



CHAPTER 1

GOING GREEN WITH IVY

Danny was sick of walking. He'd been lugging his heavy backpack for nearly four hours now. The air was so humid in the jungle that he had started sweating the moment he left his cabin. He'd been sweating ever since.

Another thick entanglement of vines blocked his path. Danny paused for a moment and took a deep, heavy breath.

"Keep moving up there," came his boss' voice from behind him.

Danny sighed and wondered why his boss didn't ever seem to need a rest. It was like she thrived out here in the wild.

"Let's go, kid," said the man standing directly behind Danny. Ron nudged Danny forward with his elbow as if to make his point. "You heard the lady."

Danny weakly reached into his backpack. He felt around for a moment or two. Then he slid a long machete out of its outer pocket. He raised the long knife in his hands and focused on the vines.

"No!" screamed his boss. Danny turned around as his boss pushed her way past the other men to the front of the line. "How many times do I have to tell you?" she said. "You will not harm any plants!"

The woman slid past Danny. He glanced over at Ron, who was smiling. He seemed to be enjoying himself a little too much. Danny turned back to face his boss. Surprisingly, she had somehow parted the tangled vines. In fact, she was already a dozen or so yards ahead of him.

Danny slid his machete back into his backpack.

“Move it,” said Ron from behind him.

“Okay, okay,” Danny said. He looked back at his older partner. He had worked with Ron for years now, and every time it was the same. Ron was always grumpy and rude. He never cut Danny any slack. After all the jobs they’d done together, Danny assumed they would be friends by now. But if Ron even had any friends, Danny was certainly not one of them.

When Danny turned back around, his boss was nowhere to be seen. It was as if she’d just disappeared into the thick brush of the jungle.

“Where did she —?” Danny started to say under his breath. Then he thought better of it. He decided his time would be better spent trying to catch up to his employer. So Danny started to jog.

The path was just too overgrown with weeds and ferns for him to move very quickly. Nevertheless, he did his best. The last thing he wanted to do now was get his boss even more annoyed with him. This was the first job he had had in months, and he didn’t know when another would come along.

Danny pushed past a particularly sharp, thorny tree of some kind. Then he stopped.

In front of Danny was a clearing. The sun's hot rays hit his face and neck. He squinted in the bright light. There, a few feet ahead of him, was a trench several feet below ground level.

Danny walked over and peered down into the hole. His boss had already beaten him to the punch. She was down in the crater, kneeling in front of a strange glowing rock. She had taken off her hat. Danny noticed her long and flowing red hair. It looked out of place there, surrounded by all the green vegetation and the green stone in front of her. Even her skin seemed to have a greenish tint to it. Danny had never noticed that before.

"Is everything okay?" he asked.

His boss laughed.

But it wasn't a laugh like something was funny. It was a dark little chuckle. Like she was up to something. Then she said, "Everything is perfect."

It was hard to see in the bright sunlight, but Danny could make out something in his boss' hands. She was holding the end of a long vine. The vine was growing right out of the earth under the glowing rock in the crater. Just like the strange stone, the plant was glowing bright green.

"I think we found what we were looking for," said Danny's boss. She stood up and faced him. Danny could hear the rest of the men spreading out behind him in the clearing. It was time to get to work. And even in the heat and humidity, no one was about to protest.



Danny had kept his complaints to himself for the last few hours. He'd rather be miserable than make his boss mad.

One thing he had learned over the past few days — he did not want to get on Poison Ivy's bad side.

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KAPOWWWWWWWWWWW!

Superman smacked Parasite with a giant telephone pole. The villain was sent crashing into a concrete wall with a ***THUDDDD!*** He was unconscious.

Finally, Superman thought. Fighting a villain you can't touch is tiring.

Superman had been forced to take a rather long lunch break to hunt down Parasite, a power-sucking super-villain.

Cautiously, Superman picked up the unconscious Parasite by his collar and soared into the air.

FWOOOOOOOOOOOSH!

Just another day as the Man of Steel,
Superman thought.

Moments later, he was dropping off the unconscious super-villain at Max Slab Penitentiary. After talking with the guards and explaining the situation, he leaped into the air and soared toward his day job at the *Daily Planet* newspaper.

As he touched down on the rooftop of the Daily Planet Building, the hero just hoped no one would notice. It wasn't exactly Superman who would get in trouble. It was his alter ego, reporter Clark Kent, who would have to face an angry boss if he was discovered.

Perry White was a pretty fair boss, but one thing he didn't care for was tardiness. And Clark Kent couldn't explain that Superman had been forced to fight the Parasite on the outskirts of the city, then fly to the Slab Maximum Penitentiary to ensure that the super-villain wouldn't escape again.

If Superman told anyone why he was late, then that would mean everyone would know he was Clark Kent. If the world found out that Clark and Superman were the same person, everyone he had ever met would become targets of Superman's countless enemies. And Superman refused to put other people at risk.

So, Superman changed into Clark Kent's work clothes in the shadow of the revolving globe atop the Daily Planet's rooftop.

Clark Kent would get a stern lecture from his boss, but there was nothing even the Man of Steel could do about it.

Clark opened the rooftop door. He walked down the two flights of stairs to the Daily Planet Building's newsroom floor. He walked past the main elevators and began to head down the hall toward the main room and his cubicle. But as he approached the end of the hall and the glass double doors that led to the newsroom, he noticed an odd smell with his enhanced senses: the scent of lilacs.

At first Clark assumed he had forgotten someone's birthday. One of his co-workers must have received a bouquet for the special occasion. As Clark reached the doors, he quickly moved out of view of anyone in the main newsroom.

Clark looked at the wall in front of him and used his X-ray vision. Inside, he could see four men holding cattle prods.

That's not good, Clark thought.

He scanned the rest of the room. No one was hurt. But even still, everyone looked terrified. He could see his old friend Jimmy Olsen, his boss Perry White, and even Lois Lane. Clark exhaled a sigh of relief that Lois was safe. Now it was time to get to work.

Clark concentrated and used his super-hearing. He could hear a woman's voice. It sounded familiar to him. He knew the person talking, but he couldn't quite place the voice.

“. . . has gone on long enough,” said the woman.

Clark searched the room and zeroed in on the speaker. She was a redheaded woman wearing a green, leafy uniform. He recognized her instantly as Batman's old enemy, Poison Ivy.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Perry White. He was facing Ivy. He looked scared and frustrated.

"Do you have any idea what kind of impact you're having on the world?" asked Poison Ivy.

Clark noticed that she looked even angrier than usual. Whenever they had met, she was always plotting some deadly campaign to save Mother Nature. She saw herself as the spokesperson for all plant life. She viewed humans as her enemies, and hated them for slowly killing the planet with their pollution and waste.

Poison Ivy was constantly using her plant-controlling abilities to try and destroy all human life on Earth. Needless to say, considering her beliefs and the state of the world today, the villain had very little to smile about.

"Ninety-five million trees are murdered by the newspaper industry every year," Poison Ivy was saying in the other room. "Your business creates nearly 49 billion pounds of greenhouse gases and 126 billion pounds of wastewater."

Perry White didn't respond. He seemed genuinely surprised by the numbers Ivy was mentioning.

"Considering that, I think it's safe to say that newspapers are an enemy of nature," said Poison Ivy. "So you've made an enemy of me."

Perry White put his hands up in front of him. "Let's talk about this," he said. "No one needs to get hurt here."

"It's a little too late for that," said Ivy.

Clark had heard enough. He didn't want to waste time by heading back to the roof to change. So he quickly jogged to the opposite end of the hall. He threw open the door to the supply room.

The small closet-like room was filled with items like paperclips and reams of paper. Due to its convenient location, and the fact that it had a lock on the inside of its door, the room was the perfect place for Clark to change into Superman's costume. Even better, it also had a small window on its far wall, making Superman's quick exits even quicker.

As Clark unbuttoned his shirt to reveal the famous S-shield underneath, he felt the start of a headache coming on. To most people, the mild pain would be nothing new. But not to Superman. Unlike most people, Superman didn't get headaches.

The Man of Steel decided to ignore the pain for now. Instead, the hero once again used his super-hearing. He concentrated and homed in on Poison Ivy's voice.

". . . fifteen minutes to make the arrangements," Poison Ivy was saying. "By the end of that time, the *Daily Planet* had better have made the switch to 100% recycled paper."

"I get what you're saying," came a voice from across the newsroom. Superman knew that voice all too well. It was Lois's. "And I agree with you."

Superman looked toward the newsroom using his X-ray vision again. Lois was walking over toward Poison Ivy. He was ready to move now, but he thought better of it. Lois was right next to Ivy. He didn't want to put her in harm's way.

"But it's not quite that simple," said Lois. "These kinds of things take time. And this certainly isn't the way to go about it."

"I don't remember asking for your opinion," said Poison Ivy.

"I'm just saying that there's a right way to do things and a wrong way," said Lois. "And taking hostages in Metropolis? In the Daily Planet Building of all places? That's just the wrong way."

"And why would that be?" asked Poison Ivy, annoyed.

Superman felt a sudden surge in the pain in his head again, then a weakness in his legs. He pushed it away and kept listening.

"This is Superman's city," said Lois. "*The* Superman. Maybe you've heard of him? Really strong guy? Leaps buildings in a single bound? Can knock out a crazy eco-terrorist without even breaking a sweat? Ring any bells?"

Poison Ivy grinned. "Why don't you look out the window?" she said. Lois narrowed her eyes at her. Then she turned toward the row of windows lining the far wall. In all the excitement, she hadn't noticed what was growing on the outside of the building.

Superman looked over toward the window of the supply closet.

It was covered in strange glowing vines. They seemed to have sprouted up out of nowhere.

Superman walked over to the vines and opened the window. Immediately, he fell to his knees.

The green glow coming from the plants pulsed in the sunlight. It seemed to be sending shockwaves of pain and weakness through Superman's entire body. It was all he could do to gather the strength to slam the window shut again.

It took all his focus to turn his super-hearing back toward the newsroom. He could barely hear Ivy speaking.

"The vine itself isn't rare," Ivy said. "But the material I found it growing out of certainly is."



“Kryptonite,” Lois said under her breath.

“Exactly,” said Poison Ivy with a grin. “The vines feed on it. And as a result, this building is now overgrown with Kryptonite-laced vegetation.”

ZIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRT!

Superman used his X-ray vision to scan the exterior of the building. Poison Ivy wasn’t exaggerating. The entire Daily Planet Building was now covered in a tangled mess of Kryptonite-infused vines.

“So Superman isn’t much of an issue in this case,” Poison Ivy said proudly. “He wouldn’t be able to get past my vines even if his life depended on it.”

Poison Ivy walked toward Lois and looked her straight in the face.

“But it’s not his life I’d be worried about, if I were you,” Poison Ivy warned. “Because if the *Daily Planet* newspaper doesn’t meet my demands in the next fifteen minutes, everyone in this room is going to know the meaning of the saying, ‘print is dead.’”