

Lois Lane, Last Will and Testament

By Tank Wilson, CarolM and Artemis

Rated: G

Submitted: June 2009

Summary: When stranded in a snow bank along a deserted stretch of mountain road, Lois takes a long look at her life. Will Superman get there in time? A multi-authored story by Tank, CarolM, and Artemis.

Story Size: 8,940 words (46Kb as text)

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Tank says: Every so often I feel compelled to write a little throw-away vignette to show the gentle readers in this fandom that I'm still alive. There was no great inspiration that grabbed me and forced me to write this piece; it was just an idea that popped into my head and I felt like it would be fun to write. Now the lack of a conclusive ending...? That was done on purpose. I felt it would allow the reader to have the story end wherever they wanted it to. Depending on your current mood and sympathies a person could have this little vignette end with the emotional impact spanning the entire range of possibilities. (And then I wouldn't have to pick one to write myself. I'm lazy)

Two gentle reader/writers decided they couldn't just allow the story to stand as is; they just had to actualize a definite ending (which is cool). Both Carol and Artemis did an excellent job of sharing the way they felt the situation should finish with the rest of folcdom, and they are presented here.

Interesting... both chose to take the 'happy ending' road... go figure.

Carol says: Well, I couldn't let Tank leave us thinking she'd died. Go figure. So with great fear and trepidation at trying to finish something *Tank* started, I began to type. I was happy with the outcome and after arguing with myself for what seemed like forever [but was probably a day or so], I decided to go ahead and post it. Thanks to Tank for giving me something to play with and to the gentle readers on the fic boards for not laughing me out of town for being presumptuous enough to think I could do Tank-fic justice. Thanks to Nancy/Anonpip for the quick beta on this.

Did I mention how shocked I was that Tank said something almost nice about Jimmy?

Thanks also go to Erin Klingler for taking this on for us!

Artemis says: For years and years I've been enjoying Tank and Wendy challenges, where Tank tries to kill off one or both of our favorite characters and Wendy twists the plot and rescues them. (He has done that to Jimmy, too, but there I don't care ;)) So as Tank awoke from his Minnesota winter slumber and Carol posted her fine ending, I thought Clark needed a voice too. So here is my humble effort.

It was cold. I was cold. I was really cold. Again I cursed the fact that I hadn't taken the time to put on a heavier coat when I'd left. Blood trickled down my forehead from the gash that had been caused when my head had hit the steering wheel. My jeep didn't have an air bag, so there had been no cushion for my face as it slammed into the wheel.

Light enough to see by still came through the back windows. The front half of my vehicle was totally covered by the deep snow of the ditch that it now rested in, but the back third of the jeep remained uncovered. Of course, as snow continued to fall it was only a matter of time until the entire jeep was buried.

The dash had been collapsed by the impact and was effectively trapping my legs. With an extreme effort I might be able to free one leg, but it would take nothing less than the Jaws of Life to free the other. The left leg also felt 'wrong.' I couldn't tell if it was broken or not because the cold inhibited the pain. Still, I could tell that it wasn't right.

It looked like I was stuck were I was for the duration. Once again Lois Lane had jumped into the pool without checking the water level.

I struck the passenger window with my closed fist. The only effect that had was to cause my hand to sting significantly. I stretched as far as I could, my leg protesting the movement, as I reached for the glove box. I opened the compartment only to find it littered with gasoline receipts and insurance information. No handy man-sized flashlight which I might use to break the window and use as a signal.

In movies, and other fiction, the heroine is usually able to get out of being trapped in a vehicle by breaking out a window and struggling through the opening. The reality was, vehicle window glass was substantial. It needed to be strong as it played an important role in the structural integrity of the car. Nothing less than a hammer, or a good sized rock would be able to break any of these windows; not that I was eager to let even more cold air into the jeep, but it would have been nice to have that option.

I was just so frustrated. I hated feeling helpless, but intellectually I knew my situation was dire. I was angry and I felt stupid.

It had seemed too good to be true, and it had been; but I couldn't pass up the chance, as unlikely as it was, that the tip was genuine. Things had been slow that morning. I didn't even know where Clark was. He'd run out early with some lame excuse about having forgotten to mail his utility bill. The ringing of the phone had been a welcome diversion.

Clark and I had been stymied in our investigation of Trenton Construction. There had been loose talk on the streets that the CEO of Trenton, Paul Van Brocklin, was making a lot of under-the-table deals with less than reputable suppliers which could have the effect of compromising structural integrity and worker safety. There had been a couple of accidents on their West River site, but nothing that couldn't be explained away as just unlucky incidents.

Clark and I had been trying to track down Van Brocklin for an interview all week, but he'd managed to be several steps ahead of us. The man had, for all intents and purposes, vanished.

The caller had refused to identify himself, big surprise there, but what he'd had to say had piqued the interest of this frustrated reporter. The bottom line was that the caller had said he could give me the whereabouts of our vanished CEO but, another big surprise, not over the phone.

We agreed on a time and place to meet, and I was on my way. I know I should have, at least, left Clark a note, or told Perry where I was going, but I hadn't. It just wasn't a habit that I'd ever gotten into. As much as I enjoyed working with Clark, I was still prone to making snap decisions and acting on them before fully weighing the consequences. I knew that odds were against this being a lead that might actually lead to Paul Van Brocklin, but I

couldn't ignore the possibility.

As it was I barely made the meet. Well, meet was a misnomer. I didn't actually meet with my mysterious source. I arrived at the small diner that had been picked as our rendezvous point. It was located about fifty miles north of Metropolis on an old two-lane blacktop that had been forgotten a decade ago. A lot of the old county roads and smaller state highways had seen much of their traffic siphoned off since the completion of the revamped interstate that served the state north of Metropolis. But when I went inside, my mystery caller was gone.

I had seen another car leaving the diner just as I arrived but thought nothing of it. Upon entering I noted that there was no one there. When I queried the proprietor I discovered that the person I'd seen just leaving had left a note for me. All it said was 'I changed my mind, sorry.' That answer was not acceptable to me, so I left the diner and headed in the direction I'd seen the departed car going. I hoped that I could catch up with the person and convince them to talk to me.

I admit that it wasn't the brightest plan. I'd have been much better served if I'd just turned around and gone home. But, as I'd said, Clark and I hadn't had much luck on the story and I figured any lead, no matter how lame, was better than no lead. Unfortunately, I was wrong.

This part of New Troy had received quite a bit of snow recently, and the forecast had been for more significant snowfall that day. The clouds looked threatening in the direction I was going but I had hoped that I would catch up with my caller and be on my way back to Metropolis before much more snow would fall. Wrong again.

I never did catch up with my reluctant source. In fact, in the hour that I had been driving since leaving the diner, I never saw another vehicle on the road. That should have told me something.

By that time it had been snowing for awhile and the driving had become increasingly difficult. Visibility had dropped dramatically, and the blowing snow had made the road surface slippery. I'd considered turning around and heading back to the diner, but chose to continue on. I assumed I'd come across a small town soon, and would find someplace there to wait out the storm. Strike three.

Since leaving the diner the countryside had begun to change. The past hour I had been driving through wooded hills and valleys. The road got narrower, and the shoulders were practically non-existent. The occasional outcropping of rocks and boulders were a sure sign that I had strayed into the foothills. One side of the road would rise up twenty to thirty feet while the opposite would fall away by just as much.

I had been traveling less than two hours since the start of my chase of the mystery man when the inevitable happened. It had become obvious that there was no way I was going to catch him, if he'd ever been on the road at all. For all I knew, he might have turned off onto some local side street before I even began to give chase. The visibility had been continually deteriorating as the snow continued to fall. I began to believe that I wasn't going to come across that 'next' small town, but I doubted that I had enough gas to get me back to the diner even if I could somehow get turned around and navigate my way back.

I had slowed down considerably, but it didn't help. I just couldn't see far enough in front of me. Finally, it happened. The road took a sharp right turn that I wasn't able to negotiate. By the time I realized the county road was no longer in front of me, it was too late. The front end of my jeep didn't respond to the panicked hard turn of the steering wheel as the tires didn't find any dry pavement to get some traction on. They slid easily on the snow covered roadway and suddenly I was plunging, headlong, down into the deep ditch.

The jeep came to a hard stop up against a massive rocky outcrop which caused significant damage to the driver's side

front end and was responsible for trapping my legs. I was head down in the ditch at about a twenty degree angle. I had bought the jeep for its 4-wheel drive rugged versatility, but nothing short of a metal-tracked vehicle was going to be able to free itself, or me. I was stuck.

I tried again to free my legs but a sharp grinding pain made me reconsider. I stared at the formless grey that blanketed my windshield and side windows. A little of the back window was still uncovered, but the light was getting dimmer by the minute. I wasn't sure which would happen first. Would the sun set, or would the snow finish covering my jeep? I guess the point was really moot because in not too many more minutes it would be dark inside my car.

I had some hard decisions to make. It was getting colder as night came on, and if I wasn't found soon I stood a real good chance of freezing to death. I supposed I could restart the engine and use the heater to keep warm, but that would only speed up my death. By now the tailpipe would have been completely blocked, causing the exhaust to back-up into the jeep. I would fall asleep and never wake up. It was a common form of suicide.

The option of breaking the passenger window to provide fresh air so I could run the heater longer was no longer viable even if I'd had something with which I could accomplish the feat. The snow was firmly packed around the front and side of the jeep, and there was no way I could reach the back window. And even that would be covered soon.

For the time being, I decided that I would try to cope with the cold as best I could. I could always opt for the warmth and the long sleep if the cold became unbearable and any hope of rescue was gone.

Periodically I had been honking the horn, hoping that someone passing by might hear it and know I was trapped. Of course, considering how bad the weather had gotten, and how bad the road conditions were, the odds of anyone being out driving around were astronomical. Also, there was little chance that any snow plows would be out trying to clear the road until after the snow stopped falling, which wasn't supposed to happen until sometime later tomorrow. My chances of seeing another sunrise weren't too good. Why hadn't I left Clark a note?

My next decision was what to do about the rapidly approaching darkness. I didn't exactly relish sitting in the dark, being bored, as I slowly froze to death. I had to do something. Since I couldn't move more than a few inches in any direction, that left writing. I knew I had a small note pad in my bag, and probably six or seven pens, one of which I hoped actually worked.

Of course, if I was going to write, I'd need to be able to see, and the darkness was becoming more complete by the minute. I reached up and flicked on the overhead dome light. I knew that leaving the headlights on for a few hours could drain the battery to the point of not being able to start the engine if I needed to, and I wanted to keep that option open. But I was sure that the little dome light wouldn't put a serious drain on the battery for several hours, and by then my fate would probably be sealed.

The small lamp didn't offer much light, but it would be enough. I pulled the pad, and a likely pen out of my bag and leaned back a bit more in the seat. Now that I had decided to write, I suppose I had to figure out what I should write.

My first idea was to write up the story. I didn't bother to title it. I thought "The Stupid Death of Lois Lane" just didn't really sing. But I did feel I should give an account on how I got here. So I wrote up the events of my day, beginning with the phone call that had led me on this unfortunate wild goose chase.

I frowned as I folded over the last page. It hadn't taken more than twenty minutes to finish up the 'story.' Now what? I stared at the new, blank page for several moments. I chewed on my lower lip, then I began to write. This did deserve a proper title.

“The Last Will and Testament of Lois Lane.”

“I, Lois Lane, being of sound mind and moderately sound body, do hereby establish this document as my last will and testament. As I find myself confronted with a potentially life threatening situation, with the establishment of this document I hope to make my final wishes on certain matters known.”

I had to smirk at the formal tone of the first paragraph. I knew that whatever I wrote here would never stand up to a serious challenge in a court of law, but I hoped that by making it sound more like a real will those mentioned might be willing to abide by my choices. I didn’t have a will, which in light of how I lived my life, was not terribly smart. But then, I was Lois Lane and I was invincible... almost. I picked the pen back up.

“To my sister Lucy, I leave control of all my financial assets and physical properties excepting those which I designate to others in the course of this document. I also wish to leave her with a giant blanket apology for all the hard times I’ve given her over the years. She has to know that I only did it because I cared. I never would have made it through those tough times without you, Luce. I love you, and I always have.

“To my parents I leave only regret that they weren’t smart enough to realize that they weren’t able to handle the responsibility of raising two children, and a hope that someday they can find some form of happiness whether it be with or without each other. Also, I leave my final expenses to my father. He will never be forced to pay for my wedding so the least he can do is pay for my funeral.”

Perhaps I was a bit tough on my folks. I know Clark would think so, but then he has no frame of reference, having been raised by ‘the perfect parents.’ I shook my head. No, it was all they deserved.

“To Perry White, my Editor-in Chief, my mentor, and the man I regarded more as a father than the one whose genetics I share, I leave my deepest respect and my Kerth awards. Since it was his encouragement and guidance that made me the reporter I am, he is as deserving of those awards as I was.”

I stopped to wipe a tear from my cheek. In a perverse sort of way it seemed somehow right that I would go before Perry. I just couldn’t imagine the Daily Planet without Perry. It just wouldn’t be home. I sighed, then put pen back to paper.

“To Jimmy Olsen I leave my eternal gratitude for being a good friend. He was like my little brother. When others shunned Mad Dog Lane, Jimmy was always willing to help me out whenever, and with whatever, I needed. He probably doesn’t realize how invaluable he was to me and Clark with his exceptional skills at computer research. We both owed him a lot for our successes. I would like to leave Jimmy my Jeep, hoping it would make it easier for him to get back and forth to work, but I’m afraid the poor old thing is pretty far from functional anymore. I just wish that Lucy could see Jimmy for the good guy that he is and maybe that might break the chain of disasters that have dogged her dating life. If that ever comes about, they both have my blessing.”

That left Clark.

I knew that my death would hurt Clark deeply. I only had to remember back not too many weeks to when I thought that I had lost him to Clyde Barrow’s bullets. I’d spent a tearful night trying to imagine what my life would be like without my best friend in it. It had also been a sort of epiphany for me. I think it really wasn’t until that moment, the moment when I thought that I’d lost him, I realized how much he really meant to me.

If Clark feels anything similar to what I felt that night, I can only hope that he can find comfort with his family and friends. In that he is luckier than I was. Of course, I was the most fortunate by far. I got Clark back. I don’t think there is going to be any Professor Hamilton-type miracle for me.

I mentally kicked myself for my actions after Clark’s

astounding resurrection. I had deeply regretted having not told Clark how I really felt about him before he was taken from me. So how did I do? I slipped back into familiar patterns and couldn’t bring myself to confess my true feelings. That would make me vulnerable. I knew that Clark would never consciously hurt me, but I just couldn’t take that chance. Lois Lane had survived too many ‘federal disasters’ when it came to relationships with men, and I wasn’t about to let it happen again. Besides, I didn’t want to risk the friendship that the two of us had managed to rebuild after the fiasco that was my aborted wedding to Lex. Dumb.

It might be too little, too late, but I wouldn’t chicken out this time. It was time to let Clark know the truth. He deserved that much.

“To Clark Kent, I leave three things. First, I want him to have the photo of the two of us taken after his first Kerth win. It will help to remind him of happier times. Second, I give him my apology for all the hard times I’ve given him in the past; the bad moods, the attitudes and arrogance that would surface from time to time, and the fact that I too often hide my true feelings from him. Clark was the only partner I could ever work with, and the best friend I thought I would never have. I cannot begin to enumerate the qualities that make Clark so special so I won’t. Instead I’ll just say, to Clark Kent I leave... my heart.

“Lois Joanne Lane.”

I set the pen and pad down on the seat next to me and let my head fall back against the seatback. It was either fully dark out now, or my jeep had been completely covered by the snow. It was hard to tell for sure. Probably both were true.

It was getting colder, and now that I’d stopped working on my will, the pain of the severe chill became nearly unbearable. I’d always thought that freezing to death would just encompass a gradual numbness overcoming me until I just drifted off. No one had said anything about the pain. It didn’t make sense logically, but the pain in my fingers and toes was almost like a burning sensation. The pain in my legs from the cold had passed from a chilly numbness, to an agony that blotted out the throbbing of my injury. I knew I wasn’t far from serious hypothermia. The cold was also affecting my thought processes. I knew I should continue to try to think of a way out of the mess I was in, but I couldn’t seem to generate any incentive to do so. I just wanted to be warm again.

It was time.

I reached for the car keys and turned the ignition. The engine protested the abuse I was putting it through by trying to rouse it from its near frozen slumber. But finally, after nearly running the battery down with several false starts, the engine caught and began to run. I quickly threw the temperature gauge to full heat and flipped the fan switch. Cool air began to blow into the cab which caused me to start shivering. The violence of my shaking was beginning to hurt before the thermostat finally opened up and warm air began to flow into my prison.

It was like heaven.

As the numbness of the cold began to leach out of my fingers and toes, the burning sensations came back. Still, it was bearable. More bearable than the cold. It was only a few more minutes before it was positively warm. I was beginning to feel sleepy.

I didn’t have any idea how long it would take for the cabin of my Jeep to fill with the trapped exhaust fumes which would cause unconsciousness, and eventually death. The fact that it would happen, of that there was no doubt. I may not have much time left, but, at least I would die warm.

I shifted about some, trying to find the most comfortable position. I stared down at the pad of paper on the seat next to me. “I love you, Clark.”

I leaned my head back and closed my eyes.

First ending: By CarolM
Dying was like sleeping.
Like the best sleep I'd ever had.
Wrapped in the cocoon of warmth finally coming from the car's heater.

I wondered if I'd know the moment I died or if I'd just cease to be aware.

A tear slipped down my cheek. Clark wouldn't know until it was too late that I loved him.

I drifted off into oblivion, glad that at least it wasn't excruciatingly painful. I'd always thought I'd go in a hail of gunfire while investigating the seamy underbelly of Metropolis or something like that. At least until Superman came along, and then I started to believe I might actually die of old age because he was always in time to save me.

Until now.

I didn't hate him for not finding me. I couldn't. He had no idea where I was. No one did.

It was my own fault. I probably should have called for him, but at the same time... What was the point? He wasn't close. I was honking the horn. If he'd heard it, he would have come anyway, even if he didn't know I was missing.

I should have called anyway.

And then I was floating.

The whole car was floating, which didn't make any sense to me, but it was. When I died, shouldn't I float above and look down to see just the brake light of the Jeep glowing under its blanket of snow, barely visible under the thin layer that covered the highest point of the Jeep?

The whole thing shouldn't float, should it?

I gave up trying to figure out dying and just relaxed into the welcome arms of unconsciousness.

"Don't leave me, Lois."

I could hear Clark's voice drifting to me through the haze.

I was cradled against his strong chest as I floated.

It was just me floating this time — the Jeep had disappeared.

But I wasn't floating.

I was flying.

I could see the mountains racing by beneath me as I flew like Superman, soaring over the outskirts of Metropolis.

Clark's apartment.

That was where I needed to go and I tried to make myself head towards Clinton Avenue, but I couldn't. Even if it was just to see him one last time from the beyond. He wouldn't know yet that I was dead. As long as he wasn't with the blonde bimbo, I'd get to see him one last time as I wanted to remember him. Relaxed at home, probably eating pizza and watching a basketball game, maybe drinking a beer.

That was how I wanted to remember Clark. Not like I was a few weeks earlier when I mourned him, but instead as he normally was.

But I couldn't make myself head to Clinton. Instead my body insisted on flying straight towards Metropolis General Hospital.

I didn't understand it as I closed my eyes and willed myself towards Clark's place, but instead found myself back in his arms, cradled again against his strong chest as I heard his murmured words again.

"Don't leave me, Lois."

It's too late, Clark, I wanted to tell him. I'm already gone.

My eyes started to flicker open.

It was white.

There really was a white light on the Other Side.

Who would've guessed?

There was a warm, comfortable weight on my chest, though my leg felt as though it was at an uncomfortable angle.

Who knew you could be uncomfortable on the Other Side?

I blinked again.

Florescent lights?

They had florescent lights on the Other Side?

"Lois?"

The voice was soft.

Clark's voice.

Why was Clark on the Other Side?

"Lois?"

I blinked and looked down, to see one of my slender hands sandwiched between two larger hands.

Clark's hands.

I tried to squeeze his hand, but there was only a slight movement of my fingers no matter how hard I tried. I had to let him know that he didn't belong here on the Other Side.

I tried to speak but nothing came out. Just a hoarse cough of sorts.

One of the hands left mine and reached up to brush the hair off my face. "Don't try to talk, yet. Let me get your nurse."

Why was the Other Side Clark getting a nurse?

That didn't make sense.

Unless...

There was something right there, niggling at the back of my brain.

I was — or had been — brilliant investigative reporter Lois Lane.

Surely I could figure out what it was.

I closed my eyes and tried to concentrate, but instead found myself drifting back to sleep.

It was dark on the Other Side when I opened my eyes again.

I could still feel Clark's hands wrapped around mine.

This time I was able to move my hand enough that he felt it.

"Hey, there, Darlin'."

I blinked, trying to get my eyes to adjust. First Clark, now Perry.

"What're you doing here?" I managed to croak out.

"Well, now, Clark tried to stay but that poor boy hadn't slept in about three days so I promised him I'd stay with you while he got some rest."

Rest?

Did one need rest on the Other Side?

"Kerths..." I whispered. "You get them."

He chuckled. "I'm not taking those Kerths. Jimmy might try to take off with the Jeep — though you were right; it's in pretty sad shape — but you get to keep your Kerths."

"What?"

One hand reached out to brush against my cheek. "Don't ever scare me like that again, Darlin'," came his gruff whisper.

"Scare you?"

"Drivin' out there all by yourself, not telling any of us where you were going. Clark was absolutely beside himself. Jimmy managed to get into your phone logs and figured out you got a call from a payphone about fifty miles north of here. Clark headed there. Superman came by to see if we had any more information, but of course, we didn't. Those two..." Perry shook his head. "Either one of them would move heaven and earth to find you, Darlin'. Somehow, together, the two of them managed to find you — Clark working the ground, Superman the air." He paused for a minute. "Superman was just as upset as Clark was, though he did a better job of hiding it. He said he had to fly the Jeep somewhere else before he could get you out and fly you here."

It was slowly sinking in.

This wasn't the Other Side. It was still This Side. I'd survived. Somehow, Superman had found me and brought me back to Metropolis.

“You don’t get my Kerths if I’m still here, Chief, but how did you know you were supposed to get them?”

“Superman said you were holding onto a notepad when he pulled you out of the Jeep. We read it.”

“We?” I asked.

He nodded. “We haven’t found your sister yet and your mom and dad aren’t here yet, either, but Jimmy and Clark were here and we read it together.” His voice was thick with tears as he spoke again. “I can’t imagine what it must have been like for you...” He stopped, unable to continue.

“Am I...” I couldn’t continue. I swallowed and tried again. “Am I going to be okay?”

“Yeah, Darlin’. You’re going to be fine. Your leg was pretty mangled, but you came through surgery just fine. You’ll have to stay off it for a while and do physical therapy, but you’re going to be just fine.”

I closed my eyes and rested my head back against the pillow. I was sure that I was going to be frustrated when I wasn’t able to do my regular work for a long time, but for the moment I was just grateful that I was alive.

Alive.

I was alive.

The nurse came in just then and asked Perry to leave for a few minutes while she checked me over. Perry said he’d call Clark and Jimmy.

I wasn’t sure how long he was gone, but not long after the nurse left, I was sound asleep.

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I was flying high over the mountains north of Metropolis. I was cradled against Superman’s chest. It had to be Superman because he was the only one who could fly. I settled my head further into the crook of his neck only to realize that he wasn’t wearing the Suit.

I’d wondered — idly and not so idly — if the Suit came off and I’d finally decided it had to. I’d seen the cape in tatters after particularly fiery rescues and the blue darkened with soot. But the next time he was seen somewhere he was clean and fresh. So presumably, at some point, he’d put on a clean Suit.

But this time, as we were flying, there was no Suit.

I moved back to look at him. His face looked grim as he gazed at me. “Don’t leave me, Lois.”

There was something wrong with Superman’s voice. He sounded different. He sounded like... Clark.

Then I realized something else. Not only was he not wearing the Suit, he was wearing glasses and his hair fell over his forehead, like Clark’s always did. That bit of hair that I always wanted to run my fingers through.

Was I, in my near-dead state, convincing myself that Clark was my own personal Superman? Instead of, well, Superman being my own personal Superman?

That didn’t seem right.

I looked back at him. The glasses were gone and his hair was slicked back like usual, instead of that one piece falling over his forehead like it did when I thought he was Clark.

“Don’t leave me, Lois,” he whispered again, looking straight at me, but still sounding just like Clark.

I didn’t get it.

I just didn’t get it.

Nearly dying was ruining my usual intuitive leaps of logic.

Maybe more sleep was the answer.

I nestled my head back into his shoulder and closed my eyes.

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For as desperate as Clark had apparently been to find me, he was nowhere to be seen.

Superman hadn’t been by either, but he was excused. The mudslide in Peru had taken up most of his time.

And I was ready to go home.

I’d kind of hoped, initially, that Clark and I would have talked by now and he’d have taken me home, but that wasn’t to be.

I had all kinds of names I wanted to call him, but I couldn’t bring myself to. Not after he’d nearly died and I’d nearly died.

I wanted to have Jimmy take me to his apartment. Clark’s apartment, that is, but finally decided that my place was the best option. He helped me inside and got me settled on my bed before he left.

Clark was right. My couches were way too uncomfortable.

Of course, not ten minutes after Jimmy left, someone knocked on the door. He’d wanted to stay, saying Perry would have his head for leaving me alone, but I’d made him go. Maybe that hadn’t been the best plan.

“Just a minute,” I called, hopping along on my... good foot. Good was a relative term.

I wasn’t sure how long it actually took me to get to the door, but when I looked out the peephole, there he was. He had his back turned, shoulders slumped, but it was him. I unlocked the door and turned around without opening it, starting the long hobble back to my room.

“Come on in, Clark,” I said, slowly working my way back towards comfort.

The door opened and I heard Clark walk in.

“Lois!” he exclaimed. “What’re you doing?”

I turned enough to glare at him. “Letting you in.”

“Are you here by yourself? You shouldn’t be out of bed.”

Without asking or anything else, he scooped me into his arms. That was when I noticed the bouquet he was holding.

Maybe there really was something between us after all. If he was bringing a bouquet of multi-colored roses.

Sure, I’d gotten flowers from other people, but not roses. No one send roses unless there was something... more between them.

A minute later, he was setting me carefully on my bed.

But there was something niggling at the back of my mind.

Drat. Nearly dying was screwing with my leaps of logic and it was starting to irritate me.

“Are those for me?” I asked without looking at him as I pulled the covers up over my legs.

He sat tentatively on the edge my bed. “I was thinking about giving them to your fish, but then I thought, What would a fish do with flowers? so I thought I’d give them to you.”

I glared at him again. “You don’t get to make jokes.”

He sighed and stared at the flowers. “I’m sorry I haven’t been to see you.”

“It’s okay.” I shrugged, trying desperately to find a mason who would rebuild the brick walls around my heart and failing. Well, I’d done a good job the first time and brick by brick I’d rebuild it. “You have more important things to do than come see me after I woke up.”

Perry said he’d been there for nearly two days — awake for three. But then he hadn’t come back.

He looked at me. If I didn’t know better, I’d say there were tears in his eyes. “There’s nothing more important to me than you, Lois,” he whispered hoarsely. He looked back at the flowers. “I thought I’d lost you. When I got there and saw you, stuck...”

“What?”

He looked back at me, something cautiously guarded or shocked or something on his face — something I couldn’t quite read.

“What?” he asked.

“You said you got there and saw me, stuck... Then what? How did you see me? Were you with Superman when he found me?”

That niggling at the back of my mind was getting more and more insistent.

“You were there, weren’t you?” I asked him slowly. “You were at the crash site.”

He nodded, still without looking at me.

“But Superman found me.”

He nodded again.

“And you were looking on the ground and Superman was looking by air and you happened to find me before him?”

He didn’t move.

Neither did I. I just stared at him.

“Lois,” he finally said. “There’s something I need to tell you.”

“You’re in love with Mayson?” I asked without thinking, knowing the whole time it wasn’t true, but the real truth that was starting to reveal itself to my consciousness was too hard to believe, too hard to face just yet. I needed a few more minutes.

“No. I’m not in love with Mayson. She’s a friend. I think she’d probably like to be more, but I don’t feel that way about her.” He hesitated. “What I need to tell you is something else.”

“You’re Superman,” I said softly as the picture finally crystallized in front of me.

He finally looked back at me, this time the shock clearly registering on his face.

And then he nodded.

“Yeah. I’m Superman.”

I nodded back.

“How long have you known?” he asked.

“Just this minute,” I told him. “It’s been coming to me since you found me, I think, but it just now really came to me.”

He didn’t speak for a long minute and, when he finally did, his voice was thick with emotion. “I thought I’d lost you. I couldn’t find you anywhere and when I finally did, the Jeep was turned on but the exhaust pipe was covered and I knew you knew better than to do that which meant you’d given up at some point.”

“I had,” I said softly. “No one knew where I was. It’s not like I have On-Star in the Jeep, though I probably should, or Superman’s cell phone number much less cell phone coverage.” I knew Superman had made more than one rescue of someone who had the new technology installed in their vehicle and I’d thought more than once that it would be a good thing for me to have. But it was still expensive and my Jeep too old.

“Did you call for me?”

I thought for a minute. How did I tell him I hadn’t? Why hadn’t I? “No,” I finally said. “I doubted you were close enough to hear me and I was hitting the horn every once in a while anyway. If you’d heard it, you would have investigated even if you hadn’t been looking for me.”

“True,” he conceded.

We sat in silence for long minutes.

“I read what you wrote,” he finally said.

I didn’t say anything.

“Did you mean it?” he asked.

“Did I mean what? That I was of sound mind or that I thought Jimmy and my sister might actually work together?” I avoided the question.

“You know what I mean.”

I did. I knew what he meant. I sighed. “I did mean it.”

“That was before you knew, though... Do you still mean it?”

Did I? Did Clark still own my heart? Did Superman? Did Clark Superman Kent?

When I was sitting there, I knew I loved Clark. That I’d been falling in love with him since we met. I knew that I should have pressed the issue when he woke up or when I saw him next. I should have asked him out on a date or something.

But now that I knew the truth?

Did I still love him? Could I deal with all that went with being the girlfriend — and maybe more someday — of Superman?

Hadn’t I dreamed of that for a year or longer?

“I don’t know,” I finally said. “I think I need to get to know you.”

“You do know me,” he said softly. “Better than anyone.”

I shook my head. “I know Clark and I know Superman as well as anyone does, but I don’t know the real you; the you that your parents see. The guy who probably makes tea with his eyes, not a kettle, and zips off to France to get the freshest croissants. I need... time. Time to figure out who you really are.”

“I’m Clark Kent. Clark is who I am, who I’ve always been. Superman is what I do.”

“It’s not that simple, Clark, and I think you know that. I think maybe you wish it was, but it’s not.”

He stood. “I’ll leave you alone then. I mean, I don’t think you should be alone so I’ll be out in the living room.” He turned to look at me. “I love you, Lois. I know you might not be ready to hear that but I do. I think I always have and I know I always will.”

He headed for the door, stopping when I called his name.

“Clark.”

He didn’t turn around.

“Please don’t go,” I said quietly.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.” I patted the bed next to me. “Come sit by me and talk to me until my next round of painkillers kick in. I took them right before you got here. But in about ten minutes,” I warned, “I can’t be held responsible for anything I might say. They make me loopy.”

He grinned at me. “That could be fun.” He walked around to the other side of the bed and sat on top of the covers.

I reached towards him, taking his hand in mine and leaned my head against his shoulder. “Watch it, Kent.”

He rested his cheek against my head for a moment before turning to kiss my hair. “I’m so glad you’re going to be okay,” he murmured.

“You’re going to help me recuperate, you know,” I informed him.

“Of course.”

“You’re going to do all my research and bring me all kinds of exotic food.”

“Gladly.”

We sat in silence for a long moment.

“I do love you, Clark,” I said quietly. “I’m not sure what that means yet, but I do.”

His arm came around me and he pulled me to his side. “I love you, too, Lois. I’ll wait for you. However long you need.”

He meant it. I knew he did.

There was comfort in that.

I realized what it was I felt.

When I was in that car, dying, physically there was a warm cocoon that melted over me.

Being with Clark like this...

It was like a warm emotional cocoon that enveloped and surrounded me.

It was safe.

It was home.

That was something I hadn’t had in a very long time.

Something I didn’t want to lose.

I wasn’t exactly sure what road Clark and I would take together, but I had a pretty good idea where we were going to end up.

And whatever it was, we’d be together.

That was all I needed to know for the moment.

It was enough.

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Second Ending: By Artemis

I have felt this terrible sense of unease since mid-afternoon.

The school bus accident took longer than I thought it would to clean up. The kids needed reassurance and I just couldn't whisk off quickly. When I got back to the Planet and found Lois gone, I looked for a note first on my desk, then on her desk, and then asked Perry and then Jimmy where she was. Jimmy said he gave the Van Brocklin research to her just after lunch. Later, she took a phone call and then left hurriedly as if to meet a source. I looked at three different message pads on her desk, hoping for a clue from the indentations on the blank paper. Finally, I found scribbled directions to Al's Diner on Rte. 42 and Ferris Road and the note 3 p.m. It was now 4:30 and I could barely keep my speed down getting to the stairwell and airborne.

I think I made a speed record even for me to Al's Diner. I was in such a hurry to find her that I walked in the Diner as Superman and asked the waitress if she had seen a woman around 3 p.m. She said there hadn't been many customers that afternoon and she remembered a man who left a note for a woman he was supposed to meet. The woman had read the note then took off driving up into the mountains. I described Lois and the clothes she was wearing today and the waitress confirmed she was the woman. I thanked her briefly and then left to follow the road.

"Come on, Lois. Where are you?" I mutter aloud. "Help me find you, Lois!" Why haven't I heard any cries of "Help, Superman"? That doesn't seem like Lois. Fortunately, I can still see the outline of the road under the dusting of snow. But the snowfall is increasing. Lois is running out of luck. Why didn't she call for me? Maybe she was still mad at Superman for not saving Clark. I mentally kick myself for not being forthcoming to Lois after the Clyde Barrow fiasco and my "resurrection."

If I tune my vision just right, I can see a single set of tire tracks under a fresh layer of snow. Why is she driving alone up this isolated road? Or was the man waiting for her outside the diner and then took her hostage and then to some lair in the woods? Either way, she's in trouble and my unease is turning into full-blown panic. I follow the winding road with increasing speed, snow swirling up behind me as I fly nearly supersonic. The snow is falling harder and wherever she is at, she is in trouble in this weather.

It is getting dark and there is little moonlight. My agony is increasing. Suddenly, just ahead of me I can see a heat source. My vision extends further into the infrared than humans. I x-ray the car and find its Lois' Jeep with the engine running and Lois alone inside it, head lying back on the headrest. The heat from the engine has melted some of the snow around the car, but the front is down in a ditch and the back is just barely sticking out of the snow. I see the back window is open just a bit. For air, I hope, because the tail pipe is covered with snow and the exhaust is going into the car. Just to be sure, and with great relish, I pull the window out and down into the snow. The shatterproof glass breaks handily into two pieces.

Clearing the snow away from the driver's door, I look through the window to see Lois with her eyes closed. I can't tell if she is breathing or not! I rip the door off and throw it away with more force than necessary, frantic to get to her. I put two fingers to her neck. She has a pulse and I can just barely hear her breathing. A wave of relief washes over me, but I need to get her to a hospital!

I check her legs and find them pinned under the crushed dashboard. Removing the dashboard is easy, but her left leg needs a tourniquet since the dash was keeping pressure on the wound. X-ray reveals the leg is broken but more importantly the bleeding needs to be stopped. Tearing a strip from my cape I quickly bandage her leg and then lift her gently into my arms, snuggling her close to me and whispering, "Hang on, Lois. You're safe with me now."

Flying with Lois in my arms is slower than flying alone, but we are still making rapid time back to the city. Not knowing

whether she can hear me or not, I keep talking to assure her and hopefully give her comfort. "Hey, we had a really great time at Thanksgiving last week with my parents. You laughed and we all talked and ate Mom's fabulous food. They love having you at the house. I love having you at the house." Suddenly I stop talking but not flying. I'm talking to her like I'm Clark, but I'm flying with her in The Suit. Maybe it's time to man up and tell her about myself. Nearly losing her is like coming up against Kryptonite.

I stride into the familiar emergency room of Met General with my precious burden, trying to make it seem like any other rescue. But it really isn't. Not to me. I place her on a handy gurney and announce loudly, "Lois Lane. From the Daily Planet. She has hypothermia, carbon monoxide poisoning and a broken left leg. I found her in a stalled car in the snow in the mountains."

The Physician's Assistant rushes over for a quick exam. "We'll get right on it, Superman. Do you have any contact information?"

"Yes. Yes, I do. I know her personally."

"All right. Please give it to the admit office."

I go over to the desk, deciding on the way that it is time to get out of reaction mode and into action mode. I tell the receptionist, "Why don't I go get her contact, Clark Kent, and bring him here. He can provide you with all the relevant information."

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It's peaceful here at Lois' bedside. Perry and Jimmy have been in and out making sure she is O.K. She is still not awake, but she is set, stitched, bandaged, drugged and breathing oxygen. And most importantly, she is alive.

The machine hisses in and out like a person breathing. I'm sitting there just holding her hand and rubbing my thumb over the back of it. I've quietly told her the Thanksgiving story again.

I'm saving the death at the gambling den story for when she is fully conscious and can throw things at me and chase me down.

Dr. Hamilton really didn't clone me, but the whole issue resurrected my spirit. When I went back to retrieve her poor battered Jeep while she was in surgery I found her "Last Will and Testament."

"You have my heart, too," I whisper to her and kiss her lightly on her forehead.

THE END