear grass skirts while they do it," Pete insisted.

"Grass skirts are Hawaiian, Pete," Lana said.

"Whatever. You get my point."

The group turned up the walkway to Shaaban's home; Shaaban led them around on the driveway to a side door. "My mom's car isn't here," he noted as he let them into the kitchen. "She must not be back from shopping for our feast yet. Come on in and I'll put on some music from home. You can hear what —"

Shaaban stopped in mid-sentence, too shocked to speak.

They were standing in his family's kitchen. It looked as if something had exploded in the room. There was broken glass and cutlery everywhere. The refrigerator door dangled open, food littered the floor. Every chair was overturned or broken. The beautiful carved wooden table was flooded with fresh red paint that still dripped to the floor.

"Dear God," Shaaban whispered hoarsely.

"Someone call the police," Clark said. Then, moving so fast that the world around him stopped dead, Clark super-spiced through the house, looking for an intruder. He always thought of speeding along like this as going into "Clark time," because while he was fine, everything around him seemed frozen.

His last stop was the living room. It, too, was a disaster area. But what he found in there turned his stomach more than all the other damage put together.

He sped back to his friends and stepped out of

Clark time. "Let's check the living room," he said quietly.

Shaaban was the first one into the living room. There were tears in his eyes as he read what was spray-painted on the wall:

GO BACK TO AFREKA!