

# The Morning After a Door Slams

By bobbart — Bob Bartholomew <bobbart\_99@yahoo.com>

Rated: G

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Summary: In the episode "Lucky Leon," what might have happened if Clark had convinced Lois to talk after the door was slammed at the end of their date? If they got their feelings out in the open, what might happen the next day? A sequel to "After a Door Slams."

Story Size: 5,874 words (30Kb as text)

Disclaimer: This is a fanfic based on the television show, Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman. Portions of this work reference scenes 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. Continuity note: This is a direct sequel to "After a Door Slams." That story should be read before this one.

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How can a radio news report sound good in the morning when you are waking up? Normally a traffic report and an update on the state legislature isn't the most uplifting way to start a day. This morning feels different. Today, it just feels good to start the day.

I guess this is what it feels like to be in love.

Wow! Did I really think that? Well, after last night, I guess I did. What a difference an hour can make.

I can't help thinking back to how that date ended. I mean, the date itself was great, but it was the end that made all the difference. Naturally, things were going so well that I got scared and tried to run away from a possible relationship. Who would have guessed that it all would have started with the slam of a door?

One minute I'm in my apartment trying to figure out how to stay partners with Clark while making sure we never try dating again. Then Clark, who's never pushy about anything, practically knocks down my door to get in. Well, I know that's not fair. Actually he stood outside my door and made the nicest plea that I've ever heard for me to let him in so we could talk.

Then, once he was inside, he had the audacity to want me talk about what had happened. The funny part is that I don't think I said that much. I'd start to say something and get stuck. Then he would say something else about how much it meant to him that things work out. We went around like that a few times and somewhere in all that I started to listen. I mean *really* listen. Not just to his words, but to his tone. Almost like a light coming on, I could see, this was much more than a date to him. That caught me off guard. Somehow I had managed to convince myself that this was "just a date" to Clark. As he spoke, it was becoming painfully obvious that this was critically important to him.

As I thought about what he was saying, the pieces only seemed to fit together one way. He wasn't interested in being "just my friend" or "just my partner." In my apartment last night, my investigative instincts finally kicked in and I could see that

my friend and partner had been lying to me. The idea of being just my friend was nothing more than a facade. What he really wanted was to be much more than that.

But there was something else. He seemed so desperate. He didn't sound like a friend who suddenly wanted to consider something more. He had the feel of a man hiding a secret. It felt like this was about something that he had kept hidden away for a long time.

Then I got thinking about how he treats me... How he behaves around me. I've worked around men all my adult life and can generally read the signs. It's sad to say that most of the men that I've worked with have been intimidated or afraid of me. Then, it seems like most of the rest can't see past my... um... physical attributes. And then there's Clark. I had managed all this time to overlook the fact that he combined all the best of everyone that I've worked with in the past. Well, I guess it'd be more correct to say that while I noticed how he treated me, I didn't take the next step to what else that might mean.

I think I was fooled because he's always so careful to keep everything on a friends/colleagues level. And finally, I made the connection. He is so careful! He puts a huge effort into putting on a very proper face. Why didn't I ever ask what else might be going on behind those loud ties? It's as if he was afraid to let me see what he was really thinking and feeling. But what would he be afraid of? Six months ago, Clark had first said that he was in love with me, but then he had taken it back saying that he was only interested in me as a friend.

Then last night I saw something different. His oh-so-carefully maintained public face slipped for just a moment. I don't think I've seen Clark so scared before. The idea that I was going to not let our relationship develop any further was too much for him to take.

So, as long as my reporter's instincts were butting in anyway, I thought I would use some of those skills to get to the bottom of this. I put the question right in front of him where he had to answer. What had been the real truth six months ago? Whatever else Clark may be, I knew that if I put him on the spot like that, I would get the truth. As with many questions, the answer, even though I was pretty sure of what it would be, was something of a shock. My partner was in love with me and had been all along. He only pretended less because he thought that's what I wanted.

It all happened so fast. First I slam the door. Then I let him in. Then, he's admitting that he really has been in love with me for a long time. Then... Then we're sharing *the* best kiss of my life. Even now I feel all shivery inside thinking about it. That was... Wow! I barely remember much after that. I know we kissed again after that. Then I realized it was late and I needed him out of here. The problem was that I didn't really want him to go. Being held in his arms and the feeling of his lips against mine was... I just don't have words for it. I do remember that for the briefest instant, I thought, "This must be what being in love feels like."

I think that was why I trapped him once more at the door. He had said that we needed to move forward. He had said that he wasn't going to back away from his feelings again. In that instant, as I was closing the door, I yearned for that warm feeling once more before he left. Would he really be open about his feelings? So, I asked him to say one thing to me before he left. I wanted so much to hear the words that I was still too scared to say myself. He looked confused for only an instant and then they came, "Lois, I love you." I think I almost collapsed from the joy. Wow! I've heard those words before but they *never* hit me like that! I didn't have words of my own with which to reply. I hope that he saw my reply on my face.

Clark is sweet, brave, and one of the best and nicest men that I've ever met. He's also capable and confident enough so that when I think of something first, he just reacts as if that is the way things are supposed to work. And, he's really handsome. I've

noticed that a few times before but I *really* noticed it last night. And finally, he's in love with me, Lois Lane.

But best of all, I'm in love with him. I couldn't tell him last night. It was too much and too soon and I wasn't sure. Before I even kissed him I had a feeling that was how I felt. After the kiss, I was mostly sure. But when I watched his face as he said those words through a half-closed door, I knew. I still couldn't bring myself to tell him right then, but I knew. I love Clark Kent.

I almost threw the door open and chased down the hall after him. But I think I was just too much in shock at my own reaction. The feeling of being in love with Clark was — is — wonderful!

I thought it would take hours to fall asleep but it only took moments. My mind should have been racing but I just felt warm. I felt loved. I felt in love.

I feel in love.

But I'm still lying here in bed. What am I going to do when I see Clark this morning? He made it very clear last night that he's expecting me to take the lead in this. That is so... Clark.

However, it should be easy.

Am I sure of how I feel? Yes.

Do I want to tell Clark? Yes!

So, what do I do? I could go in this morning as if nothing happened last night. No, whatever I do, that won't be it. I would only do it as a joke on Clark and this just isn't the time. I could go in and, in the middle of the bullpen, wrap my arms around him and see if those kisses last night were a fluke. That's a *much* better answer but I think it's still wrong. I think I'll find a way to get Mr. Kent alone where we can't be seen. I think I'll put on the most resolute, stern face possible and tell him that I after last night I'm worried about our future... Who am I kidding? Once I get him alone, I'll never be able to hold a fake angry expression long enough to play that game. I will get him alone, but I think I'll just immediately collect another of those heart-stopping kisses.

Then I'll tell him. I'll say those three words.

Am I ready? Yes. Then it's time to get out of bed, go to work and see Clark.

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Even morning traffic seems to be cooperating to keep me in a good mood. I can hardly believe how good I feel this morning. I just wish I was already at work so I could see Clark. It's going to be hard to concentrate on the Lucky Leon investigation.

I'm about half-way to work when traffic stops. Well, so much for the idea that the universe was going to be on my side for a change. As the cars creep along I can see far enough ahead to tell that it looks like there was some kind of major accident. Something, I don't know exactly what, tells me that there might be a newsworthy item here. I'm often not sure what it is that triggers my interest, but over the years I've learned to go with my instincts when I get these sorts of feelings. Traffic is creeping forward enough so that very quickly I can dart down a side street and find a place to park my Jeep.

Fortunately, the accident wasn't too far away and in less than five minutes I'm looking at a cluster of cars that appears to have been quite an accident. Now, all of the vehicles are separated and the clean-up is well underway. Off to one side, I see a group of people clustered together. The way they're all standing there tells me immediately this is a post accident news conference. I hurry over to make sure that if there is anything newsworthy, the Planet will be covered.

As I approach the crowd, I realize that Superman is there and speaking. It must have been an unusually severe accident for him to address the press. For most accidents, he just flies off as soon as everyone is safe. When I get within earshot I realize that this impromptu press conference must be nearly over. The questions are slow in coming and they are of the "get the last of the details" sort that tends to suggest that all of the critical information has

already been covered.

Since I'm approaching from the side, I get all the way to the edge of the remaining reporters without Superman seeing me. Unfortunately, just as I get there I hear him trying to finish the briefing.

"Ladies and gentlemen, that should cover all the details. If you'll excuse me I should be going."

I'm pretty sure that I can get a private briefing to cover the essentials that I missed. So I call out, "Superman!"

His head snaps around quickly, even for him. He obviously hadn't noticed me approach.

As he sees me his eyes widen and his normally-so-serious expression melts into a smile.

"Lois."

The look on his face stops me cold. In that instant my mind starts racing. He's happy to see me. I mean, he's *really* happy to see me. That smile seems familiar, but I haven't seen it from him in a long time. Back when he first appeared, I swear he was looking at me that way. But over time I became convinced that it was just my imagination. Superman didn't look at any woman like that. And even if he did look at me that way once, he hasn't since that night in my apartment when he... well... rejected me.

Maybe I'm a little more sensitive right now because of what's going on with Clark. But whatever the reason, I can see it very clearly. What was it Clark said last night? Something like, "Just for an instant I let my guard down and you saw how I really felt." Well, that's what I think I see right now. For some reason, he's let his guard down and I'm seeing how he really feels.

My mind and emotions are spinning as he starts my way. Very quickly I hear his greeting. "Good morning!"

There it is again in his voice. Superman never uses such a personal tone with anyone. There's real feeling behind that simple greeting. He's come over to me and now he's looking down at me with intensity and... affection?

He's still speaking and I'm finding that I have to concentrate to even pick up his words. "I don't think you need much on this. Eduardo was here and I think he got all of the pertinent information. He left a few minutes ago to file the story."

I'm still struggling to deal with what I just saw when Superman looked at me. The worst part is that it's not just the way he looked at me. When the realization of the meaning behind that look hit me, I felt a shiver run through me. I like it when he looks at me that way.

"Lois, are you okay?" Then he reaches out and puts his hand on my arm in a comforting gesture. At his touch I feel that same feeling surge through me as when I caught his gaze.

No! I can't be having these feelings! Not now! Not today!

"Lois?" There's genuine concern in his voice now. I need to get away and think!

"Superman... I, um... You said Eduardo already has the story for the Planet?"

"Yes. Lois, what's wrong?" The emotion is there in his voice. There's definitely something there that I don't remember noticing before.

"Nothing. I... I just need to get to the office." And I turn away. As his hand breaks contact with my arm there's an almost palatable sense of loss. His touch felt so good.

I don't look back but somehow I just know that he's staring after me, probably with a confused look on his face. I don't dare look back. I want to run but I force myself to walk at a normal pace. How do I get myself into messes like this?

I barely notice the walk back to my Jeep. Once inside I just have to take a few minutes and figure out what's going on. This is terrible! I can't be having feelings like this toward Superman! That was all settled before I got engaged to Lex. And what's he doing looking at me that way? He made it very clear that he wasn't interested in having a relationship with me.

What about Clark? How can I step into a serious relationship with him when I'm reacting this way to another man? What do I do now?

Does this change how I feel about Clark? No, those feelings are still there. But I feel all confused now. So many of the same sorts of feelings that I have toward Clark just hit me when I was with Superman. I want to be with Clark but what's going to happen next time I'm around Superman? What will happen next time he rescues me?

This is great, Lane! You've always been so worried about letting someone get too close and running the risk of having some man break your heart. Now you're the one that isn't being fair with a guy.

How can I tell Clark that I love him with these feelings hanging over me?

As I lean my head against the steering wheel, I guess I'm not surprised at the tear I feel running down my cheek. Oh Clark! What do I do now?

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I can't believe that I'm so late to work. I woke up early and was anxious to see Clark. Then I had that disastrous meeting with Superman. Not only did I lose the time that I stopped to check the accident scene, then I spent the next twenty minutes trying to regain my composure in my Jeep.

I feel like a person with only bad choices. I'm sure my feelings for Clark are real. But now I'm scared to make a commitment to deepening our relationship until I resolve my own feelings toward Superman. I can live with how he apparently feels toward me but how I reacted to him is an entirely different problem. I want so much to be fair to Clark. If I didn't care for him *so* much, this would be easier. I was all set to say those three words this morning. Now, I'm so confused. I feel like I have to put the whole Clark-thing on hold until I can figure out my own feelings. So, here I am with the elevator about to open, and the way my luck has been this morning, Clark will be right outside the elevator door.

As the door opens, I am actually hesitant to step out into the news room. My first look is to Clark's desk. His chair is empty but his computer is on and he's obviously around somewhere.

As I head for my desk I keep scanning for Clark. Before I get ten steps into the bullpen, I see Perry waving me toward his office.

As I enter his office, the door is barely closed when he asks, "How are you this morning?"

"I'm fine, Perry. Why do you ask?"

"Now, Lois, my job is to know what's goin' on around here. I know that last night was the big date between you and Clark. Now I see you come in twenty minutes late, which you never do without a good reason. And, I noticed that as soon as you got off the elevator you're looking for Clark with a look on your face that tells me that you aren't sure you want to see him. Darlin', your personal life is your business but you and Clark are my two best reporters and if there's a problem between you two, it's also my problem. So, I'll ask again, how are you?"

I can feel my self-control slipping. "I don't know! I thought I had this all figured out and now I'm all confused. It's complicated."

"So, is there going to be a problem with you and Clark?"

"No. At least I don't think so. We had a really good date last night. Not only that, we had a good chance to talk and got some things out in the open."

"But when you came in this morning, I swear that it looked like you didn't want to see him."

"Well... it's really complicated."

"Honey, if you say that everything is okay with you and Clark for working together, then the rest is none of my business. But... well, if there's there anything you want to talk about, you

know you can bend my ear."

"Thanks. Honestly, I think that except for a... um... complication, Clark and I are about the best we've ever been."

"You're sure?"

"Yes, Perry. The complication is *my* problem. It's not Clark's fault at all and I'm sure that however it works out, he and I are in good shape as far as the Planet is concerned."

Perry glances over my shoulder. "Well, Darlin', if you're sure, Clark just walked in the door. Based on the look he just flashed this way, he'd love to speak with you."

Okay, this is the moment I've been dreading. I head out of Perry's office and toward my desk. Clark is right there. The look on his face is... He looks so happy. God, I wish I knew what to do.

I just can't give him the greeting that he wants—and deserves—this morning. I notice packages on our desks.

"What are these?" I ask, being careful not to make eye contact.

I can sense his confusion. "Um... I think they're from Lucky Leon."

But my attempt at distraction fails as he continues quickly. "Lois, what's going on?"

I'm really not ready to talk to him yet. I open the package on my desk. Inside is possibly the most hideous contraption that I've ever seen. "Look, a Bath Friend," I say with the most realistic tone I can fabricate.

Clark steps closer and leans his head near mine. "Lois, I can tell something has happened. Please talk to me."

Sometimes I hate that he's so smart. I guess we're going to have to do this the hard way. But I need to be careful. I need time but I don't want to make him think he's done anything wrong.

I turn to him and look up into those soulful brown eyes of his. The instant I meet his gaze it hits me. He really does love me. I can see it shining through. How could I have missed it all this time? Now that I know, he might as well be wearing a sign saying, 'I Love Lois.'

But this isn't about how he feels about me. The sad part is that it isn't even about how I feel about him. That's what makes it so complicated.

I keep my voice low but steady. "Clark, a problem has come up... Um, last night we both said a lot of things." I stumble for the right words. "Please believe me when I say that this isn't about you. It's about me..."

Before I can continue his face falls and he cuts me off. "Please don't. I... I thought after last night that you... that we..."

I'm trying to think of what to say. I can see that he's completely devastated. I've seen men cut off at the knees before, I've even deliberately done it myself a time or two, but I don't recall a look of loss like I'm seeing right now. This isn't going right. I need to say something but it's like my breath had been snatched away. Unfortunately, for one of the few times in my life, I'm momentarily at a loss for words.

As I struggle for something to say, he seems to gather himself. He's looking at me with that same intensity that I saw last night, but this time something... something wonderful... seems gone. His look stops me cold. After only a second or so, in a cold flat voice he says, "I said that where we went was up to you. I had hoped for something else but..." As he stops I realize that I can't see the love anymore. All I see is pain. At this he just turns away. He's heading slowly for the exit. I've never seen him like this. This isn't like one of his silly "cheese of the month" exits. He's in no hurry. He's not rushing out the door. His pace is steady. He's not going *to* anywhere. He just doesn't want to be here. He just doesn't want to be with... me.

It wasn't supposed to go this way. He was supposed to listen calmly while I told him that we just needed to go slow for a while. He was supposed to smile and say, "That's fine, Lois."

Whatever you want is okay with me.” He wasn’t supposed to be hurt. He wasn’t supposed to leave.

I can’t believe this is happening. This was supposed to be such a great day. This was going to be the day that I invite Clark into my life. Instead, this is the day that I’ve seen the light go out of his eyes.

It dawns on me that I’ve been standing like a statue since Clark turned away. A quick glance around the bullpen tells me that everyone knows that something happened, even if they don’t know exactly what. I need to get away for a few minutes to collect myself. I can’t do this at my desk. Some of the small conference rooms are free. I need to at least have an excuse that looks like I’m working, so I grab some papers from my desk and head into one of those rooms. Once inside, I close the door and set the blinds so that no one can see in.

Closing off the room took what self-control I had left. I drop the papers on the table and collapse into a chair.

What just happened? It all went so fast. I’m sure I can work out the Superman feelings but not if I’ve lost Clark. As I think back to last night, the magnitude of it all hits me. He showed me his soul last night. The kisses... His declaration... I was trying to do the right thing. How could it have gone so wrong?

This it hits me... What I said... “It’s not about you, it’s about me.” That’s one of the oldest “dump the boyfriend” lines that there is. No wonder Clark left. He thought that I was dumping him before we even had a chance at a relationship.

Now it’s not just tears. I’m bawling like a schoolgirl and babbling between the sobs. “Clark. I’m so sorry. I wasn’t trying to dump you. I’m just confused. Please come back to me.”

I don’t have a clue as to all the things that I might have said during that time. I’ve never felt so lost and alone. It may have been one minute or it could have been ten. All I really know is that I have my face buried in my arms when I hear a rap on the door followed quickly by the door opening.

“Lois?”

My head pops up. “Clark!” One second I’m sitting with my face buried in my arms and the next I’m standing holding this man as if my life depended on it.

For a few seconds I don’t say anything. I’m just enjoying the feel of his arms around me. Somehow I notice that he’s not just holding me in his arms. More is going on than that. There’s energy in his embrace. I feel alive again in his arms. And more than that, I sense a gentle movement in his hands and arms. This is no static embrace, it’s a living caress. It’s as personal and intense as the kisses we shared last night. I’ve never known that a hug could be this intimate. As he holds me, I don’t need any words to know that the love is back. In that instant I never want to be anywhere else.

“Lois, I’m sorry I left. I know I said that you could set the pace. But, when you said... Well, it just hurt so much I sort of lost it for a second. I told you I won’t run away and I’m going to keep my word.”

As he pauses I jump in before he has a chance to say more. “Clark, I need to tell you something.”

He looks like he’s about to protest, but I can’t be sure. I put one finger to his lips. He gets the message and goes silent. This is what I should have done this morning instead of thinking about putting him off.

“Like I said earlier, we both said a lot of things last night. But, one very important thing was not said.” At this I reach up and cradle his face with both hands. “Clark, I love you.”

The look on his face is worth any problems that we may still have to face. Through a smile that I wish could be there forever, he says, “But Lois, earlier, out in the bullpen, you said...”

Now it’s my turn to cut him off. “Clark, I never got finished with what I was trying to say. I messed it up and tried to say things in the wrong order.” This is a little white lie but I trust in

the underlying truth of what I’m saying. “There is an issue that has me confused. But I’m sure about my feelings toward you. Clark, I do love you.”

I can’t tell who initiates this kiss but it feels very much like a mutual decision. After all that’s happened this morning, I’m in no mood for subtlety. As my lips are crushed by his, they quickly part in an open invitation for Clark to deepen the kiss. His response is immediate and soon we are truly engaged in an intimate kiss that stirs memories of the previous evening. As I become ever more involved in this amazingly passionate act, my last coherent thought is that kissing Clark is an extraordinarily enjoyable experience.

Some time later, when we’re just holding each other, I hear Clark’s voice barely above a whisper. “Lois, are we really going to be okay when we leave this room?”

Clark’s embrace feels *very* comfortable right now. I don’t want to loosen my hug enough to have a face to face conversation. So, my reply is somewhat muffled as it’s delivered with the side of my face nestled comfortably against his chest. “Clark, as I’ve been trying to say. There is a complication. I had been thinking that I needed to work it out myself. But... well, after this morning, I think it might be better with your help.”

This next part has to be face to face. I pull back just enough to make eye contact.

“Clark, there was a reason for the way I was acting this morning. I... I need to work through some feelings and... well, whatever else we’re becoming, you’re also my best friend. But I can’t talk to you about this.”

His expression tells me how much he wants to help. “Lois, I desperately want our relationship to be at a place where we can talk to each other about anything... about everything!”

“You don’t understand. Clark, this is about... well, confusing feelings that involve... someone else.” I can’t believe I actually managed to say that!

For a second or two his gaze is steady. I can practically hear the gears turning as he’s thinking through what I said. Then there’s an almost imperceptible widening of his eyes. He knows who I’m talking about.

I find that I’m holding my breath to see how he’s going to react. I don’t have to wait very long as I feel myself being drawn into another of those *wonderful* hugs.

“Lois, I’m... I’m sure that we can talk through this. I promise that if you’ll let me listen... let me help... you won’t regret it.”

There’s a note of caring in his voice that leaves me feeling that this really might all work out. “Then I think we have some things to talk about.”

Clark doesn’t appear to be done yet. “Lois, there’s something that I need to talk about with you also. Can you come over to my apartment for dinner tonight? I’ll make dinner and we can spend the whole evening working on both of our complicated issues together.”

I don’t think he realizes how hard this will be. But the caring and supportive Clark that I have come to know and, well... love, seems to be back.

I decide to have just a little bit of fun. I try to inject a suspicious tone into my voice as I reply slowly. “Well Kent, two dates in two nights? I don’t know...”

Poor Clark. He’s so easy. His expression has jumped to one of defensive panic. “But Lo...”

I already have my hand over his mouth and am almost laughing. That wasn’t very nice but it’s been a *very* trying morning and a shot of humor was just what I needed. I make sure that he can see the huge smile on my face. “Clark, I’m just teasing. I’d love to come over for dinner tonight.”

The sense of release radiating from him is palatable. For this first time today he seems relaxed.

Clark pulls back just enough to make conversation easier. I

notice that as he pulls away, his hands slide down in search of my own. As my fingers intertwine with his, I feel a warmth wash through me. How can simply holding hands affect me so? The whole experience is so distracting that I almost miss it when he begins to speak. "I think it's time for the Lane and Kent reporting team to bring its attention back to Lucky Leon and his gadgets. Shall we get back to work, partner?"

I'm so glad we got through this morning, although I still fear that talk at his apartment tonight. Finally my reply is simple and straightforward. "Yes, partner. Let's get to it." But of course those simple and straightforward words are delivered while Clark and I are holding hands and gazing into each others eyes.

As we leave the conference room, I can't help but wonder what tonight will bring.

THE END