

SUPERMAN ON THE COUCH - OUTLINE

by Chuck Weiss

Story Idea for a Graphic Novel. The illustrations of each chapter mimic the comic books of the period.

CHAPTER ONE

It's the 1930's Metropolis. Bonnie Hamilton, a woman psychiatrist, is contacted secretly by Superman who explains that he needs to talk with someone. She agrees to see him, under Superman's condition that no one must know.

At the meeting, we see the Superman who was effectively portrayed by Christopher Reeve in his series of movies, patriotic, idealistic, someone who sees a clear dividing line between right and wrong. He explains that he's having trouble handling the responsibilities that come with being Earth's "Super" hero." It's lonely at the top. He can't even reveal himself to the woman he loves for fear of putting her in danger. He also feels guilty about leaving his mother so soon after his dad died. There are times when he longs to be just an ordinary person.

CHAPTER TWO

The years pass; It's 1942. Bonnie has since retired, having passed her secret client on to her friend, another woman named Pamala Harrison. Superman had requested a woman, telling Bonnie that he doesn't feel comfortable talking about sensitive matters with a man.

Superman feels helpless. His country is fighting the Nazis and it's a clear case of Good vs. Evil, but he was forbidden to interfere in human history by his real father (*in the movie Superman, 1977*) and, by implication, in the future of human affairs as well. He can help individual humans, or defend Earth from threats that comes from outer space, but he cannot protect mankind from itself. Humans must decide their own fate. He's often criticized by the press for not lending his super powers to the war effort. "They just don't understand," he laments. He does what he can by selling war bonds and posing for recruiting posters, but feels that it isn't enough. The war isn't going well, and he shares the anxiety that everyone feels.

CHAPTER THREE

The years pass again. This time it's 1968. JFK was assassinated six years earlier. The war rages in Vietnam, with the public deeply divided. This time Superman's therapist is an African-American woman named Latisha Jefferson. A copy of *The Daily Planet* lies on a table in her office. The headline reads, "Chicago Police Riot Against Protesters Outside Democratic National Convention."

Superman felt the grief that all Americans felt when Kennedy was shot. Now, he's conflicted about the war. He's been a super-patriot all of his life, but his country is clearly the aggressor in Viet Nam. The famous "Napalm Girl" photo of a young Vietnamese girl running naked down the road, fleeing the fighting severely affected him, and we even see him break down and cry in therapy.

CHAPTER FOUR

It's now the present. Superman has a new therapist, Jennifer Lopez, who's visiting Clark Kent staying at an assisted living facility for their first session. He explains that when the news agencies stopped reporting about him, he contracted with DC Comics to market his exploits and sell memorabilia in order to keep himself in the public eye. But their rival, Marvel Comics, became Marvel Studios, creating a host of fictitious superheroes that's now worth billions, while DC Comics fights to stay alive.

Few believe Superman to be real anymore, and he feels irrelevant in the modern world. When she asks why he still pretends to be Clark Kent and lives in a retirement home, Superman says that he never liked the idea of killing off his alter ego, and that living where he does suits what he's become, old and useless. He tells her he wishes he could die, and says it was a mistake for his parents to have saved him by sending him to Earth, and that he should have perished with all the others of his race.

Jennifer suggests that Superman create for himself a new purpose in life, one that will help him feel appreciated again. He takes her suggestion to heart and reinvents himself. Clark Kent starts attending science fiction conventions as a stage magician, where he impersonates himself with a "magic act" using his X-ray vision, super strength, and power of levitation. His fanbase grows, and he's starts appearing on late night TV talkshows. Someone makes a documentary describing him as the greatest magician who ever lived, even better than David Copperfield who's known for making the Statue of Liberty disappear. It wins an Oscar, making him a worldwide celebrity and Superman is, at long last, happy in his new life. Jennifer tells him now that he has his depression under control, he no longer needs therapy.

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