



Action Comics #34
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Action Comics

Issue #34: "Smallville, Land of the Pharaohs"

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The Smallville bank sat on the corner of main street. It was not the biggest building in Smallville, that distinguishing characteristic was laid claim to by Holcombs Feed and Seed. The bank however was the most impressive. Made entirely from granite from the local quarry the sun glanced off the smooth rock blue columns that adorned the front entrance where etched into the stone above the door it proudly proclaimed itself as Smallville's First National Bank.

Once inside the, the dark wood stain and the smell of leather whisked one away to some exotic Mediterranean banking center, where the locals wore pressed linen and white shoes, but patrons were quickly reminded where they were when they meet Pete Ross, the bank manager.

Born and bred in Smallville Pete had many friends and no enemies. That's not to say as bank manager he sometimes didn't have to take a hard line with people, even those people would tell you that Pete was fair and as fine a man as you would ever want to meet. Everyone was surprised when Pete came back to town after leaving for college and spending some years abroad, but everyone was glad for it.

Pete looked up from the papers on his desk as the line on his phone blinked; it was his private line, which most of the citizens of Smallville had anyway.

"Hello, this is Pete", he paused. "Wow, that's great news Mr. Hutton ... How much? ... Wow ... What do you think I should do? ... Yeah, I heard about it ... It sent the stock down that much ... Absolutely that would be

great ... Yes, I could get everything in order here in few days. Thank you Mr. Hutton. This is great news." Pete put the phone back down into its cradle. "And I know just who I'm going to share it with."

Pete held down the button on his intercom. "Miss Danvers, will you please call a staff meeting and get me Miss Lang on the phone."

The entire town of Smallville was a throwback to a simpler time. Oh there were things like a coffee house slash internet cafe and most everyone now had a computer. Most of the farms were now automated, air-conditioned computer-run models of efficiency, but somehow despite all this Smallville still exuded that down-home folksy atmosphere that everyone associated with small towns. No where was it more apparent than the Smallville General Store.

Martha Kent poked her head through the curtain that separated the stockroom from the sales floor.

"OK Kara, coast is clear."

Kara lifted the large case of case of beans easily onto the shelf just as the bell jingled on the front door.

Dust seemed to follow the man inside. He was a small man with thin arms and legs that protruded from the khaki outfit he wore. Jangling around on top of his bald head was pith helmet. He looked like he had stepped right out of a 1940 movie serial about expeditions to darkest Africa. And that wouldn't be far from the truth.

"Why as I live and breathe!" Martha exclaimed. "Professor Phineas Potter!"

The gangly man took Martha's hand in his and bowed slightly doffing his hat and kissing her on the hand.

"Mrs. Kent. I am delighted to see you again. Don't tell me you and Jonathon have left the open fields of the farm for the rustic charm of the general store."

"I'm sorry, Potter. Jonathon is no longer with us. He died over two years ago, during that awful invasion thing."

Potter placed his pith helmet over his heart.

"I am truly sorry, Martha. There was no finer man than Jonathon Kent."

Kara poked her head out of the store room. "Mrs, Kent should I move... " She stopped seeing Potter standing there holding Martha's hand.

Martha blushed a little. When she was growing up there was a time when Phineas Potter had been as suitable a suitor as Jonathon Kent.

"Martha is this radiant beauty your sister?"

Martha jerked her hand away. "Oh Phineas, this is Kara, Clark's cousin. She's staying with us for a while."

Kara understood that introducing her as Clark's cousin meant that this person did not know of the family secret and she was to hide her powers from them.

"Pleased to meet you Kara. You certainly have the family beauty."

"Does Lana know that you're home?" Martha asked.

"No not yet, I intend to go visit my niece as soon as I restock my supplies from your lovely establishment."

"My goodness Potter where have you been all these years?"

Potter started placing canned goods onto the counter shelf. "Oh my dear Martha I have been to the far reaches of the earth and most recently the darkest corners of the African continent."

Lana held two dresses in front of her. One of them was blue, the other was yellow. She held up the blue to her, imagining how the dress would move when she walked. Pete had just called and asked her to dinner.

They had been going out steadily now these last few months. They had shared lots of things growing up. Elementary school, High School, Clarks friendship, for a time they had been Smallvilles own version of the three musketeers, all for one and one for all.

Then Clark told her.

She put the blue dress down on the bed and held up the yellow one.

She withdrew, afraid that she would accidentally let the secret out. For a while she locked the door to her room at night afraid that she might blurt it out in her sleep. Soon everyone went off to college and their separate ways. She pushed the secret out of her mind. Then she came home, with her son. Or she thought she did. It was all a fake, memories placed there by Brainiac. What had she done instead of raise a son? She couldn't remember.

She would go with the yellow one. It complimented her red hair and she liked the way the way the waist was cut.

The door bell rang. Could that be Pete already? I thought I was meeting him at the restaurant. Whatever he had to tell her must not be able to keep. She quickly slid the dress on over her head and ran into her stocking feet to the door. The last person she expected to see was her Uncle Professor Phineas Potter.

He blew into the house like a Kansas dirt devil.

"My goodness, little Lana! Look how you've grown!" He grabbed her and hugged her tight.

"Uncle Phineas?" She looked down at her dress; it was now stained with dust. She would have to wear the blue one.

"What are you doing here, you should have written me or called to tell me you were coming. I have an appointment in a few minutes."

"Hot date, my dear? I'm sorry, I'm just through town for a couple of days and thought I would drop in to see my favorite niece."

Only neice you mean, she thought. "You're welcome to stay here." She

called out as she ran into her bedroom and changed to the blue dress.

Uncle Potter had already made himself comfortable on the couch as she came out. "Don't go to any trouble dear, I'll only be a couple of days, Big Dig in Peru you know."

"I'll be back in a couple of hours Uncle Potter, and we'll catch up. You can tell me all about your latest archeological find."

"Don't rush on my account dear you take your time. I'll be here when you get back, and please call me Uncle PP like you did when you were little."

"Uh, ok Uncle PP." Lana closed the door as inside Uncle Potter clutched his dusty back pack to his chest and headed out back to the barn.

Lana walked into the restaurant. The smell of freshly baked bread made her stomach growl. Pete stood from the table and walked to her.

"Sorry, I'm late Pete. I had a visitor at the house just as I was leaving."

"Not someone I should be worried about I hope."

Lana giggled as they walked to the table. "No, you remember my Uncle Potter?"

Pete pulled out the chair for her as she sat down. "Crazy old PP Potter!?"

"Yeah, that's the one."

A waiter came over and poured a thick red wine into their wine glasses.

"Is he still traveling the world digging up old lunch boxes", Pete asked. He swirled the thick red wine and touched it to his lips giving the waiter an approving nod.

"One would assume, seeing that he ruined my first dress choice tonight when he hugged me and left a dust imprint like a fossil. He'll be gone

though in a few days, he never stays long, off again to some other archeological dig." She took a sip of the wine. "I think he mentioned Peru."

The taste of the wine hit her. It was good, very good; too good for a casual date.

"Pete, what's your news? This wine it's very expensive. Did you win the lottery?"

"Well, kinda... "

The Barn smelled of old hay and leather. It smelled old, and Potter knew from old. He had started in archeology innocently enough, having a fascination with other cultures and ancient civilizations. Several high profile universities had sponsored several early digs, but soon after several disappointing expeditions funding and interest dried up. There were still people who would pay for the kinds of things that Potter could find. Unfortunately most of those people preferred to display Potters finds not in a museum but instead in their cribs next to their one thousand gallon shark tank. And most, no all governments, didn't like the idea of national treasures going to the highest bidder. Egypt was no different. That was the reason for Professor Potters hasty retreat from Egypt before the Egyptian authorities could catch up with him and the reason he was back here in Smallville. No one would think of looking for the treasures of Se-Osiris, the son of Ramasses in little ole po-dunk Smallville.

Potter climbed the ladder into the hayloft. A couple of old stale hay bales left behind and forgotten sat in the corner of the loft, any animal that would have eaten it had been long since sold off to market. Potter sat down his back pack and took out the carefully wrapped treasures stuffing them behind the hay bales.

That should do for a couple of days until the heat dies down. Then it's a bus trip to Chicago, buses are far less suspicious when it comes to carry on luggage.

"You have how much money?" Lana nearly choked on her wine and quickly picked up a glass of water to wash it down.

"Well, I'm not a Bruce Wayne or anything, but I have made some very good investments over the years."

The waiter brought their meals. A well done steak for Pete and pan seared tuna for Lana. Pete dove right into his.

"I don't have quite as much now though cause I've bought something that I want you to help me with."

Pete cut off a slice of steak, skewered it with his fork and brought up to his mouth "You not hungry", he asked gesturing at her plate with his steak knife.

Lana absently mindedly began to cut on the slab of fish. "What did you do Pete?"

Pete lowered the chunk of steak back to his plate. "I bought Lex-corp, or what was Lex-corp, the holdings that Fero Corp had that were Lex-corp holdings, it's all very lawyer-ese and financial mumbo-jumbo. I want you to help me run it Lana." Pete brought the bovine morsel once again to the precipice of mastication.

"You want to hire me to help you run your new multi-million dollar corporation that you just bought. Don't tell me it was on E-bay."

Pete lowered his fork and swabbed the meat in the percolating juices. "No, I was already a shareholder, just with all that's gone on in the company, what with Lex going off the deep-end and now the whole Fero debacle, the stock plummeted and I picked up the last remaining shares of all the Lex-corp holdings." Pete laid down the fork, meat bob still attached and reached under the table. "I thought you with your background and your contacts from your time in Europe ... "

What background was he referring to she wondered, what contacts? What did Pete know about me that Brainiac had taken away?

"... but you misunderstand me Lana, I'm not asking you to be my employee", Pete brought a small black box out from under the table and pushed it toward Lana. "I'm asking you to be my wife."

Silent it glided through the air, on wings that gave no hint of its presence. Vision that opened the night as if it were midday. She saw the rodent scurry across the field. It stopped, vaguely aware of a presence. Did it hear her? Not likely, probably something else. Or did it have some sort of sixth sense and could detect the approaching danger? No matter, for it didn't help the little field mouse as the great owl descended from the night sky cloaked in the silence of its immense wings. Its sharp talons grabbed the mouse snapping its neck and hoisting it into the sky. Tonight her chicks would feed. She landed in the highest rafter of the Lang Barn, hesitantly she swung her large head around, the limp mouse dangling in her beak, there was something off, something had been here. No matter, her chicks were safe, their little mouths swung open wide. Little balls of fur that needed to be fed. The mother owl dropped the mouse onto the rafter and stepped on it with her large clawed foot. Her razor sharp beak tore the flesh into chunks and she stuffed it into the waiting mouths. Blood pooled on the rafter and ran down dropping to land behind the stack of hay onto the Egyptian relic swaddled in cotton.

The blood soaked through the cotton to the relic below, the relic that Seti the son of Ramesses and the most powerful magician in all of Egypt, had chosen to house his spirit. The blood awakened the long dead magician's spell. A great vortex of energy opened and the barn was bathed in a brilliant white light.

"I swear to you you'll have it in time for your music video!" Potter said into the phone.

"You better or I'll cut... " Potter wouldn't know what the rapper BMF had threatened to cut, the front door exploded in light. A tall Egyptian man stood where the front door was. He wore a gold Egyptian headdress. His chest was bare and his waist was wrapped in a cotton loin-cloth like kilt. He wore gold boots and gold arm bands on his biceps;

each wrist was wrapped in a long gold bracelet. In his head he held a long rod that ending with a golden raven with a red ruby set in its chest. He pointed the ruby staff at Potter.

"You have defiled the tomb of Se-Osiris son of Ramesses, and for that you will die." A bolt of energy lashed out from the raven's head and Potter dived beside the refrigerator.

The back door that he had come in through minutes earlier stood open and just beyond that, the old farm truck. He dove for the door and rolled out down the steps, and ran as fast as his little skinny legs could carry him for the truck.

Se-Osiris raised the staff in the air, the energy jumped and sparked from the staff. "Leave this place as a testament to those that would test the son of Ramesses!"

The energy crackled and the walls of Lana's house began to crumble into dust.

The old farm truck bounced up and down as Potter hit every pot-hole in the road. Thank goodness, Lana was the trusting sort and left the keys in truck. Potter glanced in the mirror and saw Lana's house disintegrating in white light.

The old farm truck skittered down Main Street. Se-Osiris suddenly appeared in front of it in a blinding flash. Potter turned the wheel hard and the truck swerved and tipped over onto its side, metal screaming against the pavement.

Martha woke up. What was that? There was the absence of sound, as if sound had just happened but you had missed hearing it. There was a flash from outside and a sound like wet clothes being thrown on a wooden floor. She ran to the window that looked out over the street. There was Potter running down the street as some nearly nekkid guy was about to shoot him with some sort of gun.

"Kara", she whispered. The tall blonde girl was already standing besides her wearing the new suit her and Martha had designed for her.

"Be careful." was all she said.

Kara was on the street in a second placing herself between Se-Osiris and Potter.

"Put down your weapon and give up." She said.

"My magic allows us to understand each other woman, so understand this. The defiler of the tomb of Se-Osiris shall die for his transgressions. If you choose to stand with him, so too shall you share his fate." Energy erupted from the staff and Supergirl easily sidestepped it catching Se with an uppercut that sent him flying into the air. Martha watching from the window pumped her fist in the air.

"You go girl."

"Mrs. Kent I would advise coming away from the window." The little gold robot Keelex floated beside her.

"Oh pipe down Kay, I'm not the one that's a talking phone."

Se-Osiris landed flat on his back with a loud thud. Supergirl bent down to take the staff from him. "Let's see how much trouble you are without this."

She touched it and a white light bathed her body causing her to fall unconscious.

Se-Osiris stood picking up the staff, he leveled it at Kara's head. "So shall you all share the punishment."

A shotgun blast tore through Osiris's shoulder. He screamed in pain.

Ma Kent stood on the street in her flannel night gown; the one Jonathon had given her with the little blue flowers on it. Smoke from the shotgun she held in her hand lazily dissipating into the air.

"Drop that stick or I'll fire the next round into your head."

"Who is this man that so many are willing to die for?" Se-hand shot out his fingers twisted like claws. Martha felt a sudden tightening around

her throat as if she were being strangled. She dropped the shotgun as her feet slowly began to lift off the ground.

Se-Osiris never even saw it coming. He barely had time to react with a magical protection spell before the man of steel barreled headfirst into him.

Martha dropped the few inches to the ground. Supergirl was dazed but going to Martha's aid.

"Ms. Kent what were you thinking, he could have killed you. I had to do something, you're like my own child I couldn't let him kill **you**."

"You called Kal." Kara asked.

"No, I did." Keelex floated over to them and Martha snatched him out of the air, he reverted back to looking like a cell phone.

Kara righted the overturned truck with one hand.

"That's Lana's truck."

"I'll check on her, Martha, you get back inside, and don't come back out..."

Osiris plowed into the fertile Kansas fields, dirt and soybeans spraying into the air.

"You picked the wrong town to start your villain career in mister. You have two seconds to tell me why I shouldn't pound you into the ground." Superman was furious. This maniac had threatened his Mother, and he wasn't taking any chances.

"I will take back what is mine." Osiris shoved the raven end of the staff at Superman's chest; he easily sidestepped it but was caught with the other end as Se brought it around with the force of a major league pitcher. It caught Superman in the jaw and sent him sailing into the air.

"Pete, this a lot to take in, can I give you an answer tomorrow", she asked.

Pete tried to hide his disappointment. "Sure Lana, please do, just know that whatever you decide, it won't change the way I feel about you."

Lana pushed the little box back to him. Pete stopped her, laying his hand on hers.

"No, you keep it. No matter what you decide it's yours."

"Pete, I couldn't."

"Let's cross that bridge when and if we come to it." Pete winked at her and she smiled.

He asked me to marry him. Lana kept thinking that over and over as she drove home.

He bought Lex-corp and he asked me to marry him. Lana was still in a daze as she pulled into her driveway from the tree lined road. Her driveway ended in nothing. Her house was gone. There was a smoldering mound where it once stood, the barn stood in the background, a silent witness to whatever had happened to her house. Supergirl landed in front of her.

Martha had introduced them several weeks ago. She figured since Lana knew about Clark's secret that one more would be ok. She thought it would give Kara someone closer to her own age to confide in. What she failed to ask was whether or not Lana wanted to know another secret.

"Are you ok, Lana?"

Lana stepped toward the remains of her house. "What happened here?"

"I don't know, there was some guy in town chasing your truck, Martha sent me here to make sure you're ok. Superman is fighting him now."

"My truck? Superman?" all this information was becoming too much to process. She looked at smoking rubble of her house.

"Uncle Potter."

Superman twisted his body around slowing his backward motion. Magic. Great. He hovered over the quarry as Se-Osiris approached him in the sky.

"What exactly is it you're trying to take back." Superman asked.

Se-Osiris leveled the staff at Superman, the energy shot out from it tearing across Superman's chest.

Potter scrambled onto the bus. He just made it. What good fortune for him that Superman was there, or was it a woman, he didn't have time to tell as he was running.

A couple hours bus ride and he would be on a plane to somewhere, anywhere that the authorities or that resurrected Egyptian Magician couldn't find him. He would find something else somewhere for that rapper guy, in fact he could probably pick up something in the airport gift shop. BMF would never know the difference and Superman would take care of Se-Osiris. It was Superman, he wondered again.

Suddenly the bus stopped as if it had been yanked back by a cord. Like the planes that land on aircraft carriers. Everyone else was looking out the back. Supergirl stood there holding the bus up in her hands. Potter turned to run out the front as the doors on the bus fwooshed open and Lana walked onboard.

"Phineas Potter. What have you done?"

Superman shook of the energy blast and flew at the magician. A quick spell of intangibility and he went flying through him. Se-Osiris turned

solid catching the man of steel by his cape and hanking him back toward him. Osiris, held the staff high over his head ready to blast Superman.

"Hey! Give me this stick! You'll put someone's eye out!" Supergirl sped by grabbing the staff from Osiris. She trained her heat vision on the ruby embedded in its center and the jewel exploded, the staff and Osiris began to fade.

"Noooooo," he cried, as he faded away, I will be avenged." and with that he was gone.

Superman and Supergirl hung there in the air.

"Nice guess Kara." Superman said, "Any idea what he was after?"

"It wasn't a guess, and he was after him." Kara pointed below on the ground. Lana stood there with Professor Potter.

Superman flew down to them. "Professor Potter. I'm sure that the Egyptian authorities would like to talk to you. As it happens I just happen to be going that way.

"Ms. Lang, I hope you understand, he has to be turned in."

"Absolutely Superman, its par for the course, when I was growing up Uncle Potter was always in some sort of trouble."

Superman took Uncle Potter by the shoulders and turned him away from Lana. He winked at her. He knew of course about Potter, having grown up himself around his schemes and his stolen archeological finds.

"Be safe Miss Lang, and Superman flew up with Professor Potter in tow.

More secrets.

Lana stood inside the barn looking back at the remains of her house. Superheroes. How did she get involved in this world. Clark. She loved him. Then he told her, what he really was. She still loved him, but the world he lived in was too much for her. She had to let go, again, make things

move forward. Even if that meant letting go of some of the past, even the parts she couldn't remember. Something shifted in the back of the barn, behind the hay bales. Lana heard it. Probably a mouse. She carefully poked her head behind the hay bale. There was a backpack stuffed between the wall and the barn. Lana carefully pulled it out watching for spiders.

"What happened here? Lana are you all right! Your house!"

Lana jumped and turned around. "Pete! You scared the bejeezus out of me!"

"Why do you not have a house?" Pete asked.

"Two words, crazy old PP Potter."

"Don't worry Lana, I'll have it rebuilt for you, I can do that now."

"Don't worry about it Mr. Ross." She dropped the back pack at her feet; putting her arms around his neck she kissed him.

"Yes." she said.

In a city best known for Superman, one more crater usually isn't a big deal; this one however had cost many lives and was the former site of Lex-corp towers, then Fero-corp. Superman and city workers had cleared away all the rubble. It was now ready for new construction.

A crowd had gathered around a small makeshift stage with a podium.

"So, Kent where'd you sneak off to yesterday". Lois asked as she elbowed a reporter from the Daily Star.

"I flew home I had to take care of some business."

"Rumor has it someone bought Lex-Corp/Fero at a ridiculous low rate because of all the trouble surrounding it. Any ideas who it is?"

"Not a clue Lois."

Mayor John Henry Irons approached the podium.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I have called the press conference to introduce to young entrepreneur who will be rebuilding here on this site and to welcome him to Metropolis. It is with great pleasure that I introduce the owner and CEO of the new Ross Industries.

Pete Ross dressed in a black business suit stepped from behind a small curtain.

Lois elbows Clark, "Hey, Kent, ain't that ... ?

Pete addressed the crowd. "Ladies and Gentlemen. Let me assure you that I am no megalomaniacal businessman bent on world domination. I'm just a Kansas farm boy who has had a run of good luck with some past investments. I have always thought that this company had the capability to help in some way every citizen on this planet, and I intend to see that as Ross Industries, it does. Along with the help of my CFO and finance Ms. Lana Lang."

From behind the curtain Lana stepped up to the platform, and took Pete's hand; the modest but expensive diamond flashing on her hand.

"Hey, that's ... from Smallville." Lois turned to look at Clark; she could tell from his expression that he was just as surprised as everyone else. "Ouch."

Epilogue:

The hard Antarctic winds whipped around the geological mapping team. Robert, pulled his parka around fumbling with the switch on the MiD (Magnetic Imaging Device) He checked the cable that snaked back to the small brown tent that sat alone on the white arctic plain. Gustav would watch as the magnetic pulse forced its way through the antarctic ice to the continent below. The resulting image would be stored in the computer and then the next grid would be shot to produce an image of what lay below the ice.

"Ready grid 32" Robert spoke, the mike strapped and bundled to his neck carried his voice back to Gustav.

"Grid 32, go." Gustav relayed back.

Robert turned the switch and the large gun looking machine pointed straight down at the ice began to hum. A blue light pulsed from it down into the ice.

Miles away at the Fortress of Solitude. A small blue spark erupts in the air, and a finger pokes through from nothing to this world. The blue spark rips open and a man steps through.

To be continued.

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