

Requiem for a Father

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Rated PG

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Summary: “And how are you dealing with the loss of your father?” Dr. Friskin asked, peering at Lois through her thick glasses.

First of all, I wrote this cathartic piece for Father’s Day (...of 2008... I’m a bit late in getting this here...). I really do not care for the holiday, for which I have my own (and possibly obvious, after reading this) reasons.

Thanks goes to LaraMoon, for her awesome Beta job, as usual, and to EditorJax, for making sure this wasn’t out of character. But mostly, thanks to GuineaPants. If not for her encouragement, I wouldn’t have even started this thing =P And some of her suggestions made this story better, in my opinion =D

“And how are you dealing with the loss of your father?” Dr. Friskin asked, peering at Lois through her thick glasses.

The question caught Lois off guard, and for a second she had to fight herself. “I’m doing fine,” she said dismissively. “It’s been about three years, so it hurts less.”

“Have you visited his grave? Like we’ve discussed?”

Lois tried not to clench her teeth at the question, although she had been expecting it. “No, I’ve been pretty busy at work. I haven’t really found the time to drive out there.”

“It would help with the healing process,” the psychiatrist said kindly.

Lois shrugged, wondering what the big deal was. “I’m *fine*,” she claimed once more. “I hardly ever even think about it.”

“Mm-hmm,” the doctor said, scribbling in her notebook, taking the hint to change the topic. “So how are you and your husband dealing with your adoption issues?”

Lois threw her hands up. This was going to be a long session.

The bullpen rushed with life, everyone busy with their work. Lois had been swamped at work, hardly able to talk to her parents on the phone. Normally, this wouldn’t have been an issue, but her father had been complaining about a pain in his abdomen. He had gone through tests, but they had all come back negative.

As Lois grabbed her coat to head out to meet a source, Jimmy poked his head out from the conference room. The look in his eyes as he told her she had a phone call turned her blood to ice, but she tried to ignore it as she took the phone from him.

The world disappeared as her mother spoke softly, so odd for such a vivacious woman. Her eyes burned as she tried not to revert to a six year-old girl, arguing that this couldn’t be true, that the doctors were wrong. Words like ‘cancer’ and ‘metastasized’ swirled through the handset, settling into her brain with harsh permanence. Finally, she hung up the phone, her hands shaking, as she sat there.

When Clark came back, half an hour later, he found her alone in the conference room, staring at the wall. Worried, he made his way toward the room, barely registering the fact that he rammed into Ralph’s shoulder, and quietly entered the room. Lois didn’t look up, or give any indication that she had heard him, as he came to kneel in front of her.

“Lois?” he asked as he cupped her cheek.

A soft, almost inaudible sound was his response as she seemed to collapse against him. The high-pitched keening was so heartbreaking that he could only describe it as the sound a soul made when it died, and he wanted to die right along with it.

Her father, for some reason, had loved *The X-Files*. It was so

unlike him to become infatuated with a show revolving around aliens and twisted family plots. Lois had watched a couple of episodes to see what had made him like it so much, and had found herself following along with it. At an attempt at some long over-due father/daughter bonding, they had even gone to see the movie when it came out in theaters.

One night, snuggled on the couch beside her husband, Lois flipped through the channels. A commercial caught her eye for some reason, and so her finger stilled over the channel button.

The next thing she knew, Mulder and Scully were chasing down little green men. She tried to watch, but there was an uncomfortable swelling in her chest that seemed to rise into her throat.

Clark seemed to sense her discomfort, and gently took the remote from her. Flicking off the power switch, he made a comment that it was enough television for the night.

She tried not to show him how relieved she was.

The hospital room had been the same as any other hospital room that she had been in before, save for the extra monitors. It should have been a happy time for all, what with the birth of her parents' first grandchild, but this normally joyous occasion felt somber and melancholy, at least to one of the visitors.

Lois watched her father rest wearily in the hospital chair, his tired eyes glowing with love down at the young infant in his arms. Such a small little thing, to bring such happiness into his life.

The child was not hers, but Lucy's. Her younger and unmarried sister. She wanted so desperately to feel nothing but joy on this occasion, but her mind just kept thinking how it should be her child in his arms. She was older, married, and yet she was incomplete.

Lois felt her heart break as she watched him, cursing both the illness that raged through his body and her own jealousy. They had all tried to hold onto hope that he would get better, each one clinging to it in a desperation that shook them all to the core, each

one knowing what they could not voice...

Sam Lane would not last until summer.

Lois excused herself for a moment, with the pretense of getting a cup of what passed for coffee. However, instead of turning right at the end of the hall, where the coffee machine beckoned for her, she turned left and went into the ladies' room. Her vision blurred as she stumbled towards the stall, and once she was safely inside, she sank down onto the toilet lid, burying her face in her hands, her shoulders shaking and her cries muffled by her palms.

She wanted to scream, yell, curse everything in the world. Her father, though he had not been the best father growing up, loved her and her sister dearly. And she loved him, with an intensity that startled her. She was his little girl, and he was, and always would be, her daddy.

She knew that he loved her and her sister equally, and that little boy even more, something over which she couldn't help but feel jealousy coursing through her veins.

And though she felt guilty for having these thoughts, she hated the fact that her father would never be able to hold one of her own children as he was able to with Lucy. She knew deep down that in the short time her father had left, Lucy would get to be the one to know him on a level that she, Lois, would never get the chance to.

Later, when the others would comment on her mood, especially her father, she would turn her eyes to the floor and blame her irritability on lack of sleep.

Father's Day, which had always seemed to be a ploy for mass commercialism in Lois's eyes, now held two very painful reminders for her. For one, this would be the fourth Father's Day since she and Clark found out that they could not have children. For another, this would be the third where she could not make an excuse to her father as to why she did not get him a card.

Last year, she had been so busy with work that she had been able to forget what day it was until almost midnight. This year

however, she had the day off while Clark had been called away to help with a submarine mishap.

So, alone on Father's Day, surrounded by reminders of what this day stood for, Lois did the one thing she did best:

Curled up on the couch, she popped in 'Lethal Weapon' and pretended that the day just didn't exist.

She tried to visit every weekend- of course she did. But inevitably, work would get in the way, or she just couldn't bring herself to go visit. Clark would always offer to go with her. Sometimes she accepted, but sometimes she did not.

Today, she had.

Her mother, having been a nurse in her early years, had decided to stay at home to care for her husband. She got very little sleep; saw more of what her father was going through. Lois marveled at the strength her mother had, wondering if she would ever be able to sit back and care for her own husband, knowing he was dying.

As Clark poked his young nephew in the tummy, making a silly face, she knew the answer. She just prayed it never came to it.

She soon found herself alone in the same room as her father. He looked so much worse now, had lost so much weight, that it terrified her. But she sat beside him anyway, not really sure what to do or say.

Everything, from when she was growing up, to when she was an adult, came trickling through her mind. She remembered the fights that they used to have about what she would do when she grew up, to her moving out at an early age. With all that she had put him through, had she ever done anything that he could say he was proud of her for?

"I've always been proud of you," he whispered softly, startling her. She hadn't realized that she had spoken out loud.

Biting her lower lip, she lowered her head until it rested on his hand.

Two weeks later, on a weekend when she was supposed to

visit, she got the call from her mother.

She cried so hard that Clark had to remind her to breathe.

She hadn't intended to come here, not today at least. She had planned on waiting for another time. An anniversary, or a birthday. Something.

But her feet apparently had other ideas as they carried her into the well-kept cemetery on that Wednesday afternoon, walking down a long winding path she had only traveled once, over three years ago.

She stopped in front of the well-tended grave, glaring at the bouquet of wilted flowers. Her father had hated flowers when he was alive. If he saw these now, he would throw a fit.

She choked on her own breath then as her eyes began to sting. Her knees gave out and she found herself staring at his name, etched in the cold and unforgiving marble. For a moment she traced her finger over the 'S', before her hand clenched tightly around the jagged edge of the cold stone.

"I hate you," she ground out, shocked at her own words. But now that they were out, she couldn't stop them. "*I hate you! Why* did you have to wait so long to get those damn tests done? Why couldn't you have just *held on* longer?" She sniffled loudly, angrily swiping at her eyes as her voice shifted to a softer, more childlike tone. "Why did you have to leave me?"

THE END