

No Place Like Home

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No Place Like Home

by [Beatrice_Otter](#)

Summary

Kal-El, Amanda Rogers—Stop me if you've heard this before: an alien child with superpowers turns up in Kansas as an orphan, and is raised by humans until learning of their true nature as an adolescent...

Notes

Written for the Multiverse 5000 challenge

In the course of writing this, I realized that another DC/Star Trek crossover that absolutely cries out to be made is Q and Mr. Mxyzptlk. Please tell me that this has been done somewhere.

The first time Clark Kent met Amanda Rogers, he didn't pay much attention. Young, smart, decent CV for her age, good writing portfolio, pretty—it was easy to see why Perry had hired her as a junior reporter for the City section, but she didn't really stand out in any way. Lois, just made editor of the city section and still taking a little too much glee in being finally able to give him orders legally rather than just through force of personality, asked Clark to get the new girl settled. He showed Amanda her desk, showed her where office supplies were, and gave her IT's number so she could get a computer sent up, introducing her to everyone as he went.

"Thanks for the help," Amanda said, perched on the edge of her new desk. She smiled at him.

"No problem," Clark said absently. He could hear the sound of screams on the other side of town, and cries of fire. Nonchalantly, he turned in that direction and looked through walls and buildings until he saw the fire. It was the tallest tenement in suicide slums, and from the speed at which it was burning, arson had to be involved somehow.

"Look, I was wondering—"

"Is that the time?" Clark said, glancing at his watch. Theatrically, he frowned at the wall of clocks set to different time zones. "I have to run if I'm going to make that appointment." He gave Amanda a smile. "It was nice meeting you," he said as he headed toward the doors.

"But—"

"You should go see Lois about your first assignment," Clark said over his shoulder. "If you've got any more questions I'm sure Jimmy or Lucy will be happy to help."

He didn't really notice her again until they blew open a corruption case in the mayor's office so tangled it had half the department writing up different angles of it. Once the paper was put to bed, Lois invited the entire City section out for drinks, first round on her. With a cheer they all piled into the elevators. Clark somehow found himself next to Amanda, in a different elevator than Lois. He wasn't quite sure how that happened. Still, getting jostled around by crowds could do that. It just didn't often do it to him unless he wanted it to.

"That was good work you did," Amanda said as the elevator started to move. "Digging up that tie between the city inspector and the construction and maintenance company couldn't have been easy."

"Thanks," Clark said. "But even with the arson, the speed that building went up made it pretty obvious something else had to be going on. Just wish we could have tied it back to Luthor." It was a constant frustration. Luthor had his fingers in all kinds of corruption, but was rarely stupid enough to get caught at it. Given that he had been the building's owner, the chances that he wasn't involved were something less than zero.

They reached the ground floor. The elevator doors slid open at roughly the same time as the elevator opposite, and a loud debate on whether or not Councilmember Barret was sleeping with her assistant engulfed the group for the walk to the bar.

Once there, he again found himself next to Amanda once everyone had gotten their drinks and settled down.

"So, I hear you're from Kansas," she said. "So am I."

"Really?" Clark said, adjusting his glasses. "Where in Kansas?" There weren't many people in Metropolis from the Midwest—at least, not many who'd admit to it.

"Topeka," Amanda said.

"Oh, the city," Clark said. "We didn't get there often. It's a lot different than Smallville."

"Smallville? Is that the name of your home town?" Amanda took a drink of her beer.

"Yeah," Clark said. "We lived out in the country, but that was where I went to school. Really, it's called Smallville, but it's not all *that* small compared to a lot of the other towns in the area."

After fifteen minutes of pleasant conversation about his home state—Amanda must be a bit homesick, all alone in the big city, he thought—Clark excused himself to play pool with Lois.

"She's got a crush on you, you know," Lois said as she lined up her first shot.

Clark was admiring the view. "Who?" he asked, drinking.

"The new girl. Rogers. Amanda, that's her name." Lois broke with a sharp, graceful move of the cue, and stepped back to study the table.

Nothing had gone in, so Clark grabbed a cue to take his shot. "Lois, she's only, what twenty?"

"So?"

Clark could feel his wife's eyes on his butt as he leaned over the table. He smirked, an expression he didn't often allow himself around his co-workers. "So, I'm almost forty." He lined up the cue and took his shot.

"And a very handsome almost-forty indeed underneath the suit and glasses," Lois said. "Seriously. She's been almost stalking you. Some girls go for older guys."

"And you think she's one of them?" Clark glanced over at Amanda, who was still by the bar, talking with Jimmy. She met his gaze and smiled across the room at him. "You might be right."

"I'm always right," Lois said modestly. "That's why I'm the boss. Well, that and the fact that the City section can't have an editor who's constantly AWOL—it's bad enough in a lead reporter."

"Yeah, yeah," Clark said.

Over the next few weeks, Clark tried to ignore Amanda, but now that he was watching he kind of wondered how he'd missed it. She was everywhere he was, trying to start conversations, and it made slipping out to be Superman a bit harder than normal. Aside from that, life seemed pretty normal.

Until Earth was invaded by an alien race that wanted to destroy humans and colonize the planet, and thought the best way to start the invasion was by throwing thousands of asteroids at the planet and letting gravity do most of their work for them. (Seriously. What was it these days? Earth had never had an alien invasion in recorded history, and now they had one on average once a year.)

Superman and the Green Lantern and the other Justice League members who could tolerate vacuum were up in space dealing with the asteroids while the rest of the JLU manned the Watchtower and what ships were available or stayed in atmosphere trying to deal with what got through. Too much got through.

Clark darted here and there, grabbing the biggest and hurling them back at the invaders, hoping to smash a few of their ships, not taking too much time to aim because even with his speed he couldn't get them all. No time to dwell on the devastation each one that he missed would cause on Earth, the people killed by each one.

A white light flashed. The asteroid he was reaching for disappeared. He looked around—all the asteroids had disappeared—including the ones that were already in atmosphere—and the alien ships were gone as well. The white light—it reminded him of Mr. Mxyzptlk, but the being from the fifth dimension would never use his powers to save Earth.

"Don't worry, they won't be back."

Clark jerked in surprise as Amanda Rogers appeared in front of him, out in space, without a spacesuit, having no trouble talking despite the fact that there was no air to carry sound vibrations.

"They're not dead, they're just on the other side of the galaxy near an uninhabited planet which suits their needs," Amanda said. She was wearing the same conservative skirt suit she'd worn for work at the Planet.

Clark wondered if she was a telepath. She still looked human to him, if he ignored the fact that they were currently in space without spacesuits. "Who are you?" He, too, was able to talk without air. It wasn't that she created atmosphere around them, it was that he didn't currently seem to

need it.

"Amanda Rogers." She frowned. "I suppose technically it would be more accurate to call myself Q, but I was Amanda longer than I've been Q."

"Are you from the fifth dimension?" Superman asked.

"No, I told you, I'm from Topeka," Amanda said, patiently. "The Topeka in another universe, but not a different dimension. And the fifth dimension isn't really that much more advanced than your own, Mister Mxyzptlk notwithstanding. Look, can we go someplace more comfortable to talk?"

Clark shrugged. If she'd really gotten rid of the invaders, she could obviously take *him* just as easily. That she asked seemed to be a point in her favor. Besides, if she'd been *powerful* enough to take out the invaders, there wasn't anything he could do to stop her. He flicked on his communicator. "Batman, I'm here with Amanda Rogers, who took care of the invaders. She wants to go someplace to talk with me."

"I wouldn't go off alone with her," Batman said. "We don't know anything about her."

Clark ignored his old friend's habitual paranoia. It was an argument they wouldn't ever resolve. "I'll have my communicator with me." He flicked it off, and smiled at Amanda. "Where were you thinking of?"

A flash, and they were in a cornfield. Smallville. That was his home, a field or two over.

"Is this okay?" Amanda asked. Sun glinted off her hair, bleaching it the color of the cornstalks around them. She looked like she belonged here, like she could be one of the children from town gone to make a living in the city, home for a visit. But Clark had learned a long time ago the hazards of letting himself be fooled by appearances, and he'd done that quite enough with her already. "We could go to Krypton, if you prefer," she went on. "I can't bring back the people who died, but I could re-create the planet."

Clark kept his mouth from dropping with effort. It was tempting ... but a restored Krypton without any people would make too rich a target for scavengers. "Here's fine," he said. "So, not to be blunt, but what made you choose this reality? Why did you leave your own?"

"Stop me if you've heard this before," Amanda said. "An alien child with superpowers turns up in Kansas as an orphan, and is raised by humans until learning of their true nature as an adolescent..."

"So, you wanted to learn more about me?" Clark said.

Amanda shook her head. "Actually, I was talking about myself," she said. "My parents were Q—extremely powerful energy-beings, members of the Q Continuum. They left, took human form, and moved to Earth where I was born. But leaving caused an imbalance in the Continuum, and to punish them, the Continuum killed them." She sighed. "I was very small at the time, and having been born as a human mortal, didn't know or understand what had happened to them. For some reason, the Continuum didn't take me with them, and I had no idea I was anything but Human until a couple of years ago when I started having powers. The Q found me and trained me, and I'm glad they did. But none of them understand me; none of them can know what it's like to grow up human." She smiled. "That's one thing superpowers can help with, I guess. And humans can't understand what it's like to be Q. I wanted to talk with someone, and ... you seemed the ideal person."

Clark watched her, carefully. It was possible she had hostile motives and was trying to win his trust, but given her powers he couldn't think of a reason she'd need to. Besides, if she was lying, she was an Oscar-worthy actress. "And getting a job at the Planet?"

She shrugged. "I thought it'd be easier to find time to talk there, and I didn't want to just pop into your home unannounced. I wasn't expecting it to be so hard to get you to drop the clumsy geek act."

"Have you ever tried to live among Humans?" Clark asked.

"No," Amanda said, confirming his suspicions. "At least, not for long. A couple of days. But they all knew what I was by that point, anyway."

"It's a bit different when you're going to stay here for your whole life," Clark said gently. "When you know you have to handle day to day living, being just one of the crowd—being normal—can be a relief."

"I know," Amanda said, looking down. "If I hadn't been enjoying being ... ordinary ... I'd have gotten your attention more dramatically." She sighed. "It's been a while."

This 'Q Continuum' had killed her parents for living as humans, Clark remembered. "The Continuum won't let you go back to your old life?" he said.

"No," she said. "And really, the universe—all the universes—are so amazing, I've seen and done so many wonderful things that I could never have done. I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

Clark thought this would have been more convincing if she'd been willing to look her in the eye while she said it. "You're always welcome here," he said.

"I've stayed on Earth too long already," Amanda said. She gave a small laugh. "Thank you for offering, anyway."

Clark nodded. "If you ever want to talk, swing by," he said.

"I may take you up on that, Clark," Amanda said. "Good-bye." White light flashed, and she was gone.

Clark watched the empty space where she had been for a few seconds, then took out his JL communicator. "Superman here. How's cleanup going?"

"Done," Batman said. "She fixed all the damage before she left. The only thing she didn't undo is bring back anyone who died before she intervened. We've got people checking everything, but it looks like everything's fine."

"Doesn't sound like I'm needed," Clark said. He'd figured that would be the case, but it was important to check in regardless. "Superman out." He took off, taking a few seconds to bask in the sun before heading back to Metropolis and his normal life.

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