

OUTSIDE METROPOLIS.

THE ONLY HEARTBEATS WITHIN A MILE ARE OURS.

SO YOU'VE GOT YOUR POWERS AGAIN?

TOO BAD THEY DIDN'T COME BACK AN HOUR AGO, CLARK. YOU COULD'VE SAVED YOURSELF FROM GETTING SHOT.

MAN, ALL THAT BLEEDING IN THE CAR HAD US WORRIED.



IT WASN'T THAT BAD, JIMMY.

Um, ACTUALLY, IT WAS.



WE'RE ALONE, CONDESA. SAY WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY.

BEHIND THE SENATOR AND THE GUNS--BEHIND EVERYTHING THAT'S GONE DOWN--IS A CRIME SYNDICATE CALLED HORDR.

THEY'RE KINDA LIKE A TECH COMPANY, KINDA LIKE A GANG.

SOUNDS LIKE LEXCORP.



Nah, LEXCORP IS LAST CENTURY, LOIS. LUTHOR'S STILL TRYING TO MAKE MONEY FROM ATOMS.

HORDR'S ALL ABOUT BITS. WEAPONS ARE JUST A SIDE BUSINESS.

THE REAL CASH COMES FROM INFORMATION, FROM SECRETS.



THEY FIGURE OUT THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SECRETS, THEN SELL 'EM OR USE 'EM AS LEVERAGE.

I DON'T CARE HOW POWERFUL YOU ARE--YOU GOT A BIG ENOUGH SECRET, HORDR WILL GET TO YOU.



HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS?

I WORK FOR HORDR. OR I USED TO, ANYWAY.

Uh...CLARK? YOU KNOW HOW YOU SAID WE'RE ALONE?



I'M THINKING MAYBE YOU'RE WRONG.



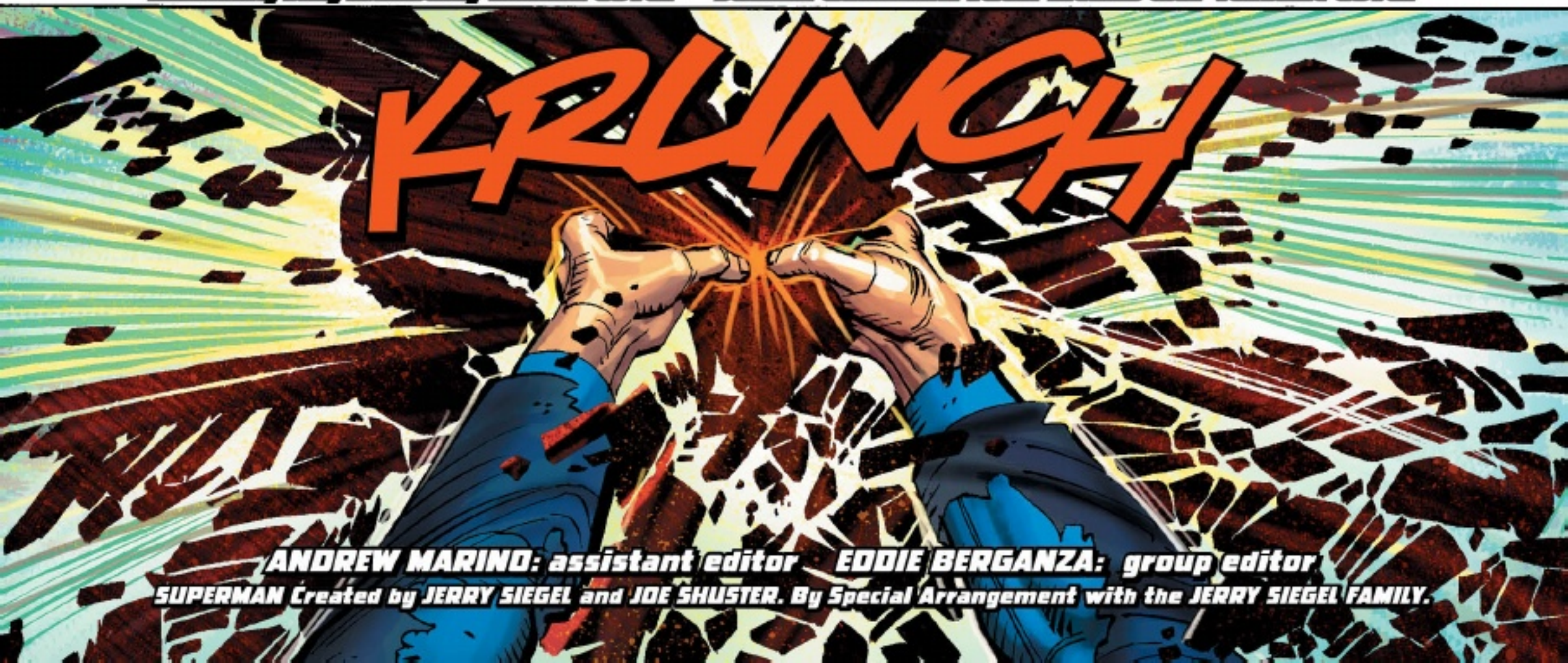
# BEFORE TRUTH PART 2



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I SEEN GUYS LIKE THIS BEFORE. ONE OF HORDR'S ALLIES DEVELOPED THE *TECH*. THEY'RE LIKE *ZOMBIES*...CORPSES THAT'VE BEEN MADE INTO *SOLIDIFIED SHADOW*.

THAT EXPLAINS WHY THEY DIDN'T HAVE *HEARTBEATS*.

WE GOTTA GET MOVING. EVEN WITH YOU AROUND, *BIG BOY*, IT AIN'T *SAFE* TO STAY IN *ONE SPOT* LIKE THIS!

CAN YOU GIVE US A SECOND? CLARK AND I NEED TO *TALK*.



TWO THINGS. FIRST, I NEED TO APOLOGIZE FOR CALLING YOU A *COWARD* BACK AT THE OFFICE. OBVIOUSLY, YOU'RE *NOT*.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, LOIS. I--

WHICH BRINGS ME TO MY SECOND POINT:

OBVIOUSLY, YOU'RE *SOMETHING ELSE*.



REMEMBER A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO, WHEN YOU CAME INTO THE OFFICE WITH YOUR FACE ALL *BRUISED UP*?

I TOLD YOU, JIMMY AND I--

--GOT CARRIED AWAY AT THE *BATTING CAGES*. I REMEMBER.

CLARK, YOU KNOW I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING *SUPERMAN* SINCE HE FIRST CAME ON THE SCENE.

LATELY, I'VE NOTICED THAT HE'S GOTTEN SLOWER, WEAKER, *SLOPPIER*. HE GETS *HURT* IN WAYS HE DIDN'T USED TO.



I CAN ACTUALLY TRACK HIS *APPEARANCES* NOW, SO I'VE BEEN PUTTING IT ALL IN THIS *DATABASE*. WHENEVER I GET A FREE MOMENT, I GO THROUGH IT LOOKING FOR *PATTERNS*.

AT FIRST, I COULDN'T FIND ANY-- MAYBE A PART OF ME WANTED TO *IGNORE* WHAT THE PATTERNS WERE TRYING TO SAY.

YOU KNOW WHAT FINALLY GOT ME TO *STOP* IGNORING THE PATTERNS?

I'M SURE YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME.



*YOU*. WHEN YOU CAME IN ALL *BUSTED UP*... IT WAS LIKE YOU WERE TRYING TO *REENACT* MY LAST SET OF DATA. I BRUSHED IT OFF AS A *COINCIDENCE*.

BUT THEN I *TRIANGULATED* THE LOCATIONS OF ALL OF *SUPERMAN'S* APPEARANCES AND FOUND MORE *COINCIDENCES*.

AND THEN *CONDESA* FINDS US AND ALL THESE *CRAZY THINGS* HAPPEN, AND WHEN SHE TALKS ABOUT *SECRETS*, SHE STARES AT YOU LIKE YOU'RE HIDING THE *BIGGEST SECRET* IN THE WORLD.

SHE WASN'T *STARING*--



AND THEN, JUST NOW, THOSE *NINJA GUYS* POP OUT OF NOWHERE AND YOU *BEAT* THEM TO SMITHEREENS. *LITERAL SMITHEREENS*.

SO I *KNOW* ALREADY, CLARK.

LOIS, WHAT ARE YOU--?!

