

# Don't Fall

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Rated G

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Summary: Lois reflects on an early conversation with Clark.

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Author's Note: All characters are the property of Warner Bros, December 3rd Productions, ABC, and anyone else who may have a legal claim on them. The story, however, is mine.

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"Don't fall for me, Farmboy," I told the brown eyes looking into mine. His expression wasn't surprising to me in the slightest. Not that I was some sort of femme fatale or anything, but for some reason I could not discern I had always held an interest for small town boys. Couldn't they figure out on their own that someone like me, someone so settled in one of the largest cities in the world, had no use for a farm boy?

It started years ago — I was... eleven, maybe? In the fifth-grade anyway. Brad Johnson had just moved to town and created quite a stir. All the fifth-grade girls thought he was just the cutest thing (and when we were in the fifth grade, we were experts at saying that without it sounding like we were talking about a teddy bear).

Personally, I didn't see the allure. Brad was a farm boy — a farm boy! He came from Wyoming... or maybe Idaho? I wasn't sure. One of those unimportant states in the west with all the corn fields. The only place in the western US that I thought might be worth seeing was California. Certainly not Wyoming or Idaho, though.

Still, Brad's moving to town changed things. Before that, all of the girls had a crush on Michael DeLaney, but Brad came by and suddenly I was the only one who still liked Michael. Michael had grown up in Metropolis just like me and he shared my dislike of the corn states. We spent many lunch times together complaining about Brad's popularity. Of course, to be fair, Michael's annoyance may have stemmed from the fact that his girlfriend, Brianna, had moved over to the Brad bandwagon.

Still, it meant that within days of Brad's moving to town, Michael and I were an item. Not that this was all that noteworthy — in the fifth grade this meant we ate lunch together and sometimes Michael would give me half of his cupcake. Oh, and once, on a dare, Michael kissed me. It was a lot like kissing Aunt May, actually.

Two weeks later, when Brianna decided she didn't like Brad anymore (I think she couldn't stand the competition), Michael dumped me unceremoniously and he was sharing his cupcakes with her.

Brad started offering to share his lunchtime snacks with me, but I wanted no part of the farm boy. Besides, he didn't get cupcakes for snacks — his mother made him something called granola. Looked like a farm product to me. So, I brushed him aside and a few days later he stopped trying. Still, it was two years before I stopped catching Brad looking at me with sad, puppy dog eyes.

At the time, I thought nothing of it. Aside from a fleeting thought that I felt badly that he was holding on to this crush for

so long, I had no real use for Brad Johnson and never gave him more than a passing thought. Even when it seemed his crush on me had died a proper death, I never missed it the way some of the girls in high school seemed to bemoan the lack of a fall back guy when an unrequited crush moved on. I didn't need a fall-back. Not that I was dating anyone else, but I didn't need a guy. I was happy without the complications of romance. And if I had needed a guy, a farm boy would have been low on my list — even one who had lived in the city for the last couple of years.

After high school, I didn't think of Brad Johnson again for years — until I walked into my Statistics for Writers class during my junior year of college. I didn't really notice the tall, blonde-haired boy when I first entered. I was annoyed at having to take this class. I was not a math person. I wanted to be a journalist. Why did I need a statistics class? But the journalism degree required it and when I tried to convince the dean to let me off the hook, he explained that knowing how to use statistics was an important skill for a writer, especially a reporter. I didn't believe him — surely that was what fact-checkers were for, but he wouldn't budge.

So, still feeling annoyed at having to be there, I took a seat in the back of the class, hoping I could pay little attention and just manage to get by. Typically I was a straight A student, but given the uselessness of the subject matter, I'd be happy with a C in this class. As long as I got a grade good enough to use for my major, I would be happy. I had no intention of wasting precious study time on this when I could be working on a story for the school paper — maybe impressing Paul, the editor.

The second day of class, though, he sat next to me. I still didn't notice him as I was busy working on my homework assignment. I had left it for the last minute — it was less important than the story I was working on for the paper — but it was harder than I expected it to be. As I moved on from the first problem, which I didn't know how to do, I groaned as I realized I had no idea how to do the second problem either.

"This class is a waste of time, don'tcha think?" the soft twang came from next to me.

I nodded as I looked up. "I don't see why I need it," I told the boy. He was cute — not Paul cute, but definitely attractive.

"Me neither," he agreed, sticking his hand out. "I'm Scott Williams."

"Hi, Scott." I shook his hand. "I'm Lois Lane. So why are you taking this class?"

He shrugged. "I'm going to be a novelist. Well, I hope anyway. You?"

"Reporter. I'm going to work for the Daily Planet," I told him.

"You have a job already?" he asked. "That's great!" I blushed. "Well, no..." I admitted. "But I will one day."

"I admire your confidence," he told me, and I noticed his twang again.

"Where are you from?" I asked him.

"Iowa," he said. "You?"

"Metropolis born and raised," I told him, already looking for a way out of the conversation. I hadn't noticed his slight cowlick before. He wasn't so cute after all.

Luckily, the professor walked in just then, effectively ending my conversation with Scott. After class, though, he trailed me out of the math building and while I walked quickly, pretending he wasn't there, he ran to keep up. "Lois," he called when he was right behind me.

I gave a sigh. Clearly I wasn't going to be able to ignore him, so I turned around, fixing my face with a look that I hoped conveyed how bored I was already.

"Um..." Taking in my face, he faltered a little. "I was wondering... if you wanted to... you know... maybe... grab some dinner together sometime... or something?" He blushed all

the way to the roots of his hair. Silly farm boy. Metropolis boys knew how to ask a girl out — and it didn't involve either rambling or blushing.

"No thanks," I said, not caring that his face fell a little. He had to know I wouldn't be interested. He had told me he was from Iowa, right? "I'm sorry," I added, feeling a twinge of guilt despite myself. "But I'm just not really interested in dating right now."

"Oh," he said, scuffing his shoe along the pavement. "Well, I understand."

I felt a little badly as he walked away, but then shrugged. What did he expect? He was a farm boy and I was the consummate city girl.

So, these experiences meant I knew exactly what was going on when I looked across the pile of papers Clark and I were working on that night and saw his face. "Don't fall for me, Farmboy," I told him. "I don't have time for it."

And I wasn't lying — I didn't have time for it. Oh, if he had had some redeeming qualities, maybe I would have made time for him. Like, perhaps, the ability to fly. Or being the third richest man in the world. I somehow seemed to have plenty of time for both that year. But not for a farm boy — never for a farm boy.

He kissed me twice that year — twice! — and I remember both kisses as taking me by surprise. They were nice and they caused a fluttering in my stomach I couldn't quite place. Still, I shook it off. There was nothing all that special about those kisses. I was just surprised that someone who had spent their life in small-town Kansas could kiss like that. Nothing more to it than that.

No, really, the first time Clark Kent surprised me was on a park bench in Centennial Park. "I have been in love with you for a long time... You had to have known."

I told him I had known he was attracted to me, although the truth was, I hadn't really. I hadn't thought about Clark's attraction to me since the first week he was in Metropolis when he looked at me over Chinese food and a pile of papers and I told him I didn't have time for him.

Sometime after that, he stopped being a farm boy — someone I had no time for. He had just become Clark Kent. Oh, I still had no time for him. Not with men like Lex and Superman around. But he wasn't at all who I thought he would be that first week. He was stronger, tougher than I had given him credit for.

He was also sweeter and gentler than I had really imagined. He was my best friend — the first person I thought of when things went wrong. Or even when things went right. It's almost amusing to me to think back to that moment on the park bench now.

Tempus once called me galactically stupid for not seeing that Clark Kent and Superman were the same man. I've long since forgiven myself for that. While I can see it now, so clearly, I can also see how different he looks in the different guises. And I know how very much I did not want to fall for Clark Kent.

No, what made me galactically stupid had nothing to do with Superman. It had to do with my thoughts on that park bench. How I dismissed Clark's admission of love away in the same way I had Brad Johnson's offer of granola. How I sat there and thought about what Clark was to me — realized he was the one I thought of when things went wrong or right and still told him that he was my best friend, nothing more. How I completely missed the fact that I was in love with him, too.

Sometimes I wonder how things might have been different if I had given Brad Johnson a chance, taken his offering of his mom's granola. Would I have learned in the fifth grade the lesson it took me until I was twenty-seven to learn? Probably not. It's hard for me to imagine being anything but what I was at that age. I probably would have taken one taste of Brad's granola and spit it out.

What about in college, though, when granola had come to Metropolis and I discovered I kind of liked the sweet, crunchy taste? If I had said yes to Scott I could have avoided the whole thing with Paul. Something tells me it wouldn't have worked out though.

While farm boys do seem to have an affinity for me, I still don't think I have one for them. Not unless they have dancing brown eyes and a smile that can light up a room. Not unless they are persistent beyond all reason. Not unless they are not just polite to a fault from growing up in a small town, but are still able to hold their own in an argument. Not unless they can make me laugh on the worst day — sometimes even laugh at myself. Not unless they worm their way into my heart until they are the first thing I think of when I wake up and the last before I fall asleep. Not unless their name is Clark Kent.

Then, as it turns out, I do have time for them. In fact, I have more time for them than I've ever offered, or even wanted to offer, anyone before.

And, you know, I wouldn't have it any other way.

THE END