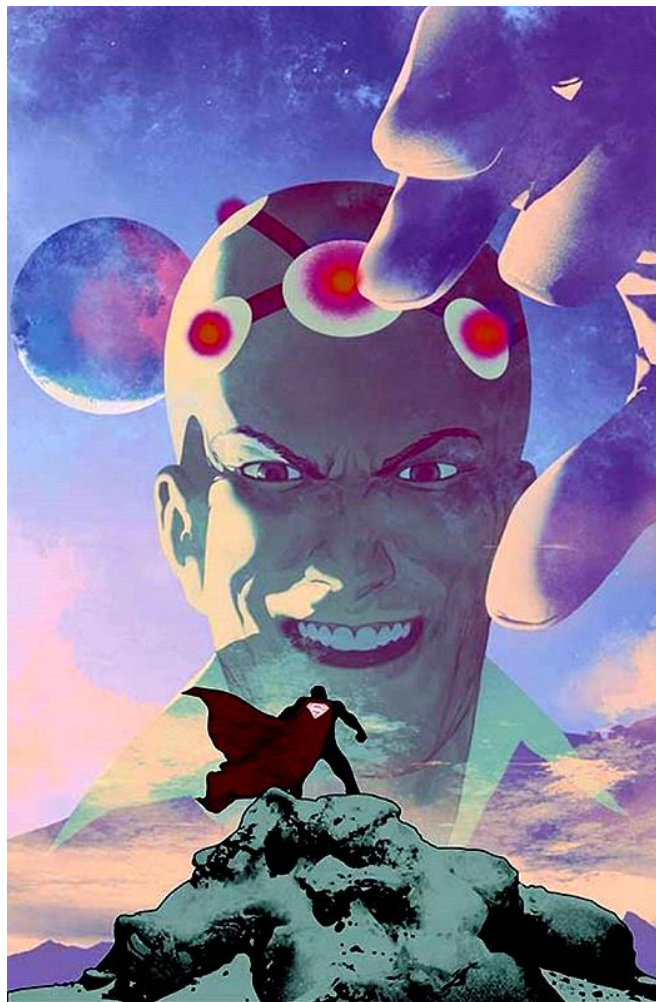


January 2025



"It's *your* New York!"

The Rondout Reader



"WELCOME TO MY WORLDS!"

by Kevin Ahearn





"Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."



'All hope abandon, ye who enter here!'



'I'm gonna eat your children!'

Shrunk And Shanghaied!

OUR CITY IN A BOTTLE



by Perry White

We *are* Metropolis, the greatest city in the country, in the whole world! No more. We're neither in America nor on earth, we been down-sized, tiny as mites and abducted by an all-powerful space alien!

The good news: we haven't been nuked or firebombed...



Other cities were and came back even stronger!



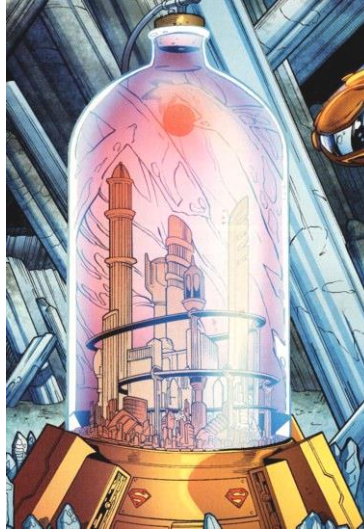
Brainiac commands unimaginable technology. Power and water flow as if never interrupted. Wi-Fi and cell phones function flawlessly inside our 'bottle'. From without, provisions, foods and medicines are somehow miraculously supplied.

No more worries about the snow being plowed. **Brainiac** runs a tighter ship than our illustrious mayor!

But that evil Green Giant made an unforeseen miscalculation...



'Ours is his city!'



High on the bottle wall...



***'Can't burn my way out. And if I try a super-punch,
I'll give Metropolis an earthquake!'***



'Up, up, and away!'



'Faster than a speeding bullet!'



'Able to penetrate alien city bottles?'



'I'll "pitch" myself as if my body were a baseball, a blazing fastball, zeroing in on the "sweet spot"!'



'Metropolis and eight million Americans...gone!'



*'And **Superman** along with them!'*

*'We have no time to mourn.
No longer is America a superpower!
Without **Superman**, will humanity
step back? Once again, will the nations
of the world be gunning for each other?'*



'I'm out and free, the Metropolis bottle repaired itself like a self-sealing fuel tank!'



*'Great Scott! A collection of cities.
Can't do much alone at this size. Got
to find help!'*

'Inside one of these bottles?'

The first one...



'I hope the inhabitants welcome tourists!'



'Nice place to visit, but...'

The next bottle looked promising...



'Dream me up!'



'In a forest of civilizations, I'll have to fly into every tree!'



BUCKINGHAM PALACE



Instead of meeting in her private parlor, the Prime Minister was commanded to report to the Royal Gardens.



'Your Majesty, I came as quickly as I...'

'Yes, yes,. Do you admire a beautiful, diverse, thriving garden?'

'Of course, but...'

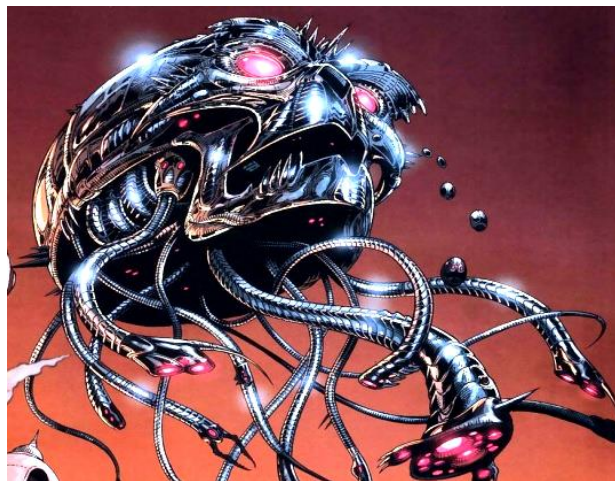
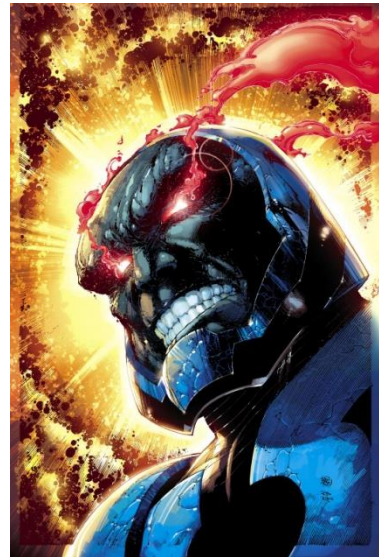
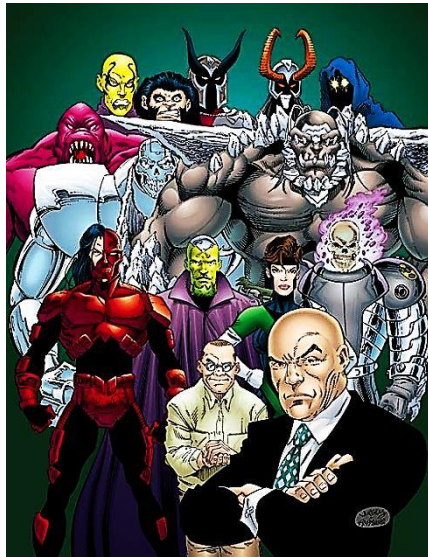
'Behold the wonder around us! Protected by the Queen's Finest and cared for by an army of clippers and pruners.'

'What a garden and a planet need most is stability! The firm belief that all flowers will be able to bloom in peace.'





'With Superman removed, the "weeds" will inherit the earth!'

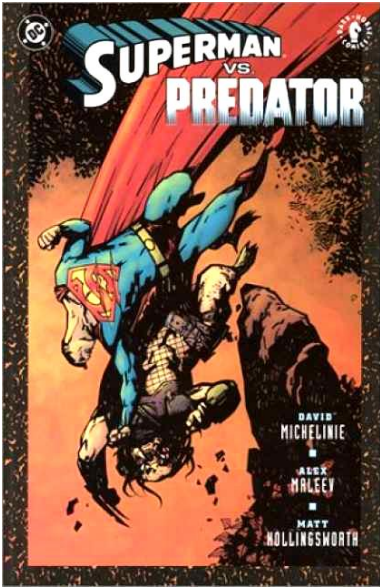


The next bottle...



'Deja vu all over again?'

And the next...

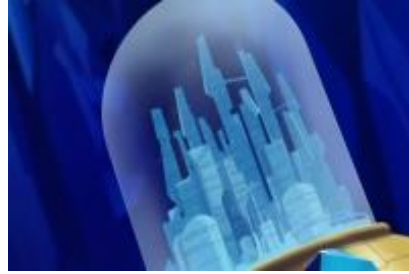


The next...



'No more crossovers!'

And another...



'No. I won't be an extra in somebody else's war!'

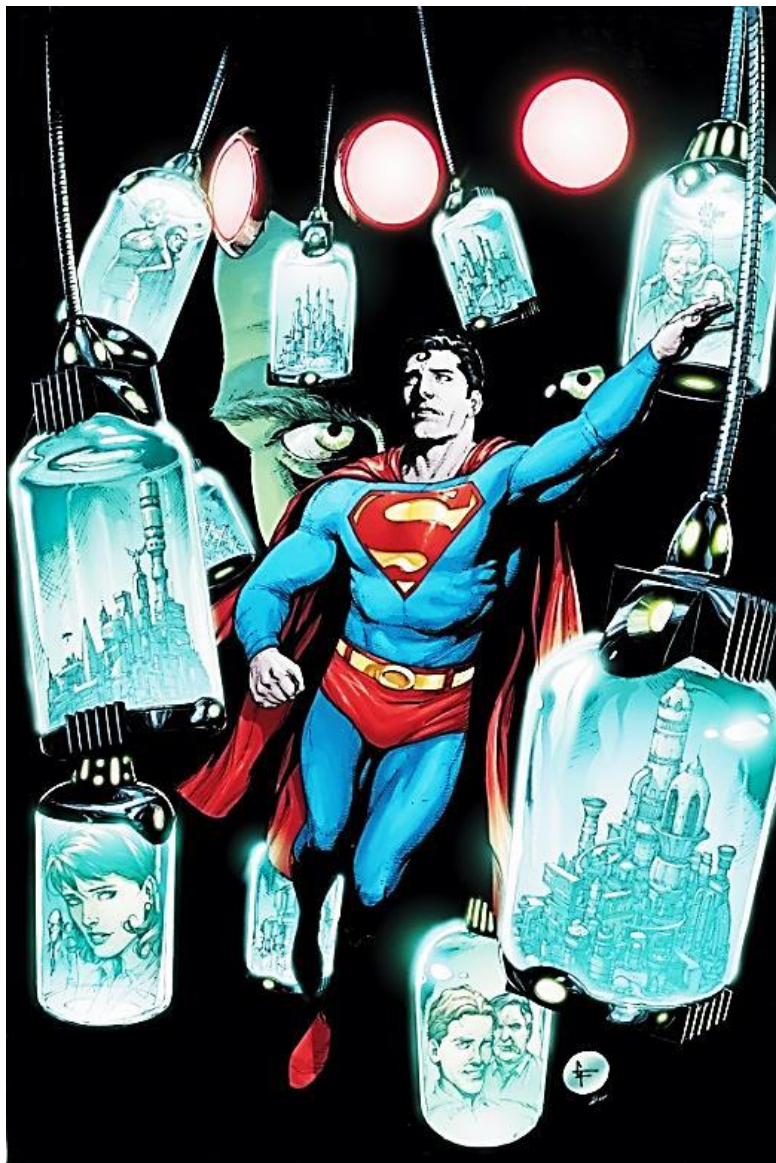
Another bottle...



'A city of the dead?'



'Did Brainiac's technology malfunction or rather than live as prisoners, the entire species killed themselves?'



'Am I seeking a flower that doesn't exist?'

SMALLVILLE



'If this doesn't top it all!'

'If this gets any uglier, it's not Clark I'm worried about.'

*'Of course, but if **Superman** should fail, our dear neighbors are gonna hafta blame somebody!'*

*'And Clark's in the middle. I just know it!'
'Those poor people of Metropolis!'*

'Oh, no! You mean...us?'



Daily Planet



'Great Caesar's Ghost! I get us a guaranteed health plan, and now we're never going to need it!'

'Who we are now forever, a blessing and a curse! Imagine being eight months pregnant or just gave birth. An eternal baby!'

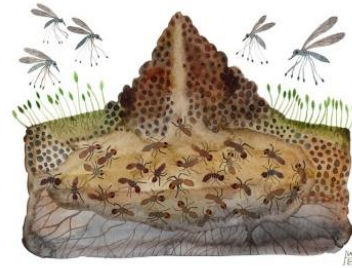
'Or that you're very old. You've lived a long full life and worn way down. You're ready to go...'

'And never will!'

'Look at the bright side! By the Magic of Brainiac, I'm going to be me, ME, ME, forever. How cool is that!'



"Being" is not enough. Living is growing. Every day we learn and discover. 'Otherwise, we might as well be immortal drones inhabiting an anthill!'



'We need Superman!'



Underground, beyond the ken of Brainiac...



*'While **Brainiac** remains in orbit while his interstellar propulsion system regenerates for a jump into a wormhole...*

'Time for Kandor to strike!'



'An attack on Brainiac?'



'How?'



'For so long we've been trapped in a neverending now. But I refused to be inert!'

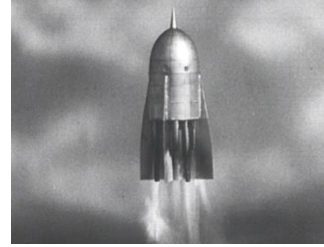
'Not a moment wasted, I have labored in complete secrecy to construct...'



'A rocketship?'



'An escape pod!'



*'Pompous arrogant **Brainiac!**
When that green monstrosity 'conquered'
Kryptonian technology, he opened up a two-way stream!*

*'I've been hacking him ever since,
tapping his power source. The rocket will
blast its pilot through the bottle membrane.
I will then send **Brainiac's** own beam reversed,
restoring our last hope to full size!'*



'The Champion of Krypton!'

*'After I, Axar, slay **Brainiac**, all the
Universe will know my name!'*

'But...how will you ever come back?'

At that moment...



"Honorable Kimba: Intruder Alert!"

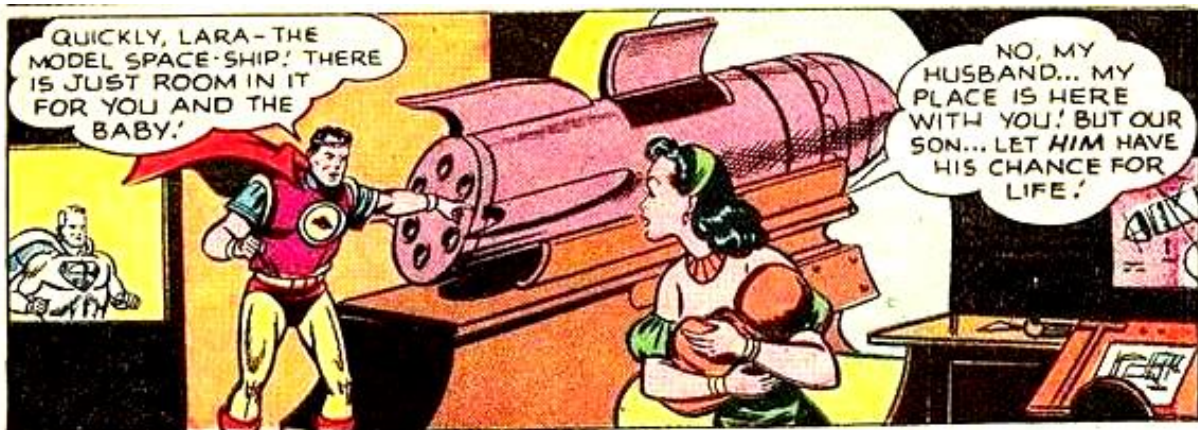
'What? Is he...?'

'Unconscious, we caught him in mid-air. Preliminary exam reveals that...'

'Impossible, bring me this "stranger who fell from the sky"!'



'By the spires of Kandor, I know who this "intruder" must be!'



'The Last Son of Krypton!'





'There's no place like home.'



'Never forget where you came from!'



'Man, what are you doin' here?'

Where Has He Gone?



THE LAST TIME I SAW SUPERMAN

by Lois Lane

We were together atop the *Daily Planet Building* when **Brainiac** struck. **Superman** looked deep into my eyes and...



And my spirit leaped into my dreams! In **Superman's** arms I felt a wonderful growing...



Little did I know that we were *shrinking*, becoming specks in a bottle!



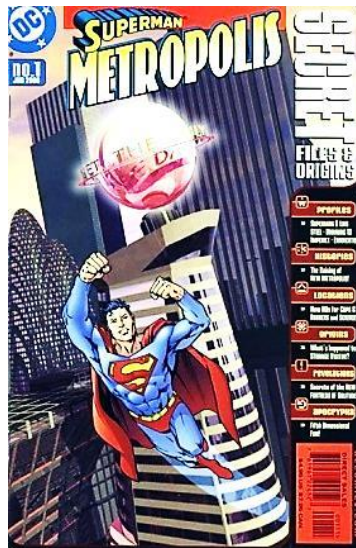
That's how I felt facing **Brainiac!**

Great Americans suddenly gone have never left us. Their immortal values are set in stone within every one of us.



...And always will be!

When **Superman** flew away, I understood, that if I never saw him or ever felt his presence again, I *always* would!

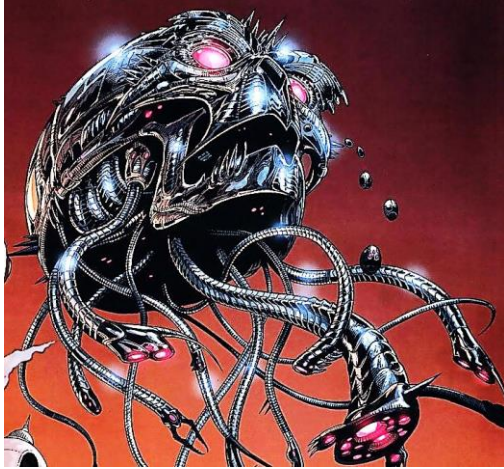


"I'll return," he promised.

And he will! **Superman** will defeat **Brainiac** and restore Metropolis to earth!

Believe in **Superman**. I sure do!

(Rebuttal on page 28)



When Superman awoke...



'Welcome to Kandor, Kryptonian! I am Raya!'



'I am the "Honorable Kimba"! Young man, do you have any idea who you are?'



'You are one of us, the Super Species! But...in costume?'



'I am Superman!'



*'Not anymore! In Kandor.
You are the equal of any of us!'*



*'How relieved you must be to finally
escape from those inferiors!'*



*'You are of the **EI** family. I knew
your Kryptonian parents!'*

After Kimba explains...



*'Please excuse me for just a minute.
I carry a change of clothes in a pouch in my cape!'*



*'An earthling Kryptonian!
He must be overjoyed to
be here!'*



*'Yes, Raya! He is Kal-el!
Pure Kryptonian blood,
the Super Species!'*



*'A challenger to my
championship reign?'*

As promised...



*'Hi, everybody. I'm Clark Kent from
Smallville, Kansas. I am an American!'*





*'Puny primitive species. They have absolutely no concept of the magnitude of my quest!'
'My once beautiful world has been 'terra-formed' to welcome a collection of creatures.'*



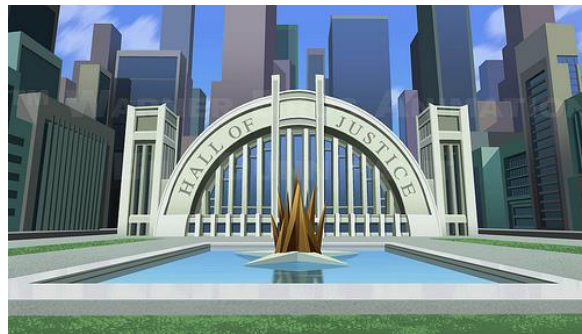
*'Can these diverse urban lifeforms exist on **Brainiac's** world without periodical genocide?'*



'My most vital city is the dead one!'



*'Stubborn idealists! They executed the one way to defy **Brainiac!**'*



'Our leader is gone! And we are going to get him back!'



'I'll create a spaceship with my power ring that will take us into orbit!



*'I'll fly escort, should **Brainiac** try to stop us!'*



'I'll fashion a quiverful of explosive arrows!'



*'Gadgets from the **Bat-Cave** will be a big help!'*



*'We get up there, I'll race around **Brainiac** till he busts!'*



'A good cyborg uppercut will take it from there and knock him out!'



*'No! We mustn't do anything or go anywhere! It cannot be our mission to save **Superman!**'*



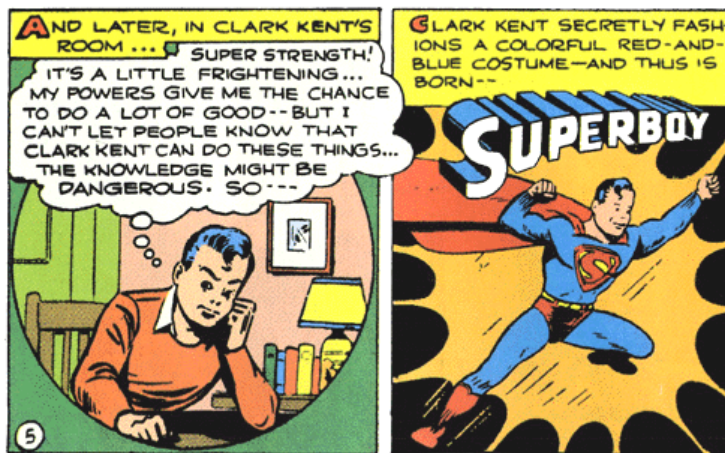
*'How can you feel this way, **Supergirl!** If **Brainiac** had captured one of us **Superman** would be first in the fray!'*



'And the ten million citizens of Metropolis? Are we to ignore them as well?'



*'All of you have to understand! I came from Krypton and arrived here a grown girl, but my cousin...the baby came from Krypton, **Superman**...his name, his shield, his costume and his mission came from an American teenager—Clark Kent!'*



'I "borrowed" so much from him, and so did all of you! Clark Kent "originated" the very idea of superheroism. He "legitimized" us all and inspired the world!'





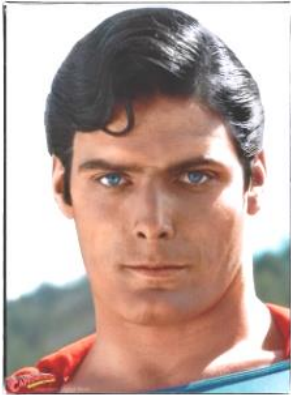
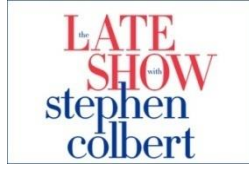
*'And if you're wrong **Supergirl**?'*



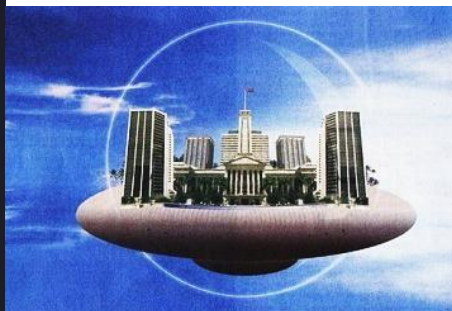
*'We might have saved **Superman** and did nothing?'*



*'Above all, **Superman** is a symbol of hope. He doesn't need to be rescued. He'll come through. He always has! And if **Brainiac** wins, abducts **Superman** and never returns, then this earth of ours is going to need us superheroes more than ever!'*



**'Tonight...Superman & Brainiac
Partners in a Cosmic Conspiracy!**



'God help Metropolis, floated away, borne within a bubble which also solved the perennial budget crisis.'

*'Why Metropolis and not another of America's **'Justice League'** cities?'*

'Our special guest...'



*'Lex Luthor...Nobel Prize winner and Lexcorp's CEO...**Superman** and **Brainiac** together?'*

*'Alien Allies from the outset! "Super-baby" was a "sleeper" clone programmed to prepare a city for **Brainiac** to steal!'*



*'Now, wait just a minute! **Superman** is one of the best things to ever happen to this planet. Peace and prosperity for a decade!'*

*'Setting us up for the kill. **Superman** melted down our defenses, making **Brainiac**'s mission a 'milk run.'*

*'But, **Superman** saved us... from ourselves!'*

'So you believed. You know better now, don't you?'

'What now?'

'Abandoned by your 'Protector' the nations of the world will soon be transforming their 'plowshares' back into 'swords' around the clock!'



'No! Humanity is not returning to the trees!'

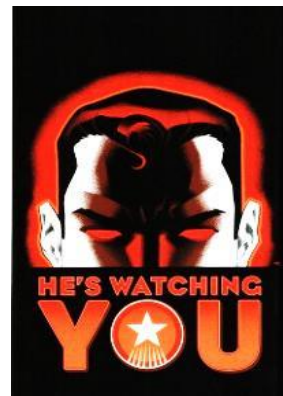
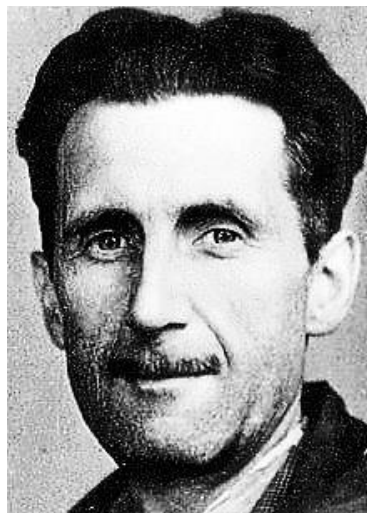
'In record time. Color against color, religion against religion, tribe against tribe, culture against culture!'

'Not if the people stand up and say, "No!"'

*'The **Superman** 'shining example'? Old news!'*

*'**Superman** is an American icon!'*

'With an Orwellian legacy'



*'Be good, be nice, become obedient, hardworking taxpayers! Or **Superman** will kick your ass!'*

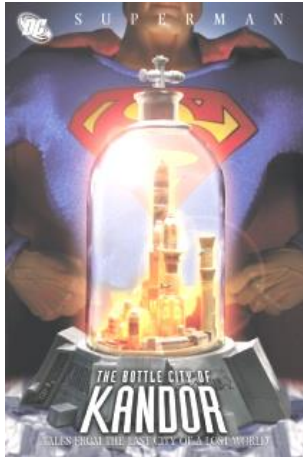


'Since your hero has deserted us, long dormant radical groups will be launching a worldwide resurgence!'



'Ready for the "Post-Superman Period"?'

One week later...

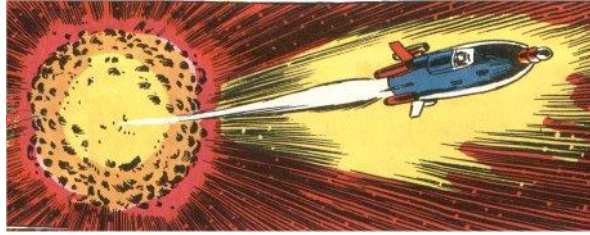


The 'prodigal- son' had seen almost all.



'Hallowed ground, Clark Kent, the sacred soil of Krypton!'

'Your birth planet! The source of your soul!'

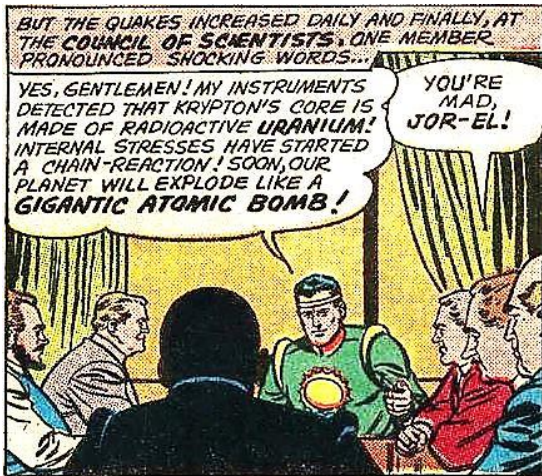


'There's a Kryptonian truth that must finally be told to the man who most needs to know!'

'Me?'

"Your father, Clark, should be remembered as Krypton's greatest scientist, not me!"

'Why?'



'Because we didn't listen to news we didn't want to hear.'

'Jor-el was stubborn, arrogant, persistent...and right!'

'The "Honorable" Jor-el, Not me!'



*'But he did inspire me!
Our one chance to defeat **Brainiac!**'*

Underground and undercover...



'Countless hours creating an 'escape craft'. Blast through the 'bottle barrier' and then, using Brainiac's technology, a single burst will restore the pilot to natural size!'



*'I will slay **Brainiac!**'*



'No, Axar! Please, it's a suicide mission. Stay with me here forever!'



'Raya is right, Axar. Your Kryptonian body has never had to react to a hostile atmosphere or weightlessness.'

*'You'd be helpless before **Brainiac!**'*



'You dare doubt me!'



*'I challenge you. I must be the man to fight **Brainiac!**'*



'Who will be the greatest Kryptonian hero?'



'Undefeated Axar, 'Champion of Krypton' versus Clark Kent of Smallville, Kansas?'



'Actually, 'Clark Kent' is just my 'costume!...'



“I am Superman!”