

# Martha... A Heart So Big

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Summary: They'd known he was different, their boy, but nothing could have prepared Martha and Jonathan for the moment they found 11-year-old Clark, inconsolable, in the barn. This is the second story in the *Martha...* series of vignettes.

Story Size: 2,044 words (11Kb as text)

Read the previous story in the series: "[Martha... She Just Knew.](#)"

**Author's Note:** I'd known for a while I was going to write a story from Martha's perspective, covering some key events in Clark's early years and then continuing through events that happen in the *Wherever You Will Go* series, especially the latest one — *So Far Away*. But I hadn't known until last week that it would be a series of vignettes, nor that they would come to me as easily as they have so far (hopefully, I didn't just jinx myself). I'm hopeful that all these can be read independently of each other and of the series, for those of you who haven't read it yet — so far, this and the previous one definitely can be.

Now, coincidentally, Queen of the Capes threw down a challenge (<https://www.lcficmbs.com/ubb/ubbthreads.php/topics/295344/re-personal-challenge#Post295344>) for me to write about a single day from my *Wherever You Will Go* series — any character, any point in time, but only covering a day or less. Fortunately for me, this fits the challenge wonderfully, lol. Now she owes me a fic! Wheee!

A super thanks to SuperBek for being my cheerleader and BR for this story!

Stories in the Martha... series:

[Martha... She Just Knew](#)

[Martha... A Heart So Big](#)

[Martha... A Gift From the Stars](#)

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Martha's heart was still thudding in her chest, and she had to focus on slowing her breathing again as she rocked eleven-year-old Clark in her lap. She'd never run so fast in her life as she had just minutes ago when Jonathan had cried out from the barn in a panic.

She closed her eyes and held her boy tight, rubbing his back and making soothing noises as she rocked with him, his not-so-little body wracked with shuddering sobs. Beside her, Jonathan cleared his throat — a clear sign he was trying not to cry — and put a comforting hand on her back.

Opening her eyes again, she turned slightly to face Jonathan, her heart twisting painfully in her chest. With a look, she asked him what was wrong with their boy. He didn't quite know either, but he indicated with a slight nod toward the barn wall two feet in front of them and shrugged.

She couldn't stop the gasp from escaping, but she tried her best to mask it with a deep breath. It was hard to believe Clark had been starting a fire in the barn — he'd never do something so reckless. Yet there were two wet, singed holes in the wood, plain as the daylight that shone through them. Her eyes drifted to the empty bucket and the darker earth beneath it indicating that the ground was damp.

As desperate as she was for an explanation, her first concern was making sure Clark was all right. He'd shown no signs of being in pain, but that wasn't surprising given how he never seemed to get hurt. But it was alarming how distressed Clark was, and all she could think to do — all she knew to do — was keep holding him, rubbing his back, telling him it would be okay.

Eventually, after countless deep breaths and murmured reassurances, Clark calmed enough that he looked up at her. His bloodshot eyes, the lids rimmed red and puffy from crying so hard, tore at her heart, but she did her best to push down her own pain. Jonathan's hand on her shoulder, giving her a supportive squeeze, and his steady gaze bolstered her.

She focused back on Clark, brushing back the lock of hair that always fell over his forehead, and she waited for him to speak. He whimpered a bit, his body still trembling slightly, and his voice was uneven as the words came tumbling out. "I'm so sorry. I'm sorry...I'm trying to be normal. I'm trying so hard. Please don't be mad. Don't be scared."

The emotion behind his words hit her with such force, her gut clenched in a vice grip, even as it took her a moment to process what he'd said.

Jonathan moved his hand to Clark's knee. "What do you mean, son?"

Clark's eyes darted to his father's, and she could feel him shrink back ever so slightly, pressing himself further into her embrace. "I'll be normal. Just don't let them take me...please?"

"Clark, oh sweetie! No one's going to take you," she soothed, but even as she said it, her mind flashed back to

whispered conversations with Jonathan in the still of the night. Her heart now clenched with a steely determination, and she looked Clark in the eyes and said with all the certainty she could muster, “No one is going to take you away from me.”

His wide, brown eyes looked up at her, seeming to search for the assurance she knew he’d find there. He nodded just slightly before new tears, these of quiet relief, started falling, and he buried himself in her chest, hugging her tightly.

She felt tears of her own, warm and wet as they started rolling down her face, and she turned her head, desperately needing Jonathan’s steady gaze. His own eyes shone with yet unshed tears as he reached up to wipe hers away, the slight roughness of his hands a familiar comfort against her skin.

After a moment, Clark brought his head back up and looked at both of them. She could feel how much calmer he was this time, and she was beyond relieved that he’d taken her words to heart.

When he spoke, though, his voice was still quiet and small and so very unlike her happy, confident boy. “I can hear when you talk...”

Her heart sank with the revelation that she’d had just moments ago, that he’d been awake and listening those late nights and early mornings when she and Jonathan had shared their worries, their fears about him. Even the little he must have heard...those times he’d happened to be listening...

“From my room. From downstairs. I can hear you...” His voice trembled and her heart shattered. “You talk about me, and...you — you’re scared of me...of what I’ll...turn into...of what I am.”

“No, Clark, no no no,” she rushed to get the words out, holding him tightly again and desperately shoving her pain down. “No, my sweet boy. Never. We could never be scared of you! Only *for* you — worried about you. We were just worried about you because we love you so much.”

His body, suddenly so little and vulnerable to her again, shook slightly in her embrace, and there was a muffled vibration, but she couldn’t make out what he was trying to say.

She kissed the top of his head, his unruly black hair, and then rubbed his arm. “Clark, honey, look at me.” She waited until she saw those eyes again, those beautiful brown eyes, so filled with fear and pain, far too much for his young age. “We love you. *Love you*. No matter what. There’s nothing in this world that could change that.”

Clark’s eyes — though she knew he believed her — held a small measure of uncertainty still. He shut his eyes tightly for just a moment before he opened them again and

turned his head to look over at the barn wall, the small twin holes with singed borders. “My — my eyes...” he whispered. “They make fire.”

Martha stared at the holes as she tried to process what he was saying. She could scarcely breathe as the pieces of a puzzle she and Jonathan had been handily ignoring started falling into place.

To say they’d been unprepared for something like this...

She took a deep breath and then another, still staring at the holes in the side of the barn. Fire from his eyes. Hearing whispers from across the house. Never getting sick. Never getting hurt. Stronger. Faster.

What else was there? What did it mean?

“M-mom? D-dad?” Clark said his too-small, too-timid voice snapped her attention back to his precious face, clouded again with worry and fear.

All she could see was her scared little boy and how much he needed her, so she tightened her arms around him once more and kissed the top of his head. “We love you, Clark. We love you so much. We’ll figure all of this out together, as a family.”

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The afternoon brought the advent of the family meeting in the Kent household, something she assured both Clark and Jonathan would continue any time the need arose. Over homemade apple pie and Clark’s favorite cookies, their son told them everything he’d been keeping inside, hiding for fear he’d be taken away or that they’d be scared of him.

It turned out that Clark was even stronger and faster than they had known, and in addition to being able to hear things from a short distance, he could also sometimes see through things, as if his eyes were some sort of X-ray machine. Jonathan had called these abilities gifts, and the way Clark’s eyes had lit up at that...it was as though she was watching some of the heaviness, the grief, leave him.

Clark had always known he was adopted, of course, but now they told him the full story of how they’d found him. How they’d carefully crafted a narrative for their friends, and for the town, and for anyone else who asked — especially strangers. They told him they had no answers and they may never know — but whether he was Russian or Martian, they loved him just the same. There was an unspoken grief that hung heavy around them that they all felt but didn’t talk too much about — there would be other days to talk about that.

After their family meeting, she’d watched Clark with amazement as Jonathan helped him learn how to master this latest gift of his — this heat vision, as they had labeled it. Just as he’d taught Clark how to safely handle and shoot his father’s old hunting rifle, Jonathan had lined up a row

of glass jars and bottles for Clark to practice aiming and focusing his heat vision.

Now, late at night, everyone else was asleep and the farmhouse was quiet but for the sound of a summer night's breeze carrying the crickets' serenade in through the windows. Martha stood in the doorway of Clark's room, and her heart squeezed, overflowing at the vision of her boy sleeping peacefully, a small shaft of moonlight peeking through a gap in the curtains and falling over his face.

Somehow, he looked just that much older, maybe wiser, too. And after their meeting, she'd watched him with a renewed sense of wonder — that feeling she assumed all mothers had, of seeing their child interact with the world and imagining what great things their future might hold. But she knew the feeling she had was different, somehow, and not just because he'd come from the stars, his origins unknown. No, there was something special about Clark, something unique. Like he was meant for greatness.

A wave of fierce protectiveness flooded through her. She knew it wasn't going to be an easy road for them, especially for her boy. But for now, she felt like she had her boy back again. Though there was a new quality to him, maybe some sort of sense of pride or security in the knowledge that forces unknown had seen fit to trust him with these gifts. He couldn't see the burdens, the responsibilities these gifts — his differences — would hold for him in the future. None of them could know, not really, not with all the unknowns. But that was her job for now — she would carry the heavy stuff for as long as she could so that he could just be himself.

When she'd first held him all those years ago, he'd made her heart grow so much bigger. And so she would hold it all — his grief, his pain, his worry — for him when he couldn't, and she'd carry it alongside her extraordinary love for him.

Her boy — whose kindness and compassion she hoped would someday change the world.

THE END

Read the next story in the series: "[Martha... A Gift From the Stars.](#)"