



**The Adventures of Superman #6**  
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## *Adventures of Superman*

Issue 6: "The Never-Ending Battle, Part 1 of 3: The American Way"

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The news hit the international press wires at 10:18am. "Ecological disaster threatens millions in Zuruquai." It's currently 10:41am, Superman is about to enter Zuruquai airspace. Technically, he's supposed to be on "time off", as he explained to Perry White, but disasters don't wait until vacations end. In fact, if he hadn't been on vacation, it would've taken him longer, since he would have had to convince Perry White to send Clark Kent on location. Perry's a good friend, and an exemplary boss; but you can't make him change his mind. You can only make him think he changed his own mind, and that doesn't happen too often.

People were very different in Metropolis than they were in Smallville. At times, Clark felt very homesick for the hospitality of his hometown. What was that old saying? You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy?

Zuruquai has been on Superman's to-do list for a while. The rotating governments, the continuous despotic leadership and terrorist links have given this small country a notorious reputation around the globe. The Man of Tomorrow had decided, early in his career, not to involve himself in political struggles; but staying out of Zuruquai was the hardest strain on that vow. Over ninety percent of the population lives in abject poverty. So poor they can't even buy dirt, literally. At least now, with an environmental disaster, which threatens hundreds of thousands, Superman can help these poor souls. Or so he hopes.

The sovereign nation of Zuruquai is mostly a desert plain in Africa. There is some light vegetation and wildlife that inhabit the desert wasteland. The human settlements are either small villages, populated by a few families, or the capital city named Portlibre.

It didn't take long for Superman to find the first group of injured civilians. His first surprise was the type of injuries these people had sustained. Chemical burns over most of their bodies, severe lung and tissue damage. There was no medical help for them in the field that they lay; it was quite evident that help wouldn't come. Superman landed gracefully near some of the youngest of the afflicted. One of the injured couldn't have been more than twelve years old. The crowd began to stir when Superman approached the smallest one.

"Go away!" Yelled one of the lesser hurt adults in this native tongue. Despite grave burns on his legs, he stood between Superman and the child. "Haven't you done enough?" His resolve had been galvanized by indignation and outright rage. Many in the crowd began a supportive murmur.

"I've come to help... "

"We've know of your kind of help." Another adult interrupted. "This is outcome of American 'help'!" The crowd seemed to mirror the resentment of the two speakers. "Go away!" The two men howled repetitively. This began an overpowering chant.

It pained Superman to do so, as he would not impose his benevolence onto others, so Superman went away.. He might not be able to help those poor souls, but he can make sure no one else is injured.

Superman hovered several hundred miles above the ground. He searched for clues to the Zuruquian's hostility towards him and the exact location of the environmental damage. Truth be told, he was more concerned about the anger he faced on the ground.

"There's more to this than simply a chemical spill." Superman thought to himself, as he hurriedly searched the country side.

Within an instant of searching, he found the root cause. He focused his vision upon the logo of the factory he had found. *Chemo Inc.* It was all too familiar. The Daily Planet ran an exposé on that company just over a year ago. The US branch had closed due to continuous pollution and

labor infractions. Although it no longer operated in any of the G8 countries, it had strong ties with other companies in the civilized nations. Most notable was LexCorp, which at one point owned nearly thirty percent of the total company stock of Chemo Inc.

The destruction at the plant was extensive. It was still hard to tell what catastrophe erupted; but most of the steel girder plant had crumbled. The site was empty... except for a man trapped under the rubble. Superman flew quickly, not that the man was in too serious a danger, but to avoid any Zuruquian's from noticing his re-entry. Once inside the perimeter of destruction, Superman started getting hints of this environmental disaster. An oily element crept through the air; smelling of chlorine, sulfur and many other toxic matters. Superman hovered over the pile of rubble that once stood as the west side of the factory. Using negligible effort, Superman freed the fair skinned man from his concrete trap.

"Superman, thank God you've come!" the man exclaimed in English, his voice trembling in panic. "You've got to stop it!"

"Stop what? What is it that happened here?" Superman replied sternly. This man was obviously not a Zuruquian. In fact, his accent pointed towards a New England origin. "Who are you?"

The Caucasian took a heavy pause; having realized he had barked an order to a being more powerful than any force of nature. He took a slow breath, trying to collect his thoughts and calm himself down.

"I'm Doctor Liam Levias." The man tried to speak more calmly, but his trembling emotions were still in his voice. "I am, or was, the head scientist for the toxic waste program at this factory. We were working on a solution to the toxic waste problem, an innovative solution that could have feasibly eliminated major pollution problems around the globe. But things got out of hand."

Superman nodded. *As if I hadn't heard that enough times*, he thought to himself.

"We were producing a new type of bacteria that would eat toxic chemicals and produce a neutral by-product. Our initial test seems positive, but when we introduced the specimen to its final test, there was some

unexpected, uh, mutation." The Doctor began to hesitate.

"Those are two words I don't like hearing together." Superman said bluntly. "What was this 'unexpected mutation', Doctor?"

"The bacteria bonded to the waste material and started using it's toxicity to breakdown and consume other materials and add it to its own mass. It was almost twenty feet in height when it broke loose. I estimate that at about fifty feet it will divide."

"Consume and divide?" Superman said, as he tried to keep a neutral expression. Unfortunately, his face was awash in shock. "Please don't tell me you created a fifty foot tall, toxic waste amoeba."

Doctor Levias stared at Superman blankly; not knowing how to tell him that they had indeed created a fifty foot tall, toxic waste amoeba.

It didn't take assistance from Batman to find where the creature was. The path of destruction was obvious and linear. The ground held no sustenance, and there were a few decimated trees that were in the way, but didn't seem to be the intended target. The chemical nightmare had passed some small villages, and seemed single-mindedly intent upon consuming the capital city. Superman wondered how it knew the location of Portlibre, if indeed it was akin to an amoeba. It had no visual receptors, it couldn't see the city.

"The air pollutants, of course!"

The creature was being attracted by the strongest quantity of pollution. It couldn't see the smaller villages over the pollution of the capital. It would, however, come back for them after destroying the city.

The Man of Steel decided to close in, and examine the creature. Upon a fly-by, the creature stopped momentarily. It seemed to have felt the change of air current. It might not be able to see, but the abomination could "taste" pollution and feel sensations near it.

Superman hadn't expected the creature to stand erect, in a rough,

humanoid form. Its thick, outer membrane was translucent, showing the greenish brown chemicals inside. In its center (close to where a human heart might be) was the nucleus. Most of the chemicals were easily recognizable acids; but the nucleus had a strange, other worldly energy that Superman had never encountered before. The Chemo monstrosity had grown to over forty feet in height, and would easily get to division stage once it entered the city. The Last Son of Krypton knew it had to be stopped before entering the city; otherwise he would quickly be battling an army of Chemo-creatures.

Superman decided a full frontal attack was in order.

He flew high, spun in mid-air, and began to plummet at incredible speeds towards the colossal creature. Superman clenched every muscle and became a rigid, indestructible rocket, dressed in red and blue. As he hit Chemo, there was negligible impact. Superman pierced through Chemo, as a toothpick might pass through gelatin.

Superman's collision with the ground was more of what he expected with Chemo. His flesh tingled with the acids which remained coated on him. He should be impervious to the chemicals, yet something is increasing the toxicity levels exponentially. That extraterrestrial energy must be playing a greater role in the monsters metabolism. Where did it come from?

As Superman shook off the effects of the hard landing, Chemo had reached the main road to the city. Each step dissolved the asphalt and petroleum, and consumed them. Vehicles on the highway swerved to avoid the creature, but very quickly, an involuntary blockade had been erected. The commuters wisely ran from their cars. Chemo stooped to grab two nearby vehicles and consumed them. The chemical activity within Chemo started to accelerate, the division process was beginning.

Superman noticed one of the abandoned vehicles on the road was an oil trucker. He quickly flew to it, and with one punch, punctured the metal shell. The trailer began to leak its black crude cargo. Superman heaved the truck and trailer over his head and flew over Chemo.

The acidic Frankenstein got a taste for the trail of petroleum and followed it. Superman had indeed hoped to use the petroleum to lure

Chemo away from the civilians, and it was working. Once far enough, he tossed the truck towards Chemo, and used his heat vision to detonate the truck. It was the world's biggest Molotov cocktail.

The explosion knocked Chemo to the ground. Chemo's shape no longer mimicked a humanoid shape, as the explosion had distorted its form. It lumbered clumsily and slowly to its "feet"; while flames danced on its outer membrane. The fire seemed to bother the creature; although the fire didn't burn the membrane, it was affecting the chemical balance of the toxins behind the membrane. Superman now realized how to feasibly stop it, if he only could do it before separation. The nucleus was almost duplicated.

Superman grabbed one of Chemo's appendages, and flew upwards with the chemical colossus in tow. The Man of Tomorrow began to spin Chemo around as fast as he could and applied a constant stream of heat vision to the monster. The acids within Chemo began to boil.

The creature quickly slumped, it was still "alive", but was no longer responsive. The centrifugal force and heat had separated the acids and changed the chemical balance. Superman flew higher, and reached escape velocity with Chemo. The cold vacuum of space would slow down Chemo's chemical process, keeping it in a form of hibernation.

With a mighty toss, Superman sent Chemo racing towards the surface of the moon. It would find no sustenance there, and no one to harm. It was a good prison for Chemo, until Superman could find a more permanent location for the creature.

Superman landed gently, carrying a huge crate over his head and numerous sacks over his shoulders. It was the same group he had encountered initially; their conditions had worsened, and they were still bitter. He was greeted with jeers and profanity. These people had little energy left, but their hate ran deep. Superman stood his ground.

"Please, I beg you, let me speak!" He exclaimed. The group turned silent. It wasn't from fear or pain, but from the earnest tone of his voice. "You have all the right to be angry from what has happened to you. An

American company did create problems, but they do not represent America. There are many more Americans who want to help, if you let them. I implore you all not to let your prejudice and distrust override your need for help."

One of the children walked to Superman and held his hand. "I trust you, Superman."

Just like that, Superman started distributing salves and helping those around him. It didn't take long until the STAR labs medics arrived. It was ascertained that two badly hurt children needed more intensive help at the Metropolis Children's hospital. With the permission of the parents, it was decided Superman would fly the children to Metropolis.

One of the men who had confronted Superman earlier, walked up to him now. "Thank you for this. I am sorry; I judged you wrong. You have saved us all. You are a *good* American."

Superman grinned, and shook the man's hand.

You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy.

### Epilogue

Affirmation. There's nothing like it. It certainly makes Superman's job easier to know at the end all efforts result in positive changes.

The children were going to be fine, and some plastic surgery would heal those scars. The parents already have the visas approved by the State Department, and were on a flight to Metropolis. Overall, it was a good day to be Superman.

Superman opened the door and walked out of the hospital. It was one of those times, where walking seemed better than flying. The air seemed fresh and clean, which compared to the toxins released by Chemo, was true.

Captain Maggie Sawyer and two officers of the Special Crimes Unit were waiting at the bottom of the stairs. Superman nonchalantly walked to Maggie.

"Hello Captain." Superman warmly greeted his friend. Maggie Sawyer was one of the bravest souls Superman had ever met. "I heard from the hospital staff you wanted to see me."

"Yeah, Supes. I got this request from the D.A.'s office this afternoon." Maggie replied, holding an envelope in her hand. "I'm sorry to have to do this."

Superman was slightly alarmed by Captain Sawyer's comment. "What is this about?"

"Superman, you're under arrest!"

**To be continued!**

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