

After a Door Slams

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Rated: G

Submitted: November 2008

Summary: Clark decides to confront, rather than ignore, the issue after Lois slams the door in his face at the end of their date in the episode "Lucky Leon."

Story Size: 5,162 words (26Kb as text)

Disclaimer: This is a fanfic based on the television show, Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman. The opening scene in this piece contains lines from the L&C episode Lucky Leon written by Chris Ruppenthal. I have no claim on the pre-existing characters whatsoever, nor am I profiting by their use. The new story elements are mine. No infringement is intended by this work.

Time frame: Middle Season 2: Lucky Leon, at the end of their date.

I'm gazing at the most beautiful woman in the world as she's saying good night at her door.

"...But everything seemed to just... 'work.' I really liked it. That's why I can never see you again."

And she slams the door shut.

Suddenly I'm staring at a closed door. "Lois?"

What happened? I was sure that we were about to share our real first kiss. The date tonight went perfectly. There were no Superman calls. Lois and I were relaxed and comfortable together. She was in a great mood right up until we were standing in her door.

As I walk down the hallway away from Lois's apartment, it feels especially still and cold. I need to think. Maybe I'll go for a patrol and try to think this through.

What happened? She seemed to be enjoying herself. We were just standing at her door and something changed. It was right there at the door. The look on Lois's face... She wasn't upset or angry... That was fear. We had a great time, she was in a good mood and then her face just fell. I think she's afraid of what might happen.

I can't let tonight end like this. I'm almost at the end of the hall, but this needs to be dealt with now. I turn around and head back for Lois's door.

When I reach her door I just pause. I don't know what to do. What's she doing right now? Did she head right for bed? I know I shouldn't do this, but I concentrate and look through the door to see if she's still in the main room.

She didn't just go right to bed. Based on the tub of ice cream in her hand it's apparent that she's also upset. She's not going to like this. I take a deep breath and knock.

Her head pops up and she has a surprised look on her face. Did she watch me walk away from the door? I have to remind myself to stop looking through the door. As I relax, the opacity of the door returns. I know better than to use my abilities that way.

A few seconds later she must have arrived at the door and looked through the peephole because I hear her say, "Clark, go away."

"Lois, this is important. We can't let tonight end like this."

"I'm not going to talk to you any more tonight. I just can't date you ever again. Now go home. I'm going to bed."

I can't let her do this. If she pulls away now, who knows what will happen?

"I can't just leave. We need to talk this out."

No reply. I'm tempted to look through the door again to see if she's putting the ice cream back in the freezer. I think better of it as that's a really bad habit to get into. Whatever she's doing, I think she really is going to try to go to bed.

I don't want to mess this up but I can't just walk away now. I don't think I've ever been so scared. If I just walk away, maybe it'll all work out fine. But it took so very long to get here. If I let Lois pull away, what kind of signal am I sending to her. On the other hand, if I push now, I risk being obnoxious. That's not a very good way to end the evening either.

Finally, I decide that I just have to go for it. I've been walking on eggshells ever since Lois's almost-marriage to Lex. I knock on the door again.

"Lois, I can't go away until we talk."

I wait a few seconds. No sound. Okay, I won't use the vision, but I can't help but hear her heartbeat. She's not in bed. She's somewhere near the door just waiting. I knock lightly one more time and then speak again. "I'm sorry but I'm not going anywhere." "Clark, this isn't funny anymore. Go home. I'll see you in the morning."

"When I said I can't leave, I meant it."

"Fine! I guess that means I'll see you out there in the hallway in the morning."

Now her reply has an edge of anger. That hurts me more than she can know.

"Please let me in so we can talk." I put all the emotion I have into my plea.

Silence. But I can hear that she's still on the other side of the door.

"Lois, whatever else has happened tonight, you're the best friend I have in the world. Please! Right now I need to talk to my best friend."

Almost a minute passes. Finally I hear movement. She's coming toward the door. The locks are being undone. The door opens. Her expression is a mix of irritation... and, I'm sad to notice, a touch of something that looks like fear... who knows? I guess I'm just happy it's not pure anger.

She barely makes eye contact as she signals me to come in. We walk out to the middle of her living room and sit down facing each other. She's on the sofa and I'm in a chair.

I'm the one who initiated this, so I guess I better get to it. "What happened in the doorway before you slammed the door on me?"

I can see that she's still angry at my insisting on coming in. "What do you mean? I wanted the date to end and I closed the door."

I hate this. I feel like every exchange is another step in a minefield. "We both know that there was more to it than that. Tonight was really important to me. You were telling me that you had a great time. Then... something happened. I saw something change on your face. Please tell me what happened."

I'm expecting her to continue in this in an angry and defensive mode for several more minutes. When her expression softens a bit, it actually catches me off guard. Then, in another instant, there it is again, that look of fear.

"Clark, I..."

That sounded more promising. Cautiously, I press my case. "Up until that moment, I thought I'd found the perfect evening. I've never had another date that's been anything close to what we shared tonight." I hope she can hear the plea in my tone.

She's still not saying much, but I can see she's thinking. And the anger seems much less apparent.

I give her time, but still no reply. So, one more try... "Please tell me what you were feeling when we stood in the doorway."

She takes a deep breath. “I don’t know... You’re right. Up to that point it had been a great evening.”

She stops for a minute and looks thoughtful.

“Do you like working with me at the Planet?”

That was unexpected. “You know I do.”

She’s still defensive—and scared—as she continues. “Do you realize that you’re the only person that I’ve ever worked with that would say that?”

“We’ve talked about this before. We have a special chemistry that works.”

“That’s the problem. We have something that works really well. I never thought that I would want to work with anyone, but I like working with you. And Clark... you’re my best friend, too.” Her response rings of fear and concern.

I think I might know where she’s going but I’m just not sure. “Then I’m really confused. If all that’s true, why did you slam your door in my face?”

Now she looks defensive. “I’m sorry about that, but it doesn’t change the fact that I can’t date you.”

She has the look of someone that’s barely holding it together as she continues, “I enjoy working with you and we work well together. I don’t want to mess that up.”

She pauses, apparently searching for the right words.

“The problem tonight was that our date was too good. When we were standing at my door, I realized that if we start dating, it could turn into something more. That might put our partnership at risk. Even more important, it would put our friendship at risk.”

Doesn’t she realize we can’t stay where we are? I try tackling this head on. “Now you have me worried. You can’t believe that I’ll start treating you differently in the office.”

Her reply is stronger and even more defensive. “Things like that happen all the time.”

My reply is a plea. “But not with me! You know me. I would never act like that. You can’t believe I’d act that way. Please don’t tell me you’re scared that I’ll be like... Claude.”

Her response was quick... almost dismissive. “No, it’s not like that. It’s just that we have such a good working relationship. What happens if we start dating and turn out not to like each other? How could we work together then?”

I stand up and move so that I’m sitting beside her on the sofa. We’re close together, but I’m careful to avoid physical contact. “It’s possible that if we start dating, we’ll find out that we really aren’t compatible in *that* way. But Lois, there’s no chance that I’m going to stop liking you as a friend. We have a huge advantage because we’ve been partners for these years. But even more important, we really are friends. I’ve seen you angry, tired, happy, frustrated... you name it. We’re still friends and we’ve already been through a lot.”

She’s a little more relaxed now but the fear that first appeared outside the door is still evident in her voice. “Clark, every relationship that I’ve ever started has ended with me not being able to stand the sight of the man and never speaking to him again. I don’t want that to happen to us.”

She really is scared of something going wrong. If it wasn’t causing this problem I’d be touched. As it is, I have to try and convince her that this will be different. That together, we are different. “In these previous relationships, how many of those men did you work with for nearly two years before your first date?”

She seems to consider this. Then, in a very soft voice she replies, “None.”

“And how many times have you tried to start a relationship with someone where you both know each other as well as we do?”

The defensiveness is back in her reply. “That makes it worse! We have something very special. We have so much to lose!”

“You’re right. We do have a special relationship and I don’t

want to mess it up either. But Lois, look at what we might gain! I think we have the potential for so much more. I’ve hoped... Well, I’ve felt that for a long time.”

She’s just sitting there. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her so quiet before. I hope I’m getting through to her.

As another handful of seconds pass in silence, I realize that she’s been watching and listening carefully ever since she let me in. The look on her face now is one I’ve seen many times during an investigation. It’s the “putting the pieces together” look. I’ve been so desperate that I’m suddenly afraid that I’ve let too much of my real feelings show.

Finally she asks, “Clark, how important was tonight to you?”

How to answer this? I’m afraid if I tell her the truth it’ll scare her. I have to go with as close to the truth as I dare. “Tonight was... Tonight *is* very important to me.”

She reaches out and takes my hand as she asks again. “But how important?”

Her touch is devastating. I was having trouble concentrating before and now I have to fight the intoxicating feeling that her touch has triggered. I need to focus! Okay... I wanted to make something happen tonight. I have my opening but I just can’t come out and tell her how much this means and how long I’ve dreamt of moving our relationship to the next level. I desperately want to tell her, but the truth would probably make things worse.

“Lois... I’m not sure it’s a good idea for me to answer that question.”

In hushed tones... “Why?”

I would get up and start pacing but there’s no way I’m letting go of her hand.

“I...” I just can’t muster the courage to say it.

After a few seconds, she seems to realize that I’m frozen. I wonder if she can also tell that I’m terrified.

Now she doesn’t seem to be afraid. I sense curiosity and... what... maybe... anxiousness?

“Last year, during the ‘Lex’ thing, you said something to me.” She certainly doesn’t look mad any more. What I see now is intensity. After a very brief pause she continues. “You said that you were in love with me.”

I feel myself melting under her gaze. “Yes, I did.”

“Later, you said it wasn’t true.”

My heart is pounding! This time I can’t get out the words so I just nod.

Now her careful tones are gone. This is a plea. “Clark... You said that tonight was very important. But back then... Please tell me which one of those was really the truth.”

I feel lost and afraid. She has me pinned with a look of intensity and interest that I’ve wanted ever since we first met. Now that I have her attention, I have no idea how to react. I find that I can’t look her in the eyes for this. As I break eye contact and lower my head to look at the substantially less frightening floor, my reply is barely above a whisper. “The first one...”

I hear her catch her breath and she lets go of my hand. Then I feel a touch on my chin with a gentle pressure to lift my face to meet hers. “So, back then, you really did...” She breaks off, apparently waiting for me to fill in the blank.

How much emotion can I pour into one word? I try to match her intensity and form my reply. “Yes.”

She reacts with an almost imperceptible nod of her head. She knew that was coming. She was waiting with her next question. “And what about since then?”

To answer this question honestly is to tell her how I feel.

Despite the look on her face at this moment, I can’t believe our relationship is ready for this yet. But I can’t lie... not now. “Lois, I... Are you sure you want to talk about this?”

My discomfort is obvious and I think Lois knows why. She reaches out and takes both my hands in hers. I see something in her eyes as she restates her plea. “Please. I want to know.”

I guess there comes a time when the whole truth is the only option. “Since that time... well, I’ve never changed in how I feel toward you.”

I can see that she expected this, but I can also tell that actually hearing it has made an impact. She takes only a few seconds to digest this. “All this time?”

“Yes.” It’s getting easier. I’m glad she knows. I only hope we survive.

“Why didn’t you say...?”

I gaze into the endless depths that are her perfect eyes. “I realized during that time that I was desperate to have you in my life. From the way you reacted that day in the park, I was convinced that you wouldn’t want to work with me knowing I felt that way. Taking it back seemed like the only way I could be near you.”

She drops my hands and stands up. “Clark...” Now she turns away, takes a step and stops.

Without turning, I hear another question. “Since then... How could you not tell me?”

“Lois... how could I? I told you how I felt once and I was afraid we’d never recover from it. I couldn’t bear the thought of not being... not working with you.”

I wait but she doesn’t respond. I guess I might as well finish coming clean.

“I guess that’s why I’m not as worried about how a change in our relationship might affect our work. I love working with you, but... well, because of how I feel... every day hurts a little.”

More silence. Finally, she turns to face me. “Remember that day in front of the Planet when you told me that you lied about how you felt.”

This isn’t where I expected this to go. I answer cautiously. “Yes?”

“Well, do you remember that I wanted to tell you something first?”

I remember it very well. I was scared to death that she was going to say that she couldn’t work with me again, knowing how I felt. That’s why I had to go first. “Yes, you said that you were glad to be working together again.”

“That’s what I ended up saying, but it wasn’t what I started out wanting to tell you... Clark, I was going to tell you that I... Well, I had realized that I felt more for you than just friendship.”

What! But I thought... “Lois, why didn’t you say anything?”

“After you said that you didn’t really feel that way, I was scared to tell you the truth of what I was feeling.”

I’m trying to decide how to reply when she continues.

“And Clark, I was embarrassed. You’d seemed so sincere. When I had time to think about it, and realized what I was feeling, I was really moved. Then when you said it wasn’t true, I was embarrassed to have reacted that way to a lie.”

I hear the pain in her voice. Right when she needed me most... Right when she was ready to turn to me... I’d managed to hurt her with a rejection of her feelings... and with a lie no less.

I can’t take this any more. Before I even think, I’m on my feet heading toward her. An instant later I’m holding her in my arms. “I’m so sorry. I wish more than anything we could go back and I could let you go first.”

I hold her for a minute. Then I realize that she still has a decision to make. I pull back just enough to look her in the eyes. “I’ve spent most of the time that we’ve known each other hiding my feelings. I think we’re at a crossroads tonight, but where we go is up to you.”

Her expression is one of openness that I’ve rarely seen in Lois. In a slightly confused tone she asks, “What do you mean?”

“Remember back on our first assignment? For just a second I dropped my guard and you saw something of my feelings. I’ll never forget what you said... ‘Don’t fall for me, farmboy. I haven’t got the time to deal with it.’ Since then I’ve tried my best

to honor that request. Except for the one time that we’ve been talking about tonight, I’ve kept my feelings to myself. But after all that’s been said tonight... Lois, what do you want?”

Considering the question, her reply came quickly. “If I’ve learned anything tonight it’s that we’ve both spent a lot of time and effort hiding from each other. I guess we’ve both had our reasons, but I think it’s time to get past that.”

She takes my hand and leads back to the sofa. While still holding my hand she sits down and indicates that I should too. I recognize the intensity in her look but there’s something else I haven’t seen before.

“I want to hear the truth. Tonight... Right now... How do you see me? How do you feel?”

How do I tell the person that is the center of my life how I feel?

“The first time I saw you I didn’t know what hit me. When you walked into Perry’s office during my interview, your very presence left me speechless. Later, by the time you said not to fall for you, it was already too late. Since then, even when I don’t agree with you, your energy is the fire that keeps my spirit warm. You are the bright light of my every day... Lois, I could go on but I’m sure I’m already sounding cliché. I was telling the truth when I said that I loved you. The sincerity that you heard was genuine. I felt that way then and I’ve felt the same every day since.”

She just sits there. This has always been my great fear. She would learn how I feel and wouldn’t be ready. I start to stand up.

Now my voice is flat. “I guess it’s time for me to go.”

She still seems dazed. “What? No!” Suddenly she’s on her feet and I’ve been engulfed in a fierce hug. “Don’t go!”

I lift my arms and return her hug. She feels so wonderful.

“Whether I stay or go has always been up to you. As long as you want me near you, there’s nowhere else I want to be. I’ve wanted to be with you for so long. But, I’ve always tried to make our relationship to be what you want.”

She looks up at me, her face just inches from mine. “I want more. Clark... I want us!”

I’m barely thinking as I lower my face to hers. The first brush of her lips on mine is exquisite. Her lips are so soft. As the kiss deepens, I can taste her. I just want to drink in all the Lois I can. I can’t help myself as I part my lips just enough to deepen the kiss. Her response is immediate and in an instant her lips separate. In another, barely functioning part of my mind, I notice that her arms have tightened and she’s now holding on as if her life depended on not letting go. I tighten my hug in return and I think we’re both holding on for dear life. I’m still reveling in the taste of her and the sweet sensation of her breath mingling with mine when I feel her tongue, oh so hesitantly, touch my lips. With almost no thought my tongue is exploring her lips. In only a second our tongues meet and seem to do a gentle dance of their own creation. This is like nothing I’ve felt before! I had no idea that a kiss could blot out the whole world.

An eternity later, and all too soon, the kiss ends. Instead of pulling back, Lois slides her head forward and rests it on my shoulder. Even the feel of her nose pressing softly against my neck is intoxicating. I can feel her heartbeat. Each pulse shakes my world like an earthquake.

Suddenly, I’m terrified. I had always thought I’d be okay if Lois didn’t want to pursue our relationship. I’d be less happy, but I’d get over it. That kiss changed everything. I had no idea what I was missing. I no longer see how to live without her.

After only a second, she gives me back a chance at life. I hear a throaty whisper... “Wow!”

I shift my arms to reposition my hug and the squeeze her to me again as I reply, “Wow doesn’t even come close.”

Another minute passes. Finally, I hear her whisper, “Where do we go from here?”

“Lois, we go wherever you want at whatever pace you want. You know how I feel. It’s up to you. It’s always been up to you.”

“Clark, this has been... amazing. But I’ve been hurt so bad before. Even now I can’t help but fear that one of those times you go running off it’ll be to run away from me.”

I’ve been scared this issue would come up all evening. As much progress as we’ve made tonight I don’t think the time is quite right yet for *that* secret. My reply needs to be face to face. I move my hands to her shoulders and gently disengage. As I look into her perfect features, I see another new expression. This looks like a mix of hope and fear. For this, I can’t be looking down at her. I slowly sink down to a squat while sliding my hands down from her shoulders so that I’m holding her hands and looking up at her.

“Lois, never doubt that I want a relationship between us to work. All I can ask is that you believe that I’ll never run from us. I know that sometimes I seem to take off at odd moments but never, *never* believe that I’m running from you. Whatever the reason may be, that will *not* be it.”

She releases one hand and brings her hand to my cheek. I see the first genuine smile since the door slammed. “Clark, after tonight, I’m ready to believe that.”

I feel her pulling me back up. I’m not even fully upright when I feel her leaning into me. As our lips meet for the second time I’m certain that ‘Lois’ is a taste that I’ll never get enough of. This time she’s the one whose lips part and very quickly I feel her tongue caressing my lips. I respond enthusiastically and for the second time in just a few minutes the world stops as we drink each other in.

When the kiss ends her head finds its way to my shoulder again. But this time it feels different. A moment ago somehow I could feel an edge of fear as she held me. Now I feel something else. Hope? I just don’t know. But she feels more comfortable... more relaxed.

Then I feel her tense. What now?

She pulls back and gestures toward a clock on the wall. “Look at the time. We have work in the morning.”

“Somehow I kind of lost track of time.”

She flashes a controlled smile. “So did I. But I need to try to get some sleep.”

I don’t think I’m going to find a better time to end the evening. I’d like it to never end but somehow I don’t think that’s an option. We start toward the door, each with an arm around the other. As we reach the door, I realize that I need to say one more thing before I leave. I gently grasp her hand as we’re standing by the door.

“Lois, this evening, especially this time here in your apartment, has been... beyond special.”

“For me too.”

I take a deep breath. “What’s going to happen tomorrow morning?”

“What do you mean?”

I put my hand to her cheek. “Lois, if it were up to me, some part of saying good morning tomorrow would involve a kiss. But, it has to be up to you. When I see you in the morning, I’ll be looking to your lead.”

For just an instant she looks thoughtful. Then a smile leaks through and with a touch of humor in her voice she asks, “So Mr. Kent, are you finally acknowledging who the leader is in our partnership?”

“When it comes to *us*, you always have been.”

The fact that she’s smiling fills me with joy. If I’m not careful I’ll be floating.

Lois steps to the door and opens it for me to exit. I step through and we’re back where we were less than an hour ago. However, I think... I hope the world has changed in this time.

She’s standing in her doorway. “Good night, Clark.”

I take a small half-step to close the distance between us. I really hope I’ve read her mood correctly. As I bend down to her she’s lifting her face to meet mine. Yes, I think we’ve made progress tonight.

This kiss is different. As our lips caress each other, neither moves to take to kiss to the level of passion that was so evident earlier. It’s brief, but in that short time I get a feeling of something that I hadn’t felt earlier. That brief, almost chaste kiss sings to me of... hope... and possibly promise.

As the kiss ends and I step back, I realized she’s smiling. I clear the doorway and she starts to close it.

“Good night, Lois.”

There’s less than a foot left in the opening when she stops closing the door. Suddenly that smile disappears and a more serious look becomes apparent. But I can’t read this one. This isn’t the fear that I saw earlier. It’s not anger. She’s thinking about something... something important.

“Clark, if you could say one last thing to me tonight, what would it be?”

“Lois, I...” After all this I’m still afraid. She must have something in mind but I can’t believe she means... that.

She’s waiting. Now I find her unreadable. Well, this night has been about taking chances and, when in doubt, going with the truth.

“Lois, I love you.”

Her smile is dazzling... blinding even. I find that I’m weak in the knees. Kryptonite is nothing compared to what this amazing woman can do to me.

As she closes the door the rest of the way, her smiling face is barely visible as I hear her final words of the night. “Good night, Clark.”

As I’m staring at a closed door, I’m not intending to eavesdrop but I’m still so tuned to her voice that I think I could hear her from across the city. I hear a whisper from the other side of the door.

“He loves me.”

I wish I could see her face. When she said those words, she didn’t sound unhappy at all.

I hope that very soon she’ll feel ready to say those words to me.

I can’t help but whisper a final farewell for the evening. “Good night, my only love.”

And I turn away from the door for the second time this evening. This time I’m filled with hope for our future.

THE END