

Shaken Not Stirred

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Rated: PG13

Submitted: April 2009

Summary: High school sweethearts Lois Lane and Clark Kent find that the road to love isn't always smooth.

Thanks to Queenie, who you can blame for the idea. She BR'd about the first 1/2-2/3 or so but had to bow out.

Thanks, also, always to my fabulous betas — Alisha, Beth and Nancy. You ladies rock!

Of course, thanks also go to my GE, Classicalla.

This is sort of set present day-ish — something like that anyway. So, don't be surprised at a digital camera or anything. Smallville, in my mind, is where Neodesha, KS is so towns/streets/etc are from around there.

See end for links/notes for each chapter as well as links to pictures of 'Smallville' and the Kent Farm, etc.

Right. Disclaimer thing. Of course, I don't own Lois or Clark or any of the other recognizable characters or locations. If I did, I wouldn't be worried *at all* that I no longer have job... And since I don't have a job, suing me would be pointless...

Thanks!

Part 1

"Get out!" She stood with her hands on her hips and glared at him.

"Why?"

"Because I *said* so." Her brown eyes flashed at him.

He glared back. "No! You're *not* the queen of the sandbox."

"It's not a sandbox."

He crossed his arms in front of him. "It's a box and it has sand in it."

"It's my space ship and you're not invited."

"I don't want to go in your space ship. Only girls play space ships in a sand box," he informed her, a note of scorn in his voice.

She sighed. "Fine. You can stay. But if it's not a space ship, what is it?"

He thought for a minute. "It's a jungle. I have to get across it to save the princess. You can be the princess."

She glared at him some more. "I'm the princess, but I'm going to rescue *you*. Go sit on the other side. I'll be there in a minute."

"Why do you get to do the rescuing?"

"Why can't I? Because I'm a girl?"

He opened and closed his mouth, then sighed. "No. So, who can we rescue together?"

She thought for a minute before turning. "*Lana! Come here! We need you!*"

The blonde on the swing set used her foot to stop herself and then trotted over.

"Sit there," the other girl ordered. "We're going to rescue you."

Lana sat down and smiled up at the boy. "You're really going to rescue me?"

He shrugged. "I guess." He turned back to the brown-eyed girl. "Let's go."

They spent the next ten minutes climbing jungle gyms and traversing beneath the monkey bars. The one-minute warning whistle sounded and they headed back towards the sand box where Lana waited patiently.

"We rescued you!" they shouted together as they reached her.

"Does that mean you're going to kiss me, my prince?" Lana asked sweetly.

He wrinkled his nose. "No." Instead, he turned to the other girl and landed a kiss right on her surprised lips. "I *am* going to marry you someday, though."

The next whistle sounded and he ran towards the first grade line.

Lana stood with her hands on her hips. "Clark Kent is mine, Lois Lane. You leave him alone."

Lois glared back. "You can have him."

Another sharp blast of the whistle sounded and they both headed towards the kindergarten line and the rest of the day of school.

Jonathan tried not to smirk as Clark took his tie off and started again.

"Big night?"

"You know what tonight is." Clark rolled his eyes as he tried to get his tie to work right.

"Ah. Lois' birthday."

"Yep. She's sixteen, which means that we can date now."

He'd been waiting for this day for a long time. He'd known since she'd ordered him out of the sandbox that he was going to marry her. He'd told her so repeatedly, though less in recent years. He'd backed off and instead cajoled her into letting him be her first date — on her birthday. He just hoped she wasn't about to break his heart.

Jonathan sighed. "I do worry about you being so serious already."

"Dad, I just *knew*. When I met her, I knew. Jor-El said Kryptonians are like that."

"I know, but still. You haven't told her about all of that, but you're already planning on marrying her. What if she can't deal with that? With your differences? I think she'll be fine with it, eventually. That's not it, but I know what sixteen is like and we've talked about this. It wouldn't be fair of you to sleep with her — or anyone else — without telling them."

"Dad! I haven't even kissed her in ten years!" Clark was sure his face was bright red.

"I know, but I also know that you've been looking forward to this for a long time and I was sixteen once and I know how easy it is to get carried away. And, of course, we've talked about birth control."

"Dad!" Clark sighed. "I'm *not* going to have sex with Lois tonight!"

"Well, that's good to hear."

Clark could hear the amusement in his mom's voice. He turned to her as she walked in. "Will you please tell Dad to stop worrying? I'm not going to have sex with Lois tonight. It's our *first* date."

"Well, you look very handsome," Martha told him, needlessly straightening his tie.

"Thanks, Mom." He gave her a hug. "But I'm going to be late if I don't get moving." He gave her a kiss on the cheek. "I'll be back by midnight."

"What's Lois' curfew?" she asked.

"Midnight, but I'll have to have her home early if I'm going to be home on time."

"Well, why don't we make it twelve-thirty tonight then?" she said with a smile. "Wouldn't want you to have to cut your first

date short.”

“Thanks, Mom.” He gave her another kiss on the cheek. “Don’t wait up,” he hollered as he headed out the front door.

He bounded down the stairs to his truck and tried not to speed on his way to town. This was it.

This was the night he had the chance to win the heart of Lois Lane.

“Lois! Clark is here!”

Lois sighed and fussed with her hair one more time. “I’ll be right down, Mom,” she called back.

It had been nearly two years since he’d made her promise that her first date would be with him. He’d worn her down. It had taken two years to get her to agree to it, and, after two years of trying to cancel, it was finally here.

She sighed. It wasn’t going to get any better. She gave her clothes another once over. She’d spent hours deciding what to wear and then had changed four times anyway.

She grabbed her purse and headed down the stairs.

She tried not to let her astonishment show. Her heart actually skipped a beat when she saw him. He was wearing a long sleeved, black button down shirt that showed off his olive complexion perfectly. His tie was a splash of primary colors that almost warranted sunglasses. He was wearing blue jeans that she’d seen him wear before and knew that they fit him perfectly. Every girl at school knew that.

And she was the one he was going out with — the one he’d saved his first date for even though he was over six months older than her.

He was standing in the entryway, looking nervous. “Hey,” he said. On seeing her, a big smile lit up his face. “You look great.”

Her stomach flip-flopped at his grin and she smiled back. “Thanks. You look nice, too.”

“Have fun, you two,” Sam said, leaning against the railing. “Home by midnight,” he reminded her, giving her a kiss on the cheek as she reached the bottom of the stairs.

“I’ll have her back by then, Dr. Lane,” Clark promised.

“Wait!” Ellen hurried into the room. “Pictures.”

Lois rolled her eyes. “Mom!”

“It’s your first date, sweetie.” She motioned Lois towards Clark. “Go stand by him and at least pretend to smile.”

She sighed and went to stand by Clark, pasting a smile on her face. It wasn’t that she wasn’t looking forward to this — she was — but pictures were a bit much, and, besides, she didn’t want Clark to know that.

“Lo-is.” Her mom’s voice held a warning she knew better than to mess with.

She sighed again and smiled a genuine smile as Clark put his arm around her shoulders — at her mom’s direction, of course. Now if only she could get him to do it for real later...

“Okay,” Ellen said, checking the pictures on the screen.

“Clark, tell your mom I’ll email them to her.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Have fun,” her parents called together as they headed out the door.

“Sorry about that,” Lois told him as they walked down the steps. “Mom’s a little crazy.”

He laughed. “Mom told me to make sure we took a couple pictures. She’d really like us to stop by the house so she can take some. I think moms are just like that.”

She shrugged as he held open the passenger door of the truck. “I guess. Thanks,” she said as he shut it behind her.

“My pleasure,” she heard him say as he headed to his side of the truck. “So, do you want to stop by? I was thinking we could go to dinner in Parsons so it’s on the way, but only if you want to.”

She shrugged. “Do you want to?”

He grinned at her. “I kind of don’t want to share you tonight.”

Lois blushed slightly and ducked her head so her hair fell in front of her face. She didn’t want him to notice. “Okay.”

“Is Italian okay for dinner?” he asked, suddenly sounding nervous. “There’s a great little restaurant there.”

“Yeah. That’s fine. So, just dinner?” She tried to still her nervous hands by holding her purse in them.

He shrugged. “Well, probably not. I doubt they’re open until eleven-thirty.”

“So, where else? A movie?”

“We could,” he said slowly. “But we can’t really talk at a movie.”

“And we’re going to talk all night?”

He grinned. “Not *all* night. I have to have you home before midnight.”

She rolled her eyes. “We see each other all the time and we’re going to talk all evening?”

“It’s different tonight. We’re on a *date*.”

“I know that. How is it different?”

Clark shrugged. “It just is.”

They chatted idly about school and friends as they drove to Parsons.

Clark pulled into the parking lot of DiGiacinto’s Family Italian Restaurant. He leaned slightly towards her as he turned the truck off. “Don’t move.”

She rolled her eyes as he headed towards her side of the truck. “Gentleman,” she muttered as he opened the door.

“Hey, my dad raised me right,” he told her. “He opens doors and stuff for my mom all the time.”

“My dad does, too,” she admitted reluctantly. “For all three of us.”

He offered his arm. “Shall we?”

She rolled her eyes at him again, but tucked her hand in his elbow, her skin tingling from the contact.

Dinner was good and they lingered over chocolate cake for dessert.

“I think they’re going to kick us out,” Clark whispered conspiratorially as it neared ten.

She laughed. “I think so.” He’d already paid the bill, so they stood and headed towards the door. “Where to now?”

“The lake?” he asked after thinking for a second.

She raised an eyebrow at him. “What exactly do you think is going to happen?”

He shrugged. “We can sit in the back of the truck and star gaze. That’s it.” He grinned at her again. “I’m a gentleman, remember?”

She nodded reluctantly. She really didn’t think that Clark would try anything untoward, but there was that little voice in the back of her head that wasn’t sure any teenage boy should be trusted.

Of course, there was also no way she was going to tell him how much she was hoping that he was going to kiss her before the night was over.

Sure, she’d played hard to get, but she’d known since he kissed her on the playground that they would eventually end up together, but she didn’t want to him to know that. Not yet.

They drove towards Big Hill Lake and one of the fairly secluded parking lots.

Clark climbed into the bed of the truck first, spreading a blanket out over the bed liner. Lois sat and leaned against the cab, wiggling a bit to get comfortable. Clark sat close to her but not too close.

“Lois,” he said suddenly, “can you be completely honest with me?” His head rested against the window of the cab and he was staring at the sky.

“Sure,” she told him, a bit surprised.

It was a long moment before he spoke again and when he did,

Lois could hear apprehension in his voice. “Are you just here because I annoyed you into accepting two years ago?”

“What?”

“I mean it. I want to be here. I think there could really be something between us, but if you’re just here to humor me...” He sighed. “I could really fall for you and I need to know if you’re going to break my heart.”

She moved slightly towards him and rested her head on his shoulder. “I know I’ve given you a hard time about this, but I really have been looking forward to tonight for a long time. I don’t know if we’re going to be one of those childhood, high school sweetheart love stories or whatever, but I don’t want to break your heart. I’m willing to see if there’s something between us if you are.”

He moved and wrapped his arm around her. “Thank you.”

She smiled to herself; she hadn’t even had to pretend to be cold. She shifted again, trying to get comfortable. “But you’re going to have to find some way for us to be more comfortable back here if we’re going to star gaze very often.”

“I suppose I could get a back seat from the junk yard in Independence and stick it back here,” he said thoughtfully.

She pulled away from him, a look of disgust on her face. “Then this is over now.”

He laughed and turned to reach through the opening in the window. He dug around behind the seat and pulled out another blanket. “Try sitting on this.” He hesitated slightly. “You can lean on me if you want.”

She took the blanket from him and moved until she was sitting in front of him, leaning against his chest. Her heart was pounding in her chest as she settled in. This was her first date — their first date. Was this okay? Was this too fast for something like this? She trusted Clark.

Didn’t she?

He stretched his legs out and wrapped his arms around her. “Is this okay?”

Lois nodded. “It’s nice.”

“I think so, too.”

They sat like that, enjoying just being together, for a while.

“So, if we’re going to see if there’s something between us,” Lois finally said, “what does that mean?”

“It’s up to you,” he told her, moving his hands to cover hers. “If you want to go out on occasional dates... that’s fine with me, but if it was my choice, by the time I get you home tonight, you’d be my girlfriend. But I don’t want to push you. I’ll take this as slow as you want. I can’t explain how I’ve known since we met that we’d end up together, but I have. That doesn’t mean I want to rush things or push you for anything you’re not ready for.”

“You mean sex?” she asked in a rush, glad that she couldn’t actually see his face as she asked.

“Partly,” he said slowly.

“I know I’m not ready for that.”

“Me either,” Clark told her softly. “My parents always taught me that, um, well, *that* should be reserved for a couple in a serious relationship, not necessarily married, but committed and monogamous. They’ve always told me that they don’t think most kids are mature enough to really make that kind of decision in high school. And even if you did tell me tonight that you wanted to be my girlfriend and neither of us were planning on dating anyone else, it’s way too soon.”

She relaxed slightly in his arms.

“Does that really worry you? That I’d push you?”

Lois shrugged. “Isn’t that what most guys want?”

Clark chuckled. “Believe me, Lois, I’m not most guys. I won’t push you to... sleep together, ever, but...” He paused, as though sensing her uncertainty. “Can you believe that?”

She nodded. “I think so.”

“But you’re not sure?”

Lois sighed. “I want to, really I do but...” She paused for a long moment and Clark gave her time to decide to tell him whatever it was. Finally, she spoke again, her head leaning back on his chest as she stared at the sky. “My parents were high school sweethearts. Dad moved from Metropolis to this little town in upstate New Troy their junior year and they broke up. Mom dated this other guy — and by dated I mean they went out like four times total. This other guy had promised her on their first date that he’d never push her but a week later... On the second date, he did push her to sleep with him and she gave in. She and my dad hadn’t at that point so this other guy was her first. They went out a couple more times and they... well, you know, both of them. They broke up or she refused to go out with him anymore or whatever and then she found out she was pregnant. Before she even told him, she got in my grandpa’s car and drove to see my dad.”

She paused again. “He was still her best friend, even though they’d broken up. He offered to marry her and they were going to, but she had a miscarriage before they did. They did the long distance thing and Mom moved in with Dad’s family when they started college together. Dad promised her that he would never push her and eventually they agreed to wait until they got married. He proposed after their freshman year of college and they got married the next summer.” She sighed. “Anyway, they both fell in love with small town life and that’s how we ended up here, so I guess that’s good, but...”

“You’re afraid I might be like that guy?” Clark asked softly.

“Most of me knows you’re not, but there’s a part of me that’s afraid every guy is — or will be once he’s in a relationship of some kind.”

“Look at me.” They moved until he could look in her eyes. One hand cradled the side of her face, his fingers tangling in her hair. “I will *never* push you for... sex, ever. Or push you past whatever limits we decide to put on our physical relationship, once we have one. I think I’ve been falling in love with you for a decade now and I can wait until you’re ready — until we decide *we’re* ready. You’re worth it. *We’re* worth it.”

“You really mean that?”

“Yeah, I do.” He grinned suddenly. “But once we get married, all bets are off.”

Her stomach flipped over again as she smiled back. She’d known for a long time that Clark was the guy for her, even if she’d tried not to let him know it. It was nice to know that he was still thinking long-term too. Her heart could be broken as easily as his, and even though he’d proclaimed for years that he was going to marry her, she wasn’t sure when the last time he’d mentioned it was. “I’d hope so.”

“Would that put your mind at ease?”

“What?”

“If I promised you now that we’ll wait until our wedding night to, you know, be together?”

She looked down so that she wasn’t looking in his eyes any longer. “Can you really make that promise?”

“Yeah, I can,” he said softly. “I can’t promise that I won’t *wish* I hadn’t promised that from time to time, but I swear to you, we won’t... make love until our wedding night.”

Lois looked back into his eyes and could see his sincerity. She ducked her head slightly again. “I think I’d like to be your girlfriend,” she said shyly. She’d thought about it off and on for a long time and had decided that if he asked, she’d say yes — if she could bring herself to ask him about that; if he could reassure her. And he had.

“Are you sure?”

She nodded. “Yeah, I’m sure.”

“If you ever feel like I’m pushing you for something you’re not ready for, tell me. And if I keep pushing, kick me to the curb.”

“Don’t worry, Kent.” She moved until she was leaning against him again. “Can we keep the whole boyfriend/girlfriend thing between us for now?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, I want to be your girlfriend, but I’m not sure I’m ready to be fodder for the Smallville grapevine and I think a few more dates might be in order before we start telling everyone we’re exclusive.”

“I think that’s probably a good idea if we don’t want tongues wagging.” He glanced at his watch. “We better get going if I’m going to get you home on time.”

“Yeah.”

They climbed out of the back of the truck and Clark stuck the blankets back in the cab. He took her hand and pulled her towards him until he held both of her hands in his. “I’d really like to kiss you, but I don’t think I want to do that with your parents inside or Lucy peeking out from behind the curtains in her room.”

She nodded. “I don’t think that’s a good plan.”

He lowered his face to hers, his lips brushing against hers before they both came back for another long, sweet first real kiss.

A minute later, they both pulled back, slightly breathless.

“Wow,” they both whispered in unison.

They laughed lightly before Clark turned and held the door open for her. “Your chariot awaits.”

She groaned. “You’re so corny.”

He shut the door and leaned in the open window. “It’s one of the reasons why you’re going to love me.”

She laughed as he walked towards his side of the truck.

“We’ll see about that.”

The drive back to Smallville was a quiet one, but he held her hand the whole time. They pulled up in front of the house and he walked her to the door.

“I guess this is good night,” she said, looking at the ground and not at him even as he took her hands in his.

“I guess so.” He leaned down and whispered in her ear, “I’d like to kiss you again but I think someone’s watching.”

She nodded and he kissed her cheek instead.

“I’ll call you tomorrow?”

“I should be home all day. At least until it’s time to go to the football game.”

He grinned at her. “I guess I have a bit of extra incentive to play well then, don’t I? Gotta look good for my girl,” he added quietly.

She laughed. “Sounds good.”

“Want to get a bite to eat afterwards?”

“Sure.”

The door opened and Sam poked his head out. “Sorry to interrupt, kids, but it’s midnight.”

Lois blushed and ducked her head. “Da-ad.”

“It’s okay. I’ll talk to you tomorrow?”

She nodded. “Okay.”

He gave her another quick kiss on the cheek. “Happy birthday.”

“Thanks.” Lois went inside but turned to watch Clark for a minute as he went back to the truck.

“Did you have a good time, Princess?” Sam asked, his arm going around her shoulder.

She sighed. “Daddy, I had a super time.”

He laughed. “I’m glad.”

“Um, he asked if we can go out after the game tomorrow. Is that okay?”

“Of course. Clark’s a good kid.” He turned and looked at her. “If he ever hurts you...”

Lois laughed. “I don’t think Clark has any intention of hurting me.”

They headed up the stairs. “Oh, I doubt he’d mean to, but if he does he has me to answer to.”

She laughed again. “I know, Daddy. I know.”

Part 2

“How was your date, sweetie?” Martha watched Clark as he came into the kitchen.

He yawned. “It was good.”

“Did you kiss her?”

“Mo-om!” Clark cracked a couple eggs into a skillet and fried them with his eyes.

“You did,” she said, a bit smugly, as she took a sip of her coffee.

Clark rolled his eyes. “Yeah, I kissed her.”

“And?”

“And I’m more convinced than ever that she’s the one for me. And she thinks there could be something between us, too.”

Martha breathed a sigh of relief. “I’m glad.”

“Me, too,” Clark admitted. “I finally asked her if she just went out with me last night because I pestered her into it, and she said that’d she’d been looking forward to it, too.”

“So, is she your girlfriend yet?” His mom tried to hide her smile behind her cup of coffee.

He sighed. “Technically, yes. But we decided we weren’t going to tell anyone yet — not if we don’t want tongues wagging.”

“Good point. Well, if she’s your girlfriend, you need to bring her home for dinner next weekend.”

“I’ll talk to her.” He zipped around the kitchen and put his dishes away. “I promised Dad I’d help him today before the game.” He gave her a kiss on the cheek. “Love ya, Mom.”

“Love you, too, sweetie.”

“Why are we here an hour early?” Abby asked Lois.

“So you can watch Pete practice,” Lois told her best friend as they walked up the stairs to the very top corner of the stands.

“I *never* come early to watch Pete practice,” Abby said with a roll of her eyes. “I think it’s because you want to watch Clark.”

Lois turned eight shades of red and shrugged. “Maybe, but that’s not the official reason. The official reason is so you can watch Pete.”

“And you’re going to give me all the details of your date last night.” Abby sat in the corner of the top row. “Tell me.”

Lois sat next to Abby and leaned against the chain link fence. “Clark picked me up at home. We went to dinner in Parsons and then to Big Hill Lake where we sat in the back of his truck and star-gazed for a while — and that’s *all* we did. Then he brought me home.”

“Did he kiss you?” her friend prompted.

Lois blushed again.

“He did!”

“Yeah, he did.”

“And?”

“It was very nice.” Lois watched as the team started their warm-ups. “We’re going out to get something to eat after the game.”

“Did he ask you to be his girlfriend? Everyone knows he’s been in love with you since he was in first grade.”

Lois nodded. “But you can’t tell *anyone*. We decided not to tell anyone yet because we’ve only been on one date.”

Abby grinned. “I won’t tell, but you know Joe’s going to ask you out soon. He’s been waiting for you to turn sixteen, too.”

“Well, then I’ll have to tell him no,” she said with a shrug.

Clark chose that moment to look up at them. He grinned at Lois and she smiled back, waving slightly as he turned back to practice.

“Well, you’ve got everyone talking now,” Abby said practically. “It’ll be all around school by Monday that you two are a thing. Lana’s going to be *thrilled*.”

"I don't care what Lana thinks as long as she keeps her hands off Clark," Lois said, surprising even herself with her vehemence. "Really?" Abby asked with a raised brow.

Lois shrugged and tried to back down a bit. "Well, you know... She's been after Clark since we were kids."

They watched as the cheerleaders went out onto the track and the blonde in question sidled up to Clark as he got a drink off the table.

"I think you've got your work cut out for you keeping her away from him."

Lois sighed. "Probably."

"But Lana's been sixteen for months and has done her best to get him to go out with her. If he hasn't yet, I don't think you have anything to worry about."

Lois nodded thoughtfully. "I think you're right. I don't think I have anything to worry about," she answered quietly as she watched Clark walk away from Lana.

"He's only had eyes for you since we were little," Abby said with a sigh. "Believe me, there's lots of girls who wish he didn't."

"You included?" Lois asked with a smirk.

Abby shrugged. "He wasn't your boyfriend yet. And he's hot."

Lois laughed and bumped her friend with her shoulder. "I'm just giving you a hard time. I know you had a crush on him last year. We talked about it *all* the time."

Abby groaned. "I remember. I was so jealous of you."

"Me? Why?"

"Because even though Clark's been allowed to date for over six months, he hasn't because he's been waiting for you. No one else even had a chance."

The stands were starting to fill up and their conversation turned to other topics.

Clark came out of the locker room talking to Pete.

A grin lit up his face as he saw Lois waiting with Abby.

"Hey," he said brightly. "You ready?"

Lois nodded and pushed away from the building where she'd been leaning. "Yeah. See you later, Abs."

Pete gave Abby a quick kiss.

"Bye, Lois," Abby said with a smirk. "Bye, Clark. Have fun."

"See you guys later," Clark called. "Where do you want to go?"

Lois shrugged. "Wherever you want. I don't have to be home till twelve."

"Well, Mom and Dad extended my curfew last night since it was our first date, but I have to be home by twelve tonight, too, so I'll have to have you home earlier than that." He tossed his gym bag in the back of the truck. "Do you want to hit Casey's Pizza or go somewhere else?"

"Casey's is fine."

He held her door open for her. "You realize that means people will be talking."

"And since half of the town just saw me get in your truck, they'll be talking more if we don't go," Lois pointed out.

"True."

He put the truck in gear then took her hand as he drove towards the high school hang out.

They found a table and Pete and Abby showed up a few minutes later and joined them. They ordered their pizza and Clark's arm found its way along the bench behind Lois.

The four of them talked and relived parts of the game before heading to the parking lot. They talked a little while longer until Pete looked at his watch. "I gotta get you home, Abs." They said their good-byes and went their separate ways.

"We have a few minutes," Clark said as he turned the truck on. "It doesn't take as long to get you home and then to get me home from your house as it does for Pete and Abby."

Lois shrugged. "Whatever. It's not like we have very long."

"Well, no," he admitted. "But I do think I'd like to go somewhere where no one else is for a few minutes so I can kiss you before we get back to your house." He grinned at her. "If that's okay with you, of course."

Lois nodded. "I'd like that."

He thought for a minute. "I know just the place. I thought about kissing you again last night, you know," he told her as they drove.

"Really?"

He nodded. "I would have if your dad hadn't come out."

"I think I'm going to smack him."

"You would have wanted me to?" Clark asked softly, his thumb rubbing over the back of her hand.

She leaned her head against the window so she could see him better. "I can't think of any reason why I wouldn't want you to kiss me anytime. Except maybe *right* in front of my parents or on the fifty-yard line at halftime or something."

He grinned and her stomach flipped again. He was going to have to stop doing that. "I'll remember that," he told her as they pulled into a deserted parking lot.

"You've got to be kidding," Lois said with a roll of her eyes.

"My parents' office?"

Clark grinned. "They're not here."

"Still."

He laughed. "I'll make a note of that. Avoid your dad's office when looking for a place to go so I can kiss you. Next time, we'll go behind the Dairy Freeze."

"I hope we won't have to keep finding places to go," Lois said shyly. "I know we said we were going to keep it quiet, but I think that plan's out the window."

Clark got out of the truck and went around to open her door. "Come here." She got out and he pulled her into a long hug as he leaned against the truck. "I think you're right about half the town knowing by now. Are you okay with that?"

She rested her head against his chest. "Yeah, I guess. They'd know sooner or later and maybe Lana'll back off if she knows we're a couple."

He sighed. "Somehow I doubt it. I don't know how many different ways I've tried to tell her I'm not interested, but she just doesn't get it."

Lois moved back to look at him. "Well, she has me to deal with now."

"I think I like the sound of that."

"You better hurry up and kiss me," Lois said suddenly. "We don't have all night, you know."

He grinned. "I guess I better then."

He lowered his head towards hers and kissed her softly. She kissed him back before they both pulled back, slightly out of breath again.

"I think I'd say 'wow' again, but that seems kind of silly," Clark told her, brushing the hair off her face with one hand. "I hope I get to kiss you a lot and I have this feeling that it's going to be 'wow' every time."

She smiled at him. "I hope so."

He kissed her again. "I don't think I'll ever get tired of doing that."

"I hope not." She rested her head against his chest again. "It's probably time to get home, isn't it?"

"Yeah."

She moved back and he opened her door again.

"Listen," he said, holding her hand as he drove towards her house. "Mom wants you to come over for dinner sometime soon, like next Saturday. She said that since you're my girlfriend, she wants to get to know you better." He grinned. "She already likes you, but you know that."

"I didn't think we were telling anyone."

Clark shrugged. “She’s Mom. She knows things.”

“Right.”

They pulled into the driveway and Clark walked her to the door. He kissed her on the cheek again. “I’ll call you tomorrow.”

“I should be here all day.”

“Bye.”

“Bye.”

Lois shut her locker as Clark leaned on the one next to hers.

“Good morning,” he said quietly.

“Good morning. Don’t tell me, you’re going to do something all chivalrous like offer to carry my books?”

He shrugged. “I could, but I think you’d smack me.”

Lois laughed. “Probably.”

“Sorry I didn’t call you yesterday. I was going to but Dad and I ended up working in one of the fields most of the day. We don’t usually do farm work on Sundays but since it’s supposed to rain all week... By the time I had a chance, it was getting late. I’d hate for you to think I was avoiding you or something.”

Lois shrugged. She’d wondered and she’d been a bit hurt as the day went on and the phone didn’t ring, but after their dates, she figured it had been something like that. “No problem.”

They stood there for a minute, leaning against the lockers.

“So, how does this work?” Lois asked suddenly. “If it’s not a secret or whatever, how does this work?”

Clark shrugged. “However we want it to, I guess.”

“Holding hands? Kissing?”

He reached out and took her hand. “Holding hands works, but I think I’d rather keep kissing to when it’s just the two of us for now.”

She nodded.

“So, will you eat lunch with me today?” he asked with a smile.

Lois rolled her eyes. “Clark, we eat lunch together every day.”

“Well, then, will you be my date for homecoming?”

“You mean Lana hasn’t already roped you into it?”

It was Clark’s turn to roll his eyes. “No. You know better than that.”

“Still, it’s good to hear.”

He let go of her hand and rested his on her shoulder, squeezing gently. “You have nothing to worry about from Lana or anyone else for that matter.”

The bell rang just then and they headed for their first class, hand in hand.

Lois sat under one of the trees outside, with her English book open as she munched on her ham and cheese sandwich.

“I thought you were having lunch with me, not your English book,” Clark said as he sat down next to her.

“I don’t have a study hall like everyone else. I always study during lunch. You know that.” Lois bit her bottom lip and didn’t look at him as she waited for his response. It was one thing for them to eat together and for her to study when they were just friends, but now that she was his girlfriend... Would he feel differently?

“Hey,” he said bumping her shoulder with his. “I’m just giving you a hard time. I know you need to study. Making it through high school in three years isn’t easy.”

“Well, I’ve worked hard to get to graduate next year instead of the year after and I don’t want to blow it.”

“Hey, look at me.”

Lois looked up at him, still biting her bottom lip. He put his hand on her chin and tugged on her lip until she wasn’t biting it anymore.

“None of that. I know how hard you’re working to graduate. We’ll eat lunch like we always do. You studying, me giving you a

hard time and helping when I can, only I’ll sit a little closer to you.” He looked at her for a long minute. “I’d like to kiss you,” he whispered.

She shook her head. “Not here.”

“I know.”

She sighed and leaned her head against the tree. “I guess I’m just trying to figure out how this is gonna work and I didn’t get my homework finished this weekend.”

“Why not?” he asked, taking a big bite of his own sandwich.

She shrugged. “Went out Friday night. Hung out with the family most of Saturday. Football game Saturday night, then pizza. And yesterday...” She hesitated. “I just couldn’t concentrate.”

“Why not?”

Lois hesitated again. “Just couldn’t.”

Clark laughed. “It’s a good thing I had to do manual labor yesterday and didn’t have much homework this weekend. I wouldn’t have been able to concentrate either.”

She smiled. “That’s good to know.”

“Read.” He nodded towards her book as he took another bite of his sandwich.

The rest of lunch passed quickly and they headed to their next class.

“Do you think Mrs. Sanderson is going to actually assign the roles for ‘Our Town’ today?” Lois asked as they headed into the auditorium.

Clark shrugged. “She’s been promising to for a week.”

Lois tossed her backpack in one of the seats and sat next to it. Clark sat next to her and rested his arm on the back of her chair, propping his foot up on the top of the chair in front of him.

The rest of the class wandered in before the bell rang, including Lana who sat in the row behind them.

“Okay, class,” Mrs. Sanderson called as she sat on the stool in front of the auditorium. “This is the day we’ve been working towards for the last couple weeks. When I call your name come on up and get your script.”

She pulled the first script off. “Darren, you have the part of Joe Stoddard.” Darren headed towards the front of the room to get his script. “Adam, Sam Craig. Pete, Constable Warren.” She continued up the list of characters until only three characters and three students remained. “Clark, George Gibbs.”

Lois patted his leg lightly as he stood up to go get his script. She held her breath. She really wanted the role of the Stage Manager, but she had no desire to see Clark kissing Lana, so Emily would be good, too.

“Lana, Emily Webb.”

Lois closed her eyes as Lana headed to get her script.

“And, for the lead role of the Stage Manager, our very own Lois Lane.”

There was scattered applause and a whistle she was sure came from Pete. She passed Lana as she headed towards Mrs. Sanderson.

When she turned around, she noticed that Lana had taken her seat and was talking to Clark in whispers.

She sighed and sat on the other end of the row in front of them next to Abby and Pete.

“What are you doing?” Abby whispered.

Lois shrugged. “She took my seat. I don’t want to make a scene.” She slumped in the chair. “I hate drama.”

Pete snorted and Abby covered her mouth to keep from doing the same. “Then why are you here?” Pete asked her.

Lois glared at him. “You know what I mean.”

“So, go,” Abby whispered. “She’s the one who’s wrong and trying to horn in on your boyfriend.”

“We’re going to start rehearsals in just a minute anyway,” Lois pointed out.

“Okay, everyone has their script,” Mrs. Sanderson said,

almost as though she had heard what Lois had said. “Let’s get started.”

Clark watched as Lois walked towards the front of the auditorium. He was proud of her for getting the part of the Stage Manager. It was the part she’d wanted and she’d do a great job, but he was dreading playing the romantic lead with Lana.

As though on cue, Lana sat next to him.

“Isn’t this great, Clark?” she whispered. “You’ll make a great George.”

“Thanks, Lana.” He sighed inwardly. She was going to want to rehearse outside of class and she wouldn’t want Lois around to work with them. “But, do you mind? That’s Lois’ seat.”

Lana shrugged. “We’re going to start rehearsal in just a minute anyway.” She nodded towards the row in front of them. “Besides, she’s talking to Abby and Pete. So, when do you want to get together to rehearse?”

Clark stifled a groan as Mrs. Sanderson called everyone to order. “Today we’re just going to read through the first part of Act I. On stage, we need the Stage Manager, George, Emily, Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Gibbs, Dr. Gibbs, Rebecca, Wally, Joe and Howie. Everyone else, pay attention in case we need to do some character shuffling when the time comes — if someone is sick or something.”

Abby, who was playing Mrs. Webb, Lois, Clark, Lana and the others headed towards the stage.

“Can’t you ground her or something?” Lois whispered as they walked up the steps. “You’re her mom after all.”

Abby rolled her eyes. “Good luck with that.”

Lois sighed as she sat in the middle chair with the ‘Stage Manager’ label on it. Clark was on one side of her and Lana on the other.

She sighed again. This was going to be a long play.

Part 3

“Lois! Wait up!” Clark jogged towards her after school.

“Don’t you have practice?” she asked as he caught up. She had her piñata from art class held awkwardly in both arms.

“Nope,” he grinned. “Coach cancelled it.” He walked backwards in front of her, his arms spread wide. “I am all yours for the afternoon. My folks aren’t expecting me home for a couple hours. You?”

She shrugged. “Going home to get started on my homework and make sure Lucy does hers.”

“Can I come over?”

Lois hesitated. “I don’t know. I’ve never had that conversation with my parents.”

He moved to walk beside her. “You mean having your boyfriend over after school?”

She nodded then shrugged. “Come on. They like you and I’m supposed to call when I get there anyway so I’ll tell them then. Besides, it’s not like Lucy won’t be an annoying chaperone. And they don’t know that you’re my boyfriend. Just that we’ve gone out a couple times.”

“Clark!”

They stopped and turned, sighing in unison as they saw Lana walking towards them.

“What’s up?” Clark asked as she neared.

“Can I talk to you for a minute?”

He shrugged, but didn’t move. “Sure.”

Her eyes flitted towards Lois. “Privately?”

“You can say whatever it is in front of Lois,” he told her.

“Listen, we’ve got the whole George and Emily thing going.” She hooked her thumbs in the straps of her backpack. “What if we went to homecoming together, too?”

He glanced at Lois. “Um, actually, Lois and I are going together.”

Lana raised an eyebrow. “Really?”

He shot Lois a puzzled look. “Yeah, really.”

“Well,” she shrugged, “if it falls through, let me know. I’ll be your backup.” She turned and sauntered off.

“He doesn’t need a backup,” Lois called after her. She turned to Clark. “What’s she thinking?”

Clark sighed and reached for the piñata. “That I didn’t really mean it when I told her I wasn’t interested the first eighty-seven times.”

They walked towards her house, across the street from the school.

“You know you don’t have anything to worry about, right?” he asked as she unlocked the front door.

“About what?” she asked, pulling her key out of the lock.

“Lana.” He set the piñata carefully on the floor near the door. “I have absolutely *no* interest in *ever* dating her.”

“Yeah, I know. I think.” She set her backpack on the couch. “But anytime you want to remind me of that, you’re welcome to.”

He set his backpack next to hers before pulling her into his arms. “You have *nothing* to worry about.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck, her fingers playing with the hair at the base of his neck. “It’s nice to hear.”

“How long before your sister gets home?”

Lois looked at her watch. “A few minutes. Depends on how long she talks after school.”

“Good, because I’ve wanted to do this all day.”

With that he kissed her.

“Hi, Mrs. Kent.” Lois set her purse down on the table in the entryway.

“Oh, nonsense. Mrs. Kent is my mother-in-law. I’m Martha.” She gave Lois a hug. “You look so pretty.” She looked at Clark. “It’s okay if I tell her that, isn’t it?”

Clark shrugged as he shut the door behind them. “Ask her.”

“Thanks, Martha,” Lois said. “Thank you for having me.”

“Well, you’re Clark’s girlfriend now,” she said leading them towards the kitchen. “And we’ve met, but we don’t really know you yet. Clark’s told us a lot about you over the years, but we want to get to know you for ourselves.”

“Mo-om,” Clark whined. “You didn’t have to tell her that.”

“Oh, honey, at some point, I’ll get out the baby Clarkie photo albums,” Martha told him.

“Mo-om!”

Lois giggled slightly. “I look forward to that Martha.”

“Tell your mom I got her email and thank her for the pictures of the two of you.”

“I will.”

Martha motioned to the table. “Have a seat. Dinner’s almost ready.”

“Can I help?” Lois asked tentatively.

“Oh, no. It’s almost ready.” Martha pulled a pan out of the oven. “Clark said you like Mexican so we’re having Mexican chicken. I hope that’s okay.”

“It’s fine.”

Clark flipped the seat next to her around and straddled it, his chin resting on his hands on the back.

“Clark.” Martha’s voice held a warning in it.

He rolled his eyes. “She hates it when I do this.” He popped a chip in his mouth.

Lois watched him carefully out of the corner of her eye. He was different here. Not bad different, just different. More relaxed. At home. Comfortable.

Jonathan came in just then and the conversation turned to a variety of other topics as they ate dinner.

They played a couple games of Outburst before Martha and Jonathan excused themselves.

“Want to go for a walk?” Clark asked as his parents headed upstairs.

Lois shrugged. “Sure. Show me the farm, Farmboy.”

Clark laughed. “It’s too dark to see much. You’ll have to come back when it’s light out.”

“You think they’ll have me back?”

He took her hand, linking his fingers with hers as they went down the stairs off the porch. “Well, I’m having you back at some point. And they loved you. Promise.”

“You think?”

“I know.” He stopped. “What do you want to see?”

“Just walk?”

“Sure. Are you cold?”

“No, I’m fine.” She mentally kicked herself. She should have said she was. Holding hands was nice, but maybe he would have put his arm around her again.

“We need to have a spot,” Clark said suddenly, stopping in the middle of the gravel road.

“A spot?”

“Yeah. A spot. Couples have songs and movies and all that. We need a spot.”

“O-kay...” Lois looked at him skeptically.

“Yeah, a place that’s ours. Where we go.”

“Like where?”

“Well,” he said thoughtfully. “There’s a couple of nice clearings in the trees, but I don’t think we’d want one of those to be our spot. If it’s cold or rainy or something...”

“Right. So, where do you suggest?” Having said she was warm, Lois was loathe to realize that she was starting to shiver just a bit.

“Well, the most popular place on a farm,” he told her with a grin, “is the hayloft.”

She raised a brow at him. “The hayloft?”

“Yep.”

“Okay. Show me and then I’ll decide.”

He put his arm around her as they walked towards the barn. She put her arm around his waist and rested her head on his shoulder.

A few minutes later, he followed her up the ladder to the hayloft.

She stood and looked around. “So, this is a hayloft?”

Clark pulled a blanket out of the cabinet and spread it on the floor. “Yep.” He opened the big outer doors in front of them so they could see the stars as they talked. “There.” He sat close to her on the blanket. “How’s this?”

“Nice.”

“So, this could be our spot?”

“Sure.”

“Good.” He leaned over and kissed her lightly. “So, it’s our one week anniversary. Well,” he amended, “yesterday was, but we had a football game last night.”

She nodded. “Yeah. So?”

“I got you something.”

She looked at him in surprise. “Really? For one week?”

He nodded. “Yep.”

“Well, gimme!” she said excitedly.

He laughed. “It’s not all that great.” He pulled something out of his pocket. “You don’t seem like the class ring, letterman jacket type — and if I’m wrong, let me know — but I wanted to give you something to show that we’re together.” He held it out. “If you don’t like it, or don’t want it, that’s fine. It doesn’t really matter if there’s some *thing* that says you’re my girlfriend. It’s enough to know that you are, so...”

She sighed and held out her hand. “Gimme.”

He gave it to her. “It’s from my letterman jacket.”

She looked at the small, gold ‘CK’ pin.

“And I don’t really know what you’d do with it, but I

couldn’t come up with something else that it didn’t seem too soon for.”

“It’s great, Clark. Really.” She thought for a minute. “I could put it on my backpack until it’s cold enough to wear my coat all the time or something.” She sighed. “That doesn’t seem right, though. I’ll figure something out.” She grinned suddenly. “I’ll make sure I wear it in the play, though.”

He laughed. “I think that’s a great idea.”

She leaned over and kissed him lightly. “Thank you. I didn’t get you anything. I didn’t know we were celebrating our one week anniversary.”

Clark shrugged. “Last week seemed too soon to give you something. It was our first date after all.”

Lois rolled her eyes at him. “We’ve known each other for ten years. You kissed me and told me you were going to marry me ten minutes after we met.”

“I was smitten.”

“Why?” she asked suddenly. “Why me?”

He leaned on his elbow and took her hands in his. “I can’t explain it. I just knew.”

She looked at their joined hands. “Do you still feel that way?”

“Now more than ever,” he told her quietly. “I don’t know how to explain it, but we feel *right*, you and me.” He sighed. “I’m scaring you, aren’t I? I don’t want to, but I know that I want to marry you someday.”

She shook her head. “No, you’re not *scaring* me. I just wonder *why*, that’s all.”

“Why do my mom and dad love each other? Or your parents? How did they know they were right for each other? They just did. Your parents have been together since high school, mine have been together almost twenty years. Who knows *why*, it just is.”

He leaned over and kissed her again. “But now I’ve got to get you home or your dad’ll have my hide.”

“Clark!”

He sighed and turned. “Hey, Lana. What’s up?”

“You did well in geometry last year, didn’t you?” she asked, catching up with him.

Clark shrugged. “I guess. Why?”

“I could really use some help.”

“Did you talk to Mr. Baldwin?”

“I don’t want to bother him. I was hoping you might help me.”

He tried desperately not to roll his eyes. “I guess.”

She smiled brilliantly at him and, if he didn’t know better, batted her eyelashes at him as well. “Thanks so much. When?”

He sighed. “Now?”

“That’s great!”

He turned and started walking the other way.

“Where’re you going?”

“To study,” he called over his shoulder.

She hurried to catch up with him. “Where?”

“Lois’ house.”

She stopped in her tracks. “What? Why?”

He stopped and turned to look at her. “Because that’s where I’m going to study and if you want me to help you, that’s where I’m going to be. Is that a problem?”

She sighed and shook her head. “No, not really. But with... Lois and her little sister there, are you really going to be able to help me?”

“Sure. If you want me to.” He turned and started walking towards Lois’ house. “She just got her wisdom teeth out and I’m taking her work to her, so if you want help...”

She followed him and they waited at the sidewalk for a break in the post-school traffic before crossing the street.

He knocked as he opened the door. “Lois?”

“Hey,” Lois said. She looked up from her spot on the couch and was surprised by what she saw. “Lana. What’s up?”

“She needs some help with geometry,” Clark told her, setting his backpack on the floor next to her before he kissed her lightly. “Sorry,” he whispered.

Lois shrugged. “As long as you don’t marry her,” she whispered back, confident that Lana was far enough away that she wouldn’t hear.

He laughed. “Don’t worry.” He kissed her again. “How’re you feeling?” he asked, heading towards the kitchen.

Lois leaned her head back against the top of the couch. “My jaw still hurts and I slept half the day. The all Jello diet is getting old.”

“I bet.” He motioned towards the couch. “Have a seat, Lana. You want something to drink?”

“No, thank you.” She sat awkwardly on the edge of the chair.

“How about you, sugarplum? You want something?”

Lois sighed. “A cheeseburger. And I’m not a sugarplum.”

Clark laughed. “A couple more days and I know. Thought I’d try it out. Sugarlips didn’t work...”

“No, it didn’t. And neither did babe or snickerdoodle or sweetie or cuddle bug or any of the dozen other names you’ve tried.”

“I know, so I’ll keep trying until I come up with something good.” He took a long swig of his soda. “Hey, your stuff is in my backpack.”

Lois unzipped it and started pulling out papers. “I’d say thanks, but I really don’t want to do homework.”

“Are you going to be ready for the play?” Lana asked suddenly.

“It’s not for three weeks,” Lois reminded her. “I’ll be fine.”

The door banged open. “Lois! Guess what?” Lucy bounded into the house. “Hey, Clark.”

“Hey, Luce.” He grabbed another soda out of the fridge and handed it to her.

“Hey, Lana,” Lucy said, popping open the can. “So, Lois, guess what?”

Lois sighed. “What?”

“Daddy came to school today for lunch and he said we get to go to Metropolis for Christmas to see Grandma and Grandpa. How cool is that?”

Lois tried not to let her true feelings show as she glanced at Clark. She could see the same thing on his face. “That’s great, Luce.”

It was. She loved going to see her grandparents, but at Christmas? She and Clark had been looking forward to spending most of Christmas vacation together.

Clark sat next to her and put an arm around her shoulders. He pulled her to him, kissing the side of her head as she leaned against him. “It’s okay,” he whispered. “Sugarbug.”

She groaned. “No. No sugarbug.” She sighed. “Okay, Luce. Homework time.” She pulled one of the folders towards her and took out the top piece of paper. “Twenty short essay questions on ‘Huck Finn’? That’s going to take forever.”

Clark squeezed her shoulders gently before he leaned forward, removing his arm from around her. “It’s not due until after Christmas so you have plenty of time.”

Lois sighed again. If she was going to Metropolis, she’d have plenty of time to get it done over break.

She picked up her copy of Huckleberry Finn and shifted slightly. “Would you mind moving down a bit?”

Clark set his English book on the table and moved to the end of the couch. “How’s that?”

“Perfect.” She took one of the throw pillows and positioned it behind her as she stretched her legs towards him, propping her feet up on one of his legs. “Thanks.”

“My pleasure, schmoopsy poo.”

Lois glared at him as Lucy groaned. “Don’t you two ever stop?”

Clark grinned and Lana just looked uncomfortable as he pulled her open geometry book towards him. “Nope.”

“Think she got the hint?” Lois asked as she sat next to Clark on the porch swing. She curled up under a blanket as he gently propelled them back and forth with one foot.

Clark shrugged. “Who knows with Lana. She offered to be my back up again the other day. She tried to play it off as a joke but...”

“Homecoming was almost two months ago. Why do you need a back up?” Irritation seeped into Lois’ voice.

“No, my marriage back up. You know, the whole ‘if we’re not married by the time we’re nineteen’ thing.”

“Nineteen?”

Clark nodded against her head. “Yep. She said nineteen. Knowing Lana, I think she was at least half serious, but it kind of went with the conversation with Abby and Pete so...”

“What did you say?”

“That I didn’t need a back up,” he told her softly.

“Good answer.” She twisted so she could see him and turned in her seat so one of her legs was tucked underneath her and the other hung over one of his. She pulled the blanket around her, and he helped her reposition it so it covered both of them, his hand coming to rest on her knee. “I think I’ve fallen in love with you,” she said quietly, earnestly, as she looked into his eyes. “I know I have.”

His other hand played with the hair at her temple. “That’s good,” he told her, his tone matching hers. “Because I fall in love with you a little more every day. I know we haven’t officially said it yet, but I love you, Lois Lane.”

She smiled back at him. “I love you, Clark Kent.”

He kissed her softly before she settled her head back against his shoulder, his arms wrapping around her. “You know I’m going to ask you to marry me someday.”

“Yep. And no waiting until we’re thirty-five nonsense either.”

Clark snorted. “Thirty-five? Sweetie, I doubt we’ll be twenty before I ask.”

She wrinkled her nose. “Sweetie? Clark, that’s pathetic.”

“Honey?”

“No.”

“Sweetheart? Darling?”

“I am not in a Disney movie about a cocker spaniel. My name is not Darling,” Lois informed him, softening her words with a kiss.

He grinned suddenly. “My little tornado?”

She groaned. “We’re disgusting.”

“You love it.”

“I love you.” She kissed him again, before settling back in next to him.

They stayed like that for a long moment before Clark spoke again. “So, what’ll you say?”

“To what?”

“If I ask you to marry me before we’re twenty.”

“As long as we’re at the same school, I’d probably say yes. If we’re at different schools halfway across the country...”

“Well, yeah, but probably? Only probably?”

Lois sighed. “I love you. I know we just said it for the first time, but I think I’ve known it forever. And I’m going to marry you. But if you propose to me the week after graduation, will I be ready for that? Will you? Will we? That’s still so young. I *am* going to marry you, but will that be the right time?” She shrugged against him. “I don’t know. I hope we’ve talked enough before you actually do ask that we’ll both know it’s the right time.”

“I do, too, because I don’t think I could take the rejection.”

“I won’t reject you. Not for any reason. Unless maybe you’re hiding some big secret from me and you spring it on me the night before the wedding. Then maybe.”

Clark was silent for a long moment. “What if I sprung some big secret on you after I proposed but long before the wedding and you thought it was a kinda cool secret?”

“What kinds of secrets do you have, Clark Kent? You didn’t make Eagle Scout?”

He chuckled. “No, nothing like that. Just curious. In the abstract.”

She shrugged. “As long as you’re not secretly married to Lana, I think we’ll be good.”

Part 4

“I can’t believe I’m not going to see you for two weeks.” Clark sighed and held her a little tighter to himself.

Lois shifted on the quilt in the hayloft, nestling in closer beside him. “I know.”

“We won’t get to see each other for Christmas or New Year’s.”

“Maybe next year...” Lois sighed. “No. Somehow I don’t think we’ll get to spend Christmas together until after we get married.”

“Probably not.”

They lay there together, their quiet conversation often interrupted by gentle kisses, for another hour.

“Do you want your gift now?” Clark asked.

Lois leaned up on her elbow. “Gift? Gimme!”

Clark laughed and went to get a small box out of the cabinet. “Here.”

Lois sat up and took it from him. “Thank you. I don’t have yours with me, though.”

“That’s okay.”

Lois ripped open the wrapping paper and glanced at Clark, slightly puzzled by the velvet box.

“Don’t worry. It’s not a ring or anything.”

She opened it slowly. “Clark! It’s beautiful.” She took the heart-shaped pendant out of the box, its delicate chain dangling from her hand.

Clark took it from her and helped her put it on.

“Don’t take this the wrong way or anything, but technically, it’s a mother’s necklace. I couldn’t find what I wanted any other way. They make what they call couples pendants, but they didn’t have any in Parsons or Independence.”

Lois looked down at the two stones nestled on one side of the heart, near a row of tiny diamonds. “What are the stones?”

“Well, the purple one is an amethyst. That’s February’s birthstone. And the sapphire is September’s, for your birthday. I could have gotten our names put on it, but I thought I’d leave it more simple for now at least. Unless you want me to. I can take it in and get it done.”

“It’s perfect. Thank you,” she said, kissing him softly.

“And I know we haven’t really talked about having kids someday,” he said when they both pulled back, “but if or when we do have kids, we can put their birthstones on there if you want to, but we don’t have to. It’s complete the way it is — you and me.” He kissed her again.

“Do you want to have kids?” Lois asked him, settling in front of him, leaning against his chest.

“Yeah,” he answered quietly, wrapping his arms around her. “I do. You?”

She shrugged. “I’ve never really thought too much about it. I mean, I figured I’d grow up and have a family, but only in that vague generalities way, not really seriously. I always thought I’d start my career first.”

“Best investigative reporter for the Daily Planet.”

“Yep. And you’re going to be right there with me.”

“I am.” He sighed. “I need to get you home.” He helped her up and pulled her into his arms.

“I know.”

“I’ll miss you.”

“I’ll miss you more.”

“I doubt that.”

“We’re disgusting. You know that?”

“Sure do, sugarlips,” Clark told her with a grin. “But you love me anyway.”

Lois sighed. “I do.”

“Remember those words, Ms. Lane,” Clark told her, kissing her again. “You’re going to need them.”

“You better believe I will.”

“Happy Birthday, Clark.” Lois held out the box.

He took it from her and carefully slid his finger under the edge of the paper.

Lois sighed and rolled her eyes. “Just open it.”

Clark laughed and ripped the paper off. “My birthday’s not until tomorrow.”

“I know, but you have to work. What’s Maisie thinking making you work on your birthday?” she grouched.

“That I need Friday night off for the basketball game and Saturday night off because I’m taking you out. So, I have to work tomorrow night.”

Lois sighed. “Fine.”

He opened the box and pulled out the leather bound journal. “Lois, this is great!”

She shrugged. “You like writing long-hand a lot more than I do. I thought you might use it to write your short stories in or something. Technically, it’s a journal but you can use it for whatever you want.”

“Thank you.” He set the book on the side table. “I love it.”

She moved back next to him on the couch and pulled the blanket back over them. “Are you ever going to let me read some of them?”

“Some of what?”

“Your short stories. I mean, I know you write them, and you’ve read a couple of mine, but I’ve never read any of yours.”

Clark was quiet for a long moment. “I know. I’ve got some that you can read if you want to.”

Lois turned to look at him. “What is it? Why don’t you want me to read them? It’s not like I’m going to make photocopies and stick them around school or post them on the Internet or anything.”

Clark sighed and tried to get her to move back towards him but she refused. “It’s not that. No one’s ever read them — not my folks, not Pete, not anyone. And it’s mostly young teen boy angst stuff that I’m not sure I’m ready to share those with anyone.”

“Not even me?” Tears sprang to her eyes and she mentally cursed at herself, willing the tears to stay where they were.

He shook his head, reaching out to lightly cup her face in his hand. “No. Not even you,” he said quietly. “Not yet.”

One tear followed another and he brushed them away with his thumb.

“Why not?” she whispered. “I thought we trusted each other.”

“I *do* trust you,” he told her earnestly. “It’s not that. I’m just not ready to share most of them with *anyone*, but I swear to you, the only person who’ll ever read them is you.”

Lois closed her eyes and shrugged. “If you say so.”

He looked at the clock. “I have to go. I’m going to be late, but I don’t want to leave you like this.”

She shrugged again and moved away from him, as she stood up and tried to surreptitiously wipe her cheeks dry.

His arms came around her and he pulled her back to his chest. “I’m sorry, sweetheart. Really, I am, and one day I’ll be happy to let you read them but not yet.”

She moved away from him. “It’s fine. Whenever.”
Clark sighed; his shoulders slumped as he shoved his hands in his pockets. “I love you.”

“I know,” Lois said, busily folding the blanket they’d been using. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He slung his backpack over one shoulder and picked up the book. He moved in front of her and pressed his lips to her head. “I love you,” he murmured against her hair.

She didn’t say anything for a long moment. “I know you do.” He kissed her head again and then left.

Lois waited until the door closed behind him and then fled to her room.

Clark didn’t even notice as the screen door slammed shut behind him.

He tossed his backpack onto the couch and headed to the kitchen to get something to drink.

And a piece of pie.

He took a big slice of apple pie and put it on a plate, loading it down with ice cream.

The chair thunked when he moved it and he sat down heavily, just staring at the plate in front of him.

“Want to talk about it?”

He looked up to see his mom standing in the doorway.

She tied her robe more securely over her pajamas and poured two glasses of buttermilk before he answered.

“I hurt Lois,” he said finally. “I promised her — and me — that I’d never hurt her but I did and there’s nothing I can do about it. I can’t *unhurt* her and I can’t fix it. Not now.” He sighed and picked up a spoonful of ice cream and pie. “She was trying not to cry when I left and I heard her run up to her room and start bawling — because of me.”

He stuck the whole spoonful in his mouth and suddenly wished he could get a brain freeze. That he could hurt, physically, just a bit.

“Why’d you hurt her? And why can’t you fix it?” Martha set one of the glasses in front of her son and she took a seat across the table.

“She gave me this great leather notebook to write stories in.” He poked a hole in the ice cream with his spoon. “And then she asked if I’d let her read some of them. I’ve read a few of the stories she’s written and they’re really good. I don’t know if they’re publishable good, but she’s definitely a great writer.” He took another big bite.

“And?”

He swallowed. “And virtually all of the stories I’ve written are about a teenage boy who’s an alien who looks human and can do all kinds of things no one else can. She thinks it’s just because I don’t trust her, but that’s not it at all.”

“Ah,” she said, understanding crossing her face. “And you’re not ready to tell her?”

He raised an eyebrow at her. “They’re all very well hidden so you don’t have to worry about that. No one will find them. And, really, are you ready for me to tell her? Is Dad? Will Dad *ever* be ready for me to tell her?”

“He wants you to be happy and Lois makes you happy.” She covered one of his hands with hers. “And that means that, someday, you’re going to marry her and that means that at some point, *before* the wedding, you’re going to tell her. He knows that. He doesn’t like the *theory* of telling anyone else, but he loves Lois. You know that.”

Clark nodded. “I know. But is now the time? I *hate* that I’m keeping anything from her. It’s not like I lie to her about stuff to cover it up or anything — maybe once or twice when I got somewhere a little too fast, but that’s it. And I don’t like that. Part of me is afraid by the time I do tell her in a few years, she won’t be able to forgive me because I’ve lied to her for so long.”

“Well,” Martha said slowly. “Maybe it’s time. If you’re right, and Lois really is the girl for you, then maybe it’s time you told her.”

“I can just hear Dad.” His voice deepened slightly. ““But by the same token, if she’s really the girl for you, when you finally do tell her, she’ll understand why you didn’t tell her sooner’.”

Martha chuckled. “You don’t sound very much like him, but that does sound like something he’d say.”

“So, what do I do?” Clark sighed. “Do I tell her and hope that everything I believe about her is true and hope that she’s not a closet xenophobe who’s going to out me to the government? Do I wait and hope that she can forgive me when I do tell her?”

“I don’t know, sweetie. It’s up to you. If you think you should tell her now, then maybe you should. If that’s what you decide you think you should do then I’d hope you’d at least tell me and Dad first, talk to us about it, about why and how you came to that decision. But it’s your decision.”

“Thanks, Mom. Sorry I woke you up.”

Martha took her empty glass to the sink and came to stand behind him. She sighed, wrapping her arms around him and resting her chin on his head. “I love you, Clark. It’s why I’m here. To help with teenage angst.”

Clark smiled slightly. “Thanks. I love you, too.” He sighed heavily again. “She didn’t even tell me she loved me when I left. I told her I loved her. She said she knew. Twice we did that. But she never told me she loved me.”

“I’m not sure if this qualifies as your first fight or not, but it’s the first time you’ve hurt her like this. Give her time.”

“How does that work? Do I take her flowers in the morning? Do I wait by her locker like usual? Do I kiss her when I see her? What?”

“Well, flowers are rarely a bad idea and the rest... Try normal and see how she responds. Go from there.” She kissed the back of his head. “But now I’ve got to get back to bed. I love you, sweetie.”

“Love you, too.”

She ruffled his hair as she moved towards the stairs. “Don’t be up too late.”

“I won’t.”

Clark sighed again and dug back into his snack.

There was a knock on the door, but Lois ignored it.

“Lois, honey, are you okay?”

Mom.

How did moms always know?

“I’m fine,” she called, hugging the black and white teddy bear closer to her and trying to stifle the hiccups.

“I’m coming in,” her mom warned.

Lois sighed and pushed herself up until she was leaning against the wall.

“Fine.” She swiped at her cheeks as her mom opened the door.

Ellen closed the door quietly behind her and sat next to Lois on the bed, one arm wrapping around her daughter’s shoulders.

“Want to talk about it?”

Lois shrugged. “It’s stupid. It’s beyond stupid.”

“But that doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurt.” They sat for a few moments, Lois leaning her head against her mom’s shoulder.

“Did you have a fight with Clark?”

“Not really,” Lois said with a shrug, picking at the ear of the bear Clark had won for her at the Corn Festival the previous fall. “I gave him his birthday present. He loved it. I asked if he was ever going to let me read any of his short stories and he said no.”

“He’s *not ever* going to let you read *any* of them?” Ellen sounded skeptical.

Lois sighed. “Not exactly. He said he had a few I could read, but I know he’s written lots of them and he said he’s not going to

let me read the others until some undetermined point in the future because he's not ready to share them with anyone. But if he ever lets anyone read them, it'll be me. Or something."

"Don't you have some that you don't want to let him read?"

Lois was glad her cheeks were already red from crying; hopefully her mom wouldn't notice her blushing, too. "A few, but most of them he can. He's read a few already. This is way the other way around and it's stupid to be this hurt by this. It's a few short stories. It's not like he's cheating on me."

"Why do you think it hurts?"

Lois rolled her eyes. "You're doing your psychologist reflecting junk on me."

"Well?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. I got the feeling there was more to it than just a couple of stories, that maybe he's keeping something from me, but I have no idea why I felt that way or what it could be. And I love him and so he's supposed to share things with me. I feel like he doesn't trust me or something."

"Did he say that?"

"No. He said he does trust me, but that he's not ready to share with anyone."

Ellen sighed and gently rubbed her hand up and down Lois' arm. "I worry about you two being so serious so young."

"You and Daddy were."

"Not really. The first time we dated, before he moved, we weren't all that serious. We both thought it *could* turn into something, but we were best friends who went out regularly and kissed. We didn't talk about marriage or kids or anything like that. And don't think we haven't noticed which two birthstones are on the necklace he gave you for Christmas either, so don't think you can say you two haven't talked long-term more than once."

"So, I'm going to marry Clark someday. So what? You were going to marry Daddy when you were seventeen. We're not planning on getting married right out of high school."

"It's two very different situations and you know it." Ellen pulled away from Lois enough to look at her face. "Unless you're..."

"Mom! No!" Lois shook her head vehemently. "No."

Ellen moved back to her side. "Well, it was very different and you know it. Claude..." She sighed. "Claude was a smooth talking French foreign exchange student who was there when I was lonely and missing your dad. Looking back, in a perverse kind of way, I think that's part of the reason why I had sex with him. Your dad and I hadn't and I was looking for something about as far away from your dad as I could get. Don't get me wrong, he didn't rape me or anything like that. I said yes, but I wished I hadn't almost immediately. I still don't know why I said yes the other two times but I did. It wouldn't have mattered, though. I got pregnant the first night."

She sighed. "That's why your dad and I were going to get married. Because I was pregnant, not because... we could or something like that. After the miscarriage, we waited a couple more years before we finally got married."

"I'm so sorry, Mom. I know that was a painful time for you, but it's not like that with me and Clark. Yes, we're going to get married, but we're not having sex and we're not going to. Not until we do get married. He promised me on our first date that he wouldn't push me and we agreed that we were going to wait until our wedding night. So, me getting pregnant at seventeen isn't something to be concerned about. And even if I did, Clark's *not* Claude. He loves me. He'd marry me and we'd work together to take care of the baby and finish school and everything else."

"Well, I still worry about you. You're my baby. You always will be."

"I know."

"So, why does it hurt?"

"Because even though he says he trusts me, it still feels like he doesn't."

"Probably. Is that something you can live with?"

"It has to be."

"Why?"

"Because I can't live without Clark. And don't get all melodramatic on me," Lois hurried on. "It's a turn of phrase. If my choices are to live without really understanding why he won't trust me with this but keep Clark in my life or to tell him it's some kind of deal-breaker and have him leave... It's a no-brainer, Mom. I'll find a way to deal with him not wanting to share these with me and move on."

"That sounds like a wise choice to me."

"Thanks, Mom."

Ellen kissed Lois' forehead. "Get some sleep."

"I'll try."

"I love you, sweetheart. More than you'll ever know."

"I know, Mom. I love you, too."

They stood and Ellen gave her a long hug. "See you in the morning, sweetie."

Ellen left and Lois changed into her pajamas before crawling under the covers.

She finally fell asleep holding Clarkie Bear to her.

Lois was at school earlier than usual. She hadn't slept well the night before and had been up much earlier than was her norm. She opened Clark's locker and put his birthday card where he'd see it when he opened it so he'd know that she wasn't mad at him.

Hurt?

Yes.

Mad?

No.

Not really.

Kind of.

But not to the point that she wanted to break up or ruin his birthday or anything like that.

She was organizing her things in her locker, getting ready for the day when suddenly a red rose appeared in front of her.

She could feel Clark standing near her as she took a deep breath, inhaling the fragrance. She turned to see him standing there, holding it out to her.

"This is for you," he said, almost shyly. "I'm sorry about last night. I'm so sorry that I hurt you."

"But not sorry enough to change your mind?" she asked softly.

He took a step towards her. "I'm sorry that I hurt you, Lois. I swore I would never do that and I didn't mean to, but no. I'm not going to change my mind. Not now. Someday, but not yet."

After a long moment she nodded and took the rose from him. "Okay. I don't like it, but okay. And I don't want to ruin your birthday by talking about it all day, so can we just move on?"

He nodded. "Yeah. If that's what you want."

She hesitated slightly. "It's what I want." She looked at her watch. "I have time to run this home, if that's okay with you. I don't really want to leave it in my locker all day."

"Do you want me to go with you?"

She shook her head. "No, that's okay. I'll be back in a few minutes." She leaned up, barely brushing the corner of his lips with hers before she slammed her locker shut and walked off.

Clark sighed and ran hand through his hair as he watched Lois walk away. He'd been up most of the night, arguing back and forth with himself over what to do.

Eventually, he'd come to the conclusion that the prior decision was the right one.

For now, even if it hurt her, he couldn't tell her. Not yet.

He wasn't ready for that. His parents weren't ready for that. He knew he wouldn't be able to handle the rejection if she freaked out, and until he was out of high school and able to move on if she did make it public, he wasn't willing to take the risk.

Not that he really thought she'd do something like that, but in their many conversations about this very thing, his dad had drilled in deep that you never really knew what someone might think. For all Clark knew, her grandpa had ingrained a deep sense of xenophobia in her or something and unless and until he was willing to take the risk of rejection and exposure, it was better not to tell her — whoever 'her' happened to be in the scenario.

He headed towards his locker to find Lana leaning against it. "Happy birthday," she said holding out an envelope.

He took it from her. "Thanks."

"Trouble in paradise?"

He looked up. "What?"

"You and Lois. You seem upset. She just took off for home. Doesn't take a rocket scientist."

"It's nothing for you to worry about." He wasn't sure exactly where they stood, but it wasn't any of Lana's business. "We're fine." He turned the knob until he could pop his locker open.

He smiled when he saw the card sitting there and absentmindedly set Lana's down. He picked up the one with the familiar writing on it and turned it over, opening it carefully.

It was obvious it had been sealed and then reopened and taped back shut.

He groaned at the picture on the front. It was a little green man in a space ship hovering over what he thought was supposed to be Mars and said 'Happy Birthday' in big green letters. He opened it and read the type on the inside. 'Hope your birthday is out of this world.'

'I love you,' it read. 'Happy Birthday. I hope we get to spend a lifetime of them together. Lois.'

A piece of paper had fallen out and he opened it.

'I wrote that the other day. I don't get what happened last night and I still feel like you don't trust me for some reason and I don't get it. But I love you. And if it comes down to pushing the issue over some stupid short stories or having you in my life, it's no contest. You win. I love you. I think I've always loved you and I know I always will. Lois.'

He smiled as he carefully put the card back in the envelope.

The warning bell rang and he hurried to get his things together.

"Aren't you going to open mine?" Lana asked, irritated.

He'd forgotten she was there.

"Sorry," he said, slightly chagrined. "I'll open it later. Thanks."

He slammed his locker shut and headed towards his first class, his step immeasurably lighter than it had been when he'd arrived on campus.

She still loved him.

That was all he needed to know for now.

Part 5

"Bye, Mom!" Lois grabbed her backpack and headed out the door.

"Be careful!" she heard her mom call from inside.

"We will!"

She hopped in Clark's truck, tossing her backpack on the floor of the passenger side before sliding across the seat to sit next to him. "Hey," she said, giving him a quick kiss. "Let's go."

Clark laughed and kissed her again. "Big Hill Lake, here we come."

Lois laughed with him. "You sound like we're going on the Oregon Trail or something. It's like ten miles from here and we're not walking the whole trail." It was July and they were going to spend the day at the lake.

"I know, but when was the last time we spent the *whole* day together?"

Lois shrugged. "Never? Well, every day we went to school. I saw you first thing there. Most of our classes were together and then you came over to study and sometimes eat dinner."

"Not the same," he said putting his arm around her. "I think 'never' is closer to the right answer. Did you eat breakfast?"

She nodded. "Yep. And you packed a lunch?"

"There's enough in there for dinner, too, probably, if we don't want to go back until later. It doesn't get dark until nine or so and I brought head lamps so even if we are out after dark..."

"We're going to spend eighteen hours together?" Lois suddenly sounded skeptical.

"Hey, if we're going to get married someday..."

"Yeah, I know, but we won't spend twenty-four/seven together will we?"

He shrugged. "Probably not. But if we work together, like we want to, we'll probably spend a lot of time together." He squeezed her shoulders. "Besides, we'll spend the whole time together on our honeymoon, won't we?" he whispered huskily.

Lois blushed. "Somehow I don't think hiking and picnics will be on our agenda."

Clark laughed. "I sure hope not."

"I'm thinking that we should spend our honeymoon chasing drug runners in the Congo so we have a great story to give Perry White." She wasn't sure how she managed to keep a straight face as she said it.

Clark looked crestfallen. "What? Really?"

Lois started to giggle. "No. Not really. I'm thinking somewhere tropical," she said with sigh.

"One of those huts you see on TV, with the fans and all, right on the beach?"

Lois sighed. "Maybe. But it needs air conditioning, I think."

"I'll keep that in mind when I plan our honeymoon."

She raised a brow. "When *you* plan *our* honeymoon?"

"What if I want to surprise you?"

"How will I know what to pack?"

The truck rolled to a stop in the parking lot at Big Hill Lake. Clark put it in park and then turned to Lois. "Do you really think we're going to spend much time outside our room when we *finally* get married?"

Lois blushed again. "I hope not." She kissed him lightly before scooting towards her side of the truck. She grabbed her backpack as she climbed out. "Last one to the lake is a rotten egg."

Clark hurried out his side, locking and shutting the door as he went. He grabbed his heavily laden backpack out of the back of the truck, running to catch up with her as she headed towards the trailhead. He grabbed her around the waist.

"Cheater."

"I don't cheat."

"You know what happens to cheaters?" he whispered.

She shook her head. "No. What?"

"They have to give the other competitor a kiss."

She turned easily in his arms. "Really?" she asked, amused.

He nodded. "Really."

She kissed him. "But I don't cheat."

"If you say so." He let go of her, grabbing her hand instead.

"Lois and Clark's day of fun is now officially underway."

She laughed as they started down the trail.

"How's this?"

Lois looked around and shrugged. "Looks good to me and I'm getting hungry."

"I heard your stomach growling," Clark said, taking his backpack off and setting it next to hers. "You want to set out the blanket and I'll get the food out?"

“Sure.”

Clark made sure Lois was busy and not watching him. He pulled out the fried chicken and zapped it surreptitiously with his heat vision. His mom had packed it well and it was still fairly warm but a little hotter would be good. She’d known he might not be able to reheat it and had helped him plan accordingly.

Lois flipped open the blanket and took the containers from him.

“This is still almost hot,” she said, surprised.

Clark shrugged. “Mom’s good.”

“I guess. What else is in there?”

“Well, whatever we don’t have for lunch is dinner, so we can either eat a little bit of everything and eat a little bit more later or save some of it for later so we’re not eating the same things for both. I don’t think we should eat the chicken later, though.”

Lois nodded. “Chicken now. With…” She took another container. “Is this your Granny’s potato salad?”

“Yep.”

“Potato salad and watermelon. How’s that? We’ll save the rest for later.”

“Works for me.” Clark repacked the rest of the items in the cooler bag and stuck it back in his bag.

“Mom sent lemonade,” Lois told him, pulling the big thermos out of her backpack.

“Great.”

They spent the next half hour eating and talking before packing back up and starting off down the trail.

By mid-afternoon, they’d reached their destination. They’d actually hiked to the mid-point of the trail because it had a great view and they’d spent some time sitting there just enjoying it before turning around and heading back towards the trail head.

About an hour’s walk from the parking lot, he led Lois off the trail and through a wooded area to a secluded beach where they spread the blanket out again and set their backpacks down to keep it in place.

“Ready for a swim?” Clark asked, as he sat on the blanket to take off his hiking shoes and socks.

“More than ready.” Lois already had her shoes off and stood, pulling her shirt over her head.

Clark almost did a double take until he realized she’d been wearing her swimsuit underneath it all along. She tugged her shorts down and tossed them all in a pile before quickly reapplying her sun screen.

He didn’t think she realized that he was staring at her as she did so. When she was done, she walked down to the lake and slowly waded in. She turned just as he pulled his shirt over his head. She watched him as he walked down to join her.

“What?”

She shook her head. “I just haven’t seen you without your shirt on very often,” she told him, running her hands up his arms and around his neck. “It’s nice.”

He laughed. “I’m glad you think so.”

She moved away from him. “And don’t bother saying something like, ‘I’ve never seen you without your shirt on, Lois,’ because it’s not happening until we’re on that gun running assignment.”

Clark sighed as he followed her into the water. “You can’t blame a guy for thinking it, can you?” He was glad she was wearing her speed swimming suit from when she’d been on the swim team the year before. The full back and high neckline covered much more than most other suits would have. He also knew that her parents wouldn’t approve of the swimsuits many of the other girls at school would have worn on a date day and that she didn’t see the point of wasting her spending money on another one when she had her swim team suits.

They spent an hour in the water, alternately swimming and sharing long, slow kisses while they talked.

They went back to the beach and stretched out on the blanket to let the sun dry them.

Clark sighed as he wrung his shorts out as best he could.

“Should have worn your swim trunks,” Lois told him as she applied sun screen one more time.

“They’re not good hiking shorts and I figured these wouldn’t be too bad to swim in.” Suddenly, he found himself wishing he’d told her the truth months earlier because then he could have dried them off instead of being uncomfortable until the sun took care of it.

She raised a brow at him. “I think they were fine for swimming but they’ll take forever to dry.”

“I’ve realized that. Thanks.”

He gave up and sat down next to her. When she was done, he reached for the bottle and put the unnecessary sunscreen on himself.

They didn’t talk much but simply held hands and enjoyed being together until they decided they were ready to eat dinner.

By then, even Clark’s shorts were nearly dry.

They munched on ham and turkey sandwiches with fruit salad and brownies for dessert.

“You’ve been holding out on me, Kent,” Lois said as she took her first bite. “You know better than to keep chocolate from me.”

“If I’d shown it to you at lunch, you would have eaten them all then,” he pointed out.

“I wouldn’t recommend trying it again.” She popped the rest of her first brownie in her mouth.

“Duly noted.”

“What time do we need to leave to hike out of here?” she asked, starting on her second brownie.

“Normally, I think it would take about an hour, but since it’ll be getting dark, we will probably want to leave in an hour and a half or so.”

“And you brought head lamps.”

Clark nodded, ignoring her glare as he helped himself to another brownie. “Yep. And I’ve got great night vision. And the moon should be pretty full tonight, so we should be good.”

The breeze coming off the lake was turning cooler as the sun went down. They both pulled their shirts on and Lois put her shorts back on as well, nestling in next to him with her head on his chest as they watched the sunset.

“We need to get going,” Clark said quietly.

“I don’t want to move,” Lois murmured, her eyes closed as his hand ran over her back.

“I know.”

“I’m already starting to get sore from the hike.”

“If we stay here much longer, we’ll both be asleep.”

“I thought you said we weren’t going to sleep together until after we got married,” Lois said with a contented sigh.

Clark chuckled lightly. “We still have all our clothes on, don’t we? The first time we’ll be naked together will be after we get married.”

She didn’t reply and a few minutes later, they were both asleep.

“Clark! Lois!”

Clark stirred slightly and wondered why it felt like there was a weight on his chest.

“Clark! Lois!”

It sounded like his dad. Why was his dad in his dream?

“Clark! Lois!”

The tone of the voice changed and there was another sound.

A motor.

A motor?

“Clark?”

The weight on his chest shifted and he suddenly remembered that Lois had fallen asleep. He must have, too.

“Hey,” he whispered.
 They both sat up as a light suddenly shone on them.
 “What is that?” Lois murmured.
 “I think they’re looking for us,” he replied.
 “Clark! Lois!” It was definitely his dad’s voice and it definitely sounded relieved. “Are you okay?”
 “We’re fine,” Clark called, shielding his eyes with his arm.
 “But could you move that spotlight a bit?”
 It dimmed.
 “Thanks.”
 They stood up and quickly repacked their backpacks, holding their shoes and socks as they waded to the boat.
 A minute later, they were in the back of the boat.
 Jonathan pulled Clark into a fierce hug as Sam did the same with Lois.
 The Deputy Sheriff told them all to sit down. They did and were soon on their way back to the dock.
 They didn’t try to talk over the noise of the boat, but Clark’s dad kept a hand on his back the whole time and Sam kept his arm around Lois.
 Twenty minutes later, after hugs had been exchanged all around, it was agreed that they would meet at the Kent farm. Lois went to get into Clark’s truck but Sam stopped her.
 “Lois, I think you better ride with us,” he said quietly.
 “What?” she asked, surprise showing on her face.
 “I’ll see you in a few minutes,” Clark said quietly. “I don’t think this is the time to rock the boat.”
 Lois nodded. “I know.”
 She started towards him to give him a quick kiss, but decided better of it and went to get in the back seat of her parents’ car.
 Clark climbed in his truck and heard his dad as he started it up. “Straight home.”
 Clark nodded and headed towards home.
 He rested his elbow out the window and propped his temple on his fist. Spending the whole day with Lois had been great. He was glad he wasn’t with his parents as his face darkened slightly at the memory of some of the kisses they’d shared in the lake.
 Holding her while they slept... He didn’t remember much, obviously, but what he did was nice.
 He pulled into the driveway right after Lois’ parents’ car did.
 He caught her eyes as they got out of the vehicles. She smiled slightly at him as he opened the front door. His parents were right behind them.
 Clark leaned against the counter between the living room and the kitchen while Lois sat on the couch with her parents. His parents took other seats around the room.
 “Okay, kids,” Jonathan said. “Why don’t you tell us what happened?”
 Lois looked at him and shrugged. “Go ahead.”
 “I picked Lois up at about eight-thirty. We went to Big Hill Lake and hiked for about three hours. Ate lunch. Hiked for another half hour or so until we reached the overlook. Hung out there for about half an hour. Hiked about two and a half hours then cut through the woods to that little beach. Went swimming. Laid there for a while until we were nearly dry. Ate dinner. Watched the sunset. We were talking about heading back and fell asleep. That’s it.”
 Sam looked at his daughter. “Lois?”
 “Sounds about right to me.” She looked at her mom.
 “Whatever you’re thinking, don’t. *Nothing* happened except we fell asleep. That’s it. I’m sorry we worried you. I know Clark is, too. We didn’t mean to, honest.”
 Sam sighed. “I’m sure you didn’t mean to, Princess, but you did.”
 “It won’t happen again,” Clark told him earnestly. “I’ve *never* brought her home late, ever, and I wouldn’t have this time except we honestly dozed off after a long day of hiking and sun

and all that. I swear to you, that’s all that happened.” Thoughts had been swirling through his head about what they must have thought — even though they were both fully clothed when the boat arrived. He looked Sam in the eye. “I’ve *never* touched her and I won’t. Not until we get married.”
 “He hasn’t, Daddy,” Lois said quietly. “Not today. Not ever.”
 Sam stood and walked towards Clark, stopping a few feet in front of him. “You’ve never done anything untoward with my daughter?”
 Clark stood straight up and held his gaze. “I’ve kissed her, sir, but that’s it. Hugs, holding hands, kissing — nothing more than that.”
 “You’ve never wanted to?”
 Clark wanted to look at Lois or his parents for some kind of guidance, but he made himself keep looking directly at Sam. “I didn’t say that,” he said quietly. “I said I never have. I love Lois. I want to marry her and have a family with her, but I promised her on our first date that we wouldn’t be together like that unless and until we got married. I meant it then and I mean it now. I can promise you all you want, and I do respect you, but I promised Lois and that’s more important to me than any promise I might make to you.”
 Sam held his eyes for a long moment before nodding. “I believe you. And I don’t believe that you two meant to fall asleep out there. I do think that we’re going to have a long talk with Lois tomorrow and it might be a few days before you see each other again.”
 “Yes, sir.”
 A few minutes later they left. Clark sighed and sat on the couch knowing his parents would want to talk to him.
 They surprised him when they stood up. “We’ll talk tomorrow,” Jonathan said quietly as he and Martha headed for the stairs. “You’ve had more sleep than any of us.”
 “I’m sorry,” Clark said quietly.
 Martha stopped and gave him a hug. “I know, sweetie.”
 He wrapped his arms around her. “I love you, Mom.”
 “I love you, too.”
 He sighed and followed them upstairs.

 “Hello?” Clark rolled to the side of his bed and picked up the phone. He wasn’t sure where his parents were, but he knew they weren’t in the house.
 “Hey,” Lois said quietly.
 “Hey. How much trouble are you in?”
 “I’m grounded for a week and grounded from you for two.”
 “Two weeks?!” he asked, incredulous.
 “Well, after this phone call, which can’t last very long, I’m basically on house arrest until Sunday. After that, I can talk to you for up to half an hour a day, but I can’t see you until the next Sunday — and I can’t even *think* about sneaking over to Maisie’s while you’re working.”
 Clark sighed. “Well, I guess that’s the way it is.”
 “I wish I was going to summer school now,” she told him, resigned. “But since I don’t... I guess I get to watch daytime TV or something. They said Abby can come over but no covert trying to contact each other through her or anything. They said that if we really love each other then we can handle two weeks without seeing each other.”
 “Well, yeah, I’m sure we can. Doesn’t mean we *want* to.”
 “What did your parents say?”
 “Nothing yet. We went straight to bed and I haven’t seen them yet today.”
 “Well, hopefully, it’s not any worse than mine.”
 “I hope not.” Clark sighed. “I’m going to miss you,” he said quietly.
 “I know. I’m going to miss you, too.”
 He grinned suddenly. “I’ll write you every day and give them

to you later.”

Lois laughed. “Okay. I can’t imagine anything exciting enough to write about, but I can do that, too.”

Clark heard something in the background.

“I gotta go. I love you.”

“I love you, too, sweetheart.”

“I know.”

“I’ll talk to you next week.”

“Yeah.”

“Love you.”

“Love you.”

Clark hung up and flopped back onto his bed. Two weeks without Lois. Sure, they’d survive, but that didn’t mean he was looking forward to it.

“Clark,” he heard his mom call as they came in the front door. “Can you come down here?”

He sighed and headed downstairs. A few minutes later, he was sitting on the chair in the living room telling them what Lois’ parents had said.

Martha and Jonathan exchanged a look. “Well, that’s a bit more strict than what we were thinking. We were thinking grounded except work and only short phone calls for a week, but if that’s what her parents said, that’s what goes,” Martha told him. “And you’re still grounded for a week — you can go to work and that’s it.

“Yeah, I know. Doesn’t mean I like it, but I know,” Clark told them. “Maybe Pete’ll want to go do something next week,” he finished with a sigh.

“It’ll be good for you to go out with Pete or Josh or some of the other guys.”

“I go out with Pete all the time,” he reminded them.

“No,” Jonathan said. “You and Lois go out with Pete and Abby. It’s not the same.”

Clark shrugged. “I know and I’m sure it’ll be fine.” He sighed. “I’m sorry we worried you guys.”

Jonathan sighed. “We were worried, but not too worried, because of, well, you. We were more worried that we’d find you two asleep but without any clothes on or something. We didn’t figure either of you were hurt.”

Clark sighed. “I’ve told you guys we’re not going to have sex until we get married. I meant what I told Sam last night. I’ve never touched her.”

“We believe you, Clark, but when we get a phone call from Lois’ parents at twelve-thirty in the morning asking if we know where you are...”

He winced. “I’m sure.”

“We waited a while longer. We tried to convince them to wait until morning because we thought it was probably something like what happened, but at two a.m. we finally called Sheriff Lawson. He knows you two and knows it’s not like you two to be late, so he agreed to send out a boat and if they didn’t find you, then they’d wait till dawn and start hiking the trail. Sam said he would have done it in their boat, but it’s at Parsons Lake so it didn’t help any.”

Clark groaned. “We were supposed to go to the lake with Lois’ parents next weekend and go water skiing. Guess that’s not going to happen.”

“Guess not,” Martha said quietly, “but I’m sure you’ll figure out something else to do.”

He shrugged. “Yeah. Maybe Maisie’ll give me extra hours.”

He sighed. It was going to be a long two weeks.

Part 6

Lois pulled her mom’s car into the farmyard and put it in park.

Clark was waiting to open her door and she practically launched herself into his arms, burying her head in his shoulder.

“I’ve missed you,” he whispered.

“I’ve missed you, too.”

After a long moment, he released her before grabbing her hand. “Come on.” They walked quickly towards the barn and were in the hayloft a moment later.

“I know my folks aren’t home but...” He pulled her into his arms, kissing her soundly.

Her hands found their way to the back of his neck and she pulled him closer to her. After long minutes, they both pulled back, breathless.

“We need to slow this down,” Lois whispered.

“I know,” he agreed, resting his forehead on hers. “I love you so much and...”

“I know.” She kissed him lightly before moving away and sitting on the blanket that he must have spread out earlier. “It’d be easy to get carried away.”

He sat behind her and she snuggled back into his chest.

“Yeah, it would.”

She sighed as she rested her head against him. “Two weeks is too long. Promise me we’ll never do that again.”

He chuckled. “Promise. I do have something for you, though. Sit up.”

She complied and watched as he went to the small cabinet to pull out a small bundle.

He sat back down. “Here.”

She took them. “The letters?”

“Yep. I wrote you every day, but they’re not much. Mostly just what I did — and all I did was work and help Dad around the farm — and that I missed you. And that I love you. There are lots of I love yous in there.”

“I left mine at home,” Lois told him, chagrined. “I was in a hurry.”

“I’d rather have you here with me.”

“I’d rather be here.”

Tires crunched in the yard.

“That’s Mom and Dad,” he said. “You hungry?”

“Yeah. I slept in and didn’t eat breakfast. Mom got back from Independence at ten and I dropped her off at her office in Smallville before I headed out here, but I didn’t want to stop to get something to eat.”

He helped her to her feet. “Well, Mom’s got a brisket in the crock pot.”

“Then what’re we waiting for?”

They headed into the house and spent the rest of the day with his parents.

Lois heard the doorbell ring and gave herself another once over in the mirror. She wasn’t nearly as nervous as she’d been the year before since she and Clark had been a couple for a year. It wasn’t their first date this time.

“Lois,” her mom called. “Clark’s here!”

“I’ll be right down,” she hollered back. She grabbed her purse and headed down the stairs. “Hey,” she said with a smile when she saw Clark. It had been almost six weeks since her grounding had ended and they’d spent most of the time outside of school and football practice together.

“I’ll have her home by midnight,” Clark promised.

“Happy birthday, Princess,” Sam said, giving her a hug.

Ellen did the same and then Lois and Clark were on their way.

“Where are we going?” Lois asked, resting her head on Clark’s shoulder as he drove through Smallville.

“DiGiacinto’s and Big Hill Lake. We just won’t fall asleep like we did at Parsons Lake.

“Re-enacting our first date?” she asked with a raised brow.

“Why not?”

They drove in companionable silence to Parsons.

Clark opened her door when they got to the restaurant and wrapped his arms around her. “Happy Birthday,” he said quietly. “I haven’t really said that yet today.” He kissed her gently. “I love you.”

She kissed him back. “I love you, too. Thank you.”

They lingered again over chocolate cake before heading towards the lake parking lot. They sat in the back of the truck looking at the stars, much as they had the year before.

“Thank you for tonight, Clark,” Lois said quietly. “Dinner was great and I love being here with you like this.”

“You’re not asking what your birthday present is?”

“Dinner wasn’t my present?” she asked, surprised.

He snorted. “No. I know better than that.”

“Gimme!”

He turned and reached through the open window into the truck. He handed her a package. “Here.”

She quickly ripped open the paper. “Well, I’m sure it’s not a shirt from Men’s Warehouse,” she told him, looking at the top of the shirt box.

“Well, no, but open it.”

She did and carefully picked up the papers she found there. “What’re these?”

“Those are my stories,” he said quietly. “The ones I wasn’t ready for you to see yet.”

She twisted to look at him. “What?”

He nodded.

“You’re ready for me to see them?”

He hesitated and then shook his head slightly. “No, not really. Not *entirely*. But I don’t know that I ever will be completely ready to show them to you or anyone else.” He smiled at her. “I love you and I trust you and, if I waited until I was completely ready, I don’t know that I’d ever share them with you and I want to.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

“Thank you,” she said softly before kissing him. “You don’t know how much this means to me.” She settled back against him, setting them carefully to the side.

“Listen, I know you wouldn’t let anyone else see them on purpose, but could you do me a favor?”

“Anything.”

“Only read them when no one else is around and keep them well hidden.”

“Sure.”

They talked quietly for a while longer, enjoying being together.

“I dream about the night we spent we spent at Parsons Lake,” Clark said suddenly.

“What?”

“I dream about sleeping with you in my arms.”

Lois sighed dreamily. “I dream about sleeping in your arms, though it’s rarely on a beach.”

“Where is it?” he asked huskily.

She shrugged and ducked her head. “Usually on a couch or in bed or something, I guess.”

“Your bed?”

“I don’t really know. Our bed, I guess. I’m not really sure where it is. You?”

He shrugged. “Mostly the beach where we were. Sometimes someplace else.”

“Like where?”

He changed the subject suddenly. “Do you want your anniversary present?”

“What?” She turned. “Clark, I didn’t get you anything. I mean, I did but I thought we were celebrating it next week.”

He grinned at her, the grin she loved. “I know,” he whispered. “I did that on purpose. I wanted tonight to be about you.”

She smiled back at him. “Gimme.”

“Close your eyes.”

She gave an exaggerated sigh and did as she was told.

He got something out of the truck and tugged her back against him. “Okay. Open your eyes.”

She did and gasped. “Clark!”

The velvet box held a gold ring. Their birthstones were nestled inside the delicate gold heart which was accented with small diamonds. Clark’s name was on one side of the band and hers was on the other.

“It’s a promise ring,” he said, taking it out of the box. “It matches your necklace and it means that I intend to marry you some day.”

“That’s good, because I intend to marry you someday, too.”

He slipped it on her ring finger. He brought her hand to his lips and kissed it softly. “I told your dad about this,” he said quietly. “I told him I wasn’t going to propose or anything like that, but I wanted him to know that I do plan on marrying you and that I was giving you this tonight.”

“What did he say?”

Clark shrugged. “I think he still thinks we’re too young to be so serious, but he also knows that nothing he can say is going to change our minds. But it’s not like I’m proposing tonight, just promising to.”

She turned so she could look at him again. “I’m going to hold you to that. Thank you.” She kissed him — a long, sweet kiss — before settling back in his arms. “I love you.”

“I don’t know how I feel about you,” he said suddenly.

“What?” she asked, off-guard.

“I mean, there’s no *one* way I feel about you. I love you, but I feel so many other things, too. Happy and kind of scared, because everything is new with us and new can be scary. Excited. Calm. You’ve always been my rock, even when you didn’t know it. I’m safe with you in a way I’m not anywhere else. I’m lost. I’m found. Ever since I met you, whatever it is that’s always been so right between us, is stronger than me. Being with you is stronger than me alone. That’s what I mean when I say I don’t know how I feel about you. There’s no one way to define it.”

“Oh, Clark,” she whispered, tears in her eyes, as she turned to kiss him again.

Her lips brushed against his, before returning to kiss him again — softly at first, but soon both needed something more. She shifted again so that she was facing him more fully. Her hands rested on his chest as he held her.

As the kiss continued to build, she didn’t really realize what was happening as her fingers started to work on the buttons of his shirt. It wasn’t until she slipped her hands inside his shirt to feel the soft skin of his chest under her hands, that she realized his hands, too, were doing some exploring of their own.

They had slipped under the bottom of her shirt and his fingers were tracing patterns on her lower back, slipping slightly higher with each pass.

She pulled slightly away from him as his lips left hers to trail down her neck. “Clark,” she murmured.

“I know,” he said, his hands stilling on her back. He kissed the base of her neck one more time before leaning his head against the cab of the truck. He tugged the hem of her shirt down as she buttoned his. He pulled her close, cradling her against him. “If for absolutely no other reason than our first time shouldn’t be in the back of my truck.” He kissed her forehead. “I’m sorry. I promised you a year ago I’d never push...”

“You weren’t pushing. I wanted more as much as you did.” Her cheek rested against his chest. “I love you. You love me...”

He kissed her forehead. “I know.” He sighed. “I should get you home.”

“Probably.”

They climbed into the cab and her head rested on his shoulder

as he drove her home.

“Movie’s over,” Clark whispered. “I’ve got to get you home soon.”

“I know, but it’s still so early,” she grouched.

“It’s a school night.”

“Boy scout,” she muttered, sitting up and stretching.

Clark laughed and stood, holding out a hand to help her up before pulling her into his arms. “It’s one of the reasons why you love me and why your dad keeps letting me see you, because I get you home on time.”

“Except the once,” she reminded him.

“I know, but that was what? Ten months ago? Nine?

Something like that.”

The VCR clicked to automatically rewind the movie.

“What’s that?” Lois asked as the ‘Breaking News’ bulletin sounded.

Clark shrugged.

“Good evening, folks,” the local news anchor said. “We’re not sure what exactly is going on at this moment, but the White House has asked that all stations cover an emergency EPRAD press conference that will be starting momentarily.”

“That’s odd,” Lois said, sitting back down.

Clark sat next to her as the picture shifted to EPRAD headquarters in Metropolis. A distinguished looking gentleman, surrounded by harried looking scientist types, stepped to the podium.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Professor Tom Daitch — D-A-I-T-C-H. I will make a short statement and will not be taking any questions at this time. Earlier this week, EPRAD scientists found a previously undiscovered asteroid. Calculations have been run and double checked and redouble checked. It is our belief that this asteroid is on a collision course with Earth.”

“What?” Lois whispered.

“Did he just say...?” Clark whispered at the same time.

“Mom! Dad! Come here!”

The reaction by the members of the press at the news conference apparently had a similar reaction because Professor Daitch was calling for them to be quiet.

“What is it, honey?” Martha asked.

Clark nodded at the television as Professor Daitch began speaking again. “Please, calm down. The military has been prepared for something like this for a very long time and launched several ASGARD rockets earlier today. Calculations indicate that the rockets will reach their destination by noon Eastern Time tomorrow. Indications are that they will disintegrate much of the asteroid and the rest would be much smaller. Some of those may still be large enough to do some damage, but not nearly as much as Nightfall itself would. Nightfall is thirty-seven miles across and would potentially cause permanent damage to the Earth and life as we know it. We are confident that the rockets will perform as designed and there is absolutely no need to panic.”

He looked back at his notes. “We will have short briefings every hour to update you on the progress of the rockets and will hold another press conference at two p.m. tomorrow afternoon after we have had the opportunity to assess the damage the ASGARD rockets have done to the Nightfall Asteroid.”

He, and those surrounding him, turned and left.

Martha and Jonathan had long since sunk onto one of the chairs.

“Oh, my,” Martha whispered.

“That was... interesting,” Jonathan added.

Clark looked at the clock. “We gotta go! Lois, we’re going to be late.”

“Go on,” Martha told him. “I’ll call and let her parents know

what happened.”

“Thanks, Martha.” Lois gave her a quick hug before following Clark out the door.

Clark lounged at his desk in their physical science class. The television was on and they were waiting for the latest update on the damage the ASGARD rockets had done to the Nightfall Asteroid.

The same group of men from the night before appeared on the screen.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I will be making an announcement. I will not be taking any questions at this time. We will have another briefing at six p.m. Eastern Time and we will take questions then.”

He shuffled his notes. “The ASGARD rockets did reach their target approximately two hours ago. Most of them hit exactly as they were supposed to, disintegrating much of the asteroid and breaking the rest into a number of smaller pieces, the vast majority of which will burn up in the atmosphere creating one of the most spectacular shooting star light shows in history. More details on where best to see the asteroid show and what areas need to be prepared for some of the slightly larger chunks will be available later. We anticipate the events to be approximately one hundred hours from now.”

He took a deep breath. “However, two of the rockets did not hit the target at all. The reasons for this are not important at the moment but will be reviewed in the coming weeks and months so that the problems can be rectified should this situation ever present itself again. That said, there is still one very significant piece of asteroid, measuring nearly ten miles across. More rockets are being readied to launch sometime early tomorrow morning.”

“What happens if they miss?” one of the reporters called.

Professor Daitch hesitated. “More details will be provided later this afternoon.”

“What’s going to happen?” several reporters yelled.

He glanced at someone Clark couldn’t see. “*If* they miss, and we have every confidence that they won’t, then this will likely have a disastrous effect on the Earth. Those calculations are currently being rechecked and those announcements will be made at a later time. I want to reiterate that there is no reason to panic. The rockets *will* do their job. Thank you.” He turned and left.

“Are you okay?” Lois whispered.

He looked over at her. She was pale but not overly so. “Um, yeah. Why?”

She shook her head. “You look awful. The color is completely gone from your face.” She reached out and felt his face. “You don’t feel warm.”

He nodded. “Right. I’m fine.” He wasn’t, but...

“I don’t think I trust those rockets,” Pete said suddenly. “Not if a couple of them already missed.”

A plan was starting to form in Clark’s mind. He surreptitiously slipped his keys into his backpack and leaned it against Lois’ desk.

He raised his hand. “Mrs. Burgess, can I use the bathroom?” he asked suddenly.

She was still engrossed in the continuing coverage and waved him off.

He left the classroom, leaving Lois a couple of notes — one in her locker, one in his — before leaving the building. He ran towards her house and into the backyard.

Under the cover of the trees, he lifted into the air and headed towards the farm.

Class was over and Clark still wasn’t back.

Lois sighed and grabbed his backpack as well as her own.

“Where’d he go?” Pete asked as they headed towards their

next class.

Lois shrugged. "I have no idea. He said he had to go to the bathroom and never came back."

She stopped at his locker to stick his backpack in it. When she opened it, there was a slip of paper with her name on it.

"Lois, sorry I didn't tell you where I was going. My keys are in my backpack. Bring the truck to the farm after school. I'll explain everything then. I love you. C"

"I guess he went home," Lois told Pete who was still standing there. She shrugged. "I gotta go to class. I'll see you later."

Her mind, like everyone else's, wasn't really on school the rest of the day. Once it was over, she headed to her house to leave her parents a note, telling them where she'd be.

The phone rang. "Hello?" she said after she picked it up.

"Hey, it's me."

"Clark! Where'd you go?"

"I went home. I needed to talk to my folks about something and the three of us need to talk to you."

"Okay," she said with a shrug. "I just wanted to drop my stuff off at the house. I'm heading back over to school and I'll be on my way."

"I'll see you in a few minutes. I love you."

"Love you."

She stashed her backpack in her room and changed clothes before heading back to the high school. She climbed into the truck and headed out of town.

Clark was waiting for her when she pulled into the farmyard.

"Hey," she said as he pulled her into his arms and held her tightly, his head buried in her neck. "What is it?"

"I love you," he said into her shoulder.

"I love you, too. How'd you get home?"

"Not important."

"I thought you said you and your folks needed to talk to me."

"We do." He moved back and took her face in his hands before kissing her soundly. He let go and reached for her hand. "Come on. We need to talk."

Part 7

"Where are we going?"

"The hayloft," Clark told her.

"I thought we were going to talk to your folks," Lois asked, puzzled.

He hesitated. "We will, but I wanted to talk to you about something first."

"The world is going to end in like four days, unless that rocket works, so I'm guessing it's important."

He hesitated again as she went up the ladder in front of him. "I know and it is."

Lois pulled the quilt out of the cabinet and spread it on the floor. Clark moved straight to the door as she sat down.

"What is it, Clark?"

"There's something I have to tell you," he said, still not looking at her.

"As long as it's not that you're secretly married to Lana, I think it'll be okay," she said with a roll of her eyes. She stood and walked towards him, stopping when she could wrap her arms around him and rest her cheek on his back. "What is it, sweetheart?"

He leaned one shoulder against the door frame and covered her arms with his. "You're going to be mad," he warned.

"You *are* married to Lana?" she asked skeptically.

He snorted. "No. That's not *ever* going to happen. Ever. You know that." He sighed and his voice was quiet when he spoke again. "Remember the first time we said, 'I love you'?"

"Like it was yesterday."

"And we talked about what if I told you some big secret after I proposed but before we got married?"

"I remember," Lois said slowly. "And now you're scaring me."

"There's something about me that I've never told you and I'm afraid you're going to be mad, but I hope not when I tell you why it's such a good thing. Or even if you never talk to me again... You'll be safe and that's the most important thing. You and everyone else."

"What are you talking about?"

He turned to face her, wrapping his arms around her. "You know I'm adopted."

"I've known that for as long as I can remember," she told him, resting her head on his chest.

"I know, but you don't know *how* I was adopted."

"Your mom's cousin..."

He shook his head. "No."

She pulled back and looked at him. "No?"

He closed his eyes and sighed. "This is the hard part." He rested his forehead on hers before taking a deep breath and plunging in. "Mom and Dad found me."

"O-kay," she said slowly.

"In Shuster's Field."

She raised an eyebrow. "Someone *left* you in Shuster's Field. Was his bull put up?"

Clark shrugged. "I don't know about his bull, but no one *left* me there." He took a deep breath. "I *landed* there. My *ship* landed there."

She moved away from him. "Clark, you're being insane. The Earth is about to end and you're talking crazy. I'm going to go talk to your folks."

She turned towards the ladder only to find him in front of her, hovering in midair over the main floor of the barn.

Her jaw dropped. "Clark?" she whispered.

He moved back towards her, coming to a stop in front of her, his hands resting on her shoulders. "This isn't how I planned on telling you. I've planned on telling you for a long time, but not like this. Not until after I'd proposed to you after graduation. Then I was going to tell you and pray that you still wanted to marry me."

"So..."

He helped her sit down on the blanket. "I know this is a lot to take in," he said softly, brushing the hair back off her forehead. "Mom and Dad found me in spaceship. They didn't know where I came from or anything but they loaded me and my ship in the truck and brought me home. We didn't really know there was anything too weird about me until Jr. High. And I don't want to tell you the whole story now, because you're right. Time's limited, but I promise I'll tell you everything later."

Lois swallowed hard and nodded. "Okay." She ran her hands through her hair. "Man, I must really be in shock to just let all this go by."

He moved to sit behind her, pulling her to him. "I know you are, but I'm hoping you'll see this as a good thing."

She rested her head against him. "Why?"

"Because of two things. I'm invulnerable and I can fly."

"You can *fly*?" she asked skeptically. "Right," she went on, shaking her head. "The whole thing over there." She waved an arm in the direction of the ladder. "So, why is that a good thing? I mean, it'd be cool and you can fly me places, but..."

"I'm also taking that diving class," he said quietly. "We'll know tomorrow night if those other rockets worked and if they don't, I'm going to take my diving equipment and I'm going to fly into space and, hopefully, I'm going to stop this thing."

She turned to stare at him, her eyes wide. "You think you can fly into space and destroy an asteroid?"

He nodded. "I'm going to try." He cupped her cheek in his hand. "I love you, Lois, and I couldn't go without telling you where I'm going and why," he said softly. "I'm not from Earth,

but you've always made me feel like this was home. I love you and I have to do this. I have to make sure that you and my parents and everyone else are safe. And I'm invulnerable to everything we've ever found, but this... This is outside of any scope of possibility we ever came up with and there's always the chance I won't come back and I couldn't just leave you without telling you why."

Lois nodded slowly. "Thank you."

"Do you hate me?" he asked quietly.

She stood up and started to pace. "No, I don't hate you. I'm overwhelmed, but hate? No." Tears filled her eyes. "You really think you might not come back?" she whispered.

He stood in front of her and wiped her cheeks as the tears overflowed. "I don't know, sweetheart. I hope I will. I plan to. But I have to try to save you... everyone. And if that means I don't come back... Maybe this is why I was sent here. Not *here* specifically, but you know how everyone wonders what their purpose in life is? Maybe this is mine."

She wrapped her arms around him and they held each other for long minutes. She pulled back and looked up at him, kissing him softly. "I love you, Clark."

He kissed her back. "I love you, too. You know that."

"You have to come back to me."

"I will."

She kissed him again, her arms snaking around his neck, pulling him closer to her. Minutes later, they were back on the quilt as her hands found their way under his shirt and together they pulled it over his head.

But it was the breather they needed.

"What're we doing?" he asked her quietly, resting his forehead on hers as they both breathed heavily.

"If you're leaving and there's a chance you might not come back, I want to make love to you," she told him, brushing his hair back. "Just once before you go. Before I might not ever see you again."

He kissed her softly. "We're waiting for our wedding night, remember? I'm not going to leave you forever, and unless you're planning on us getting married..." His voice trailed off as a grin crossed his face.

"When are you going?" she asked.

"Thirty-six hours or so. We'll know about the other rockets by then and then it won't be *too* far away. I can hold my breath for a long time so that helps but..."

"Then why don't we? Tomorrow morning." Tears snuck down her cheeks.

"Are you sure? I love you and the thought crossed my mind, but to marry you and widow you in just a few hours..." Tears filled his own eyes. "I don't think I could do that."

"Isn't that my choice?"

He kissed her again. "I love you. I want to marry you. You know that." He disappeared for just a second and before she realized what was happening, she was sitting on the quilt and he was in front of her on one knee. "I got this the last time I was in Kansas City." He opened the velvet box, disengaging the engagement ring from the matching wedding band. He held it out towards her. "I've known I wanted to marry you since you kicked me out of the sandbox when you were in kindergarten." She wiped tears from her cheeks as she laughed. "I love you. I can't promise you beyond tomorrow, but, Lois Lane... Will you marry me?"

She nodded. "Of course I will."

She pulled the promise ring he'd given her for her birthday off her finger and he slipped the engagement ring on in its place and kissed her again as she slid the promise ring onto her right hand.

She pulled back. "I'm only seventeen. How are we going to get married?"

They rearranged themselves so that he was sitting behind her again. "We'll find a state where you only have to be seventeen with no waiting period."

"When?"

"We'll skip school tomorrow," he said, kissing the side of her head. "I *think* New Troy fits the bill — I looked it up when we were doing that marriage project in Family Living — but I'm not sure. I'll double check later." He played with the ring on her finger. "I know it's not much but..."

"It's perfect."

"I knew when I saw it that it was the one I wanted. The guy said it was called a trillion cut but it reminds me of the family crest from my birth family. I wish we had time for me to tell you everything but... I'll show you some of it tomorrow, okay?"

She nodded. "I don't have a wedding band for you, though," she said quietly.

"We'll get one later."

"Are you sure?"

"Marrying you is the important part."

"Okay. But how will we get to New Troy?"

He chuckled. "I'll fly us."

She nodded slowly. "Right."

"Are you really okay with this?"

She nodded again. "I'm sure I'll have lots of questions later but... I love you and that's what it boils down to." She sighed. "We probably need to go talk to your parents."

"Yeah. They knew I wanted to tell you first but they wanted to talk to you, too."

"Are we going to tell them we're getting married?" she asked.

"What do you think?"

"Will they try to talk us out of it?"

He thought for a minute. "Probably."

"Then, no. I'll put the ring in my pocket if that's okay."

"For now." He stood and helped her to her feet. He held her lightly by the waist and looked carefully around the farmyard before floating them down to the ground.

"Wow," she whispered.

He grinned. "I'm so glad you're okay with all this." He took her hand and they headed towards the house.

As they walked in the door, Lois put the ring in her pocket before going to the kitchen to greet Martha and Jonathan.

Lois closed the front door quietly behind her. She didn't think her parents would be too upset about her skipping school, what with the world about to end and all, but to run off and marry Clark? She'd left them a note that said she was going to spend the day with him and would be home later.

She hadn't slept much all night — her head kept spinning from Clark's revelation of the things he could do and that he was an alien. As she'd thought about it, she'd realized that his short stories had to have been about what it was like for him growing up. He'd shared with her even without telling her the whole story. She'd have to ask him about that.

But what kept her up most of the night was that she was going to marry him in just a few hours.

Clark's grin lit up the truck as she stuck her packed backpack on the floorboard of the passenger side. She slid immediately into the middle, her leg next to Clark's. His arm went around the back of the seat as she kissed him lightly.

"Hi," she said almost shyly.

"Good morning," he said back, kissing her again before putting the truck into gear. "Are you sure you want to do this?"

She nodded, resting her head against him as they headed towards Big Hill Lake.

"What's the actual plan?" she asked, a bit nervous.

"Well, I thought we'd park at the lake and everyone'll think

we went for a hike in the state park. It's still pretty dark so I think we can just take off from the parking lot unless someone else is around. Then we'll want to walk a ways so that no one sees us flying off."

She giggled. "That's probably a good plan. You know what people are going to think we're doing, right?"

He squeezed her slightly. "Pretty much what we're actually going to be doing?"

Lois was sure she was doing a great imitation of a tomato. "Well, yeah, I guess."

"Hey," he said softly, his hand rubbing her upper arm gently. "We don't have to do this."

She shook her head. "I want to. That doesn't mean that I'm not a bit nervous. I mean, I've never done this before... What if I'm not any good?"

"What if I'm not?" Clark asked pragmatically. "I've never done this before either. But we'll learn together, okay?"

He pulled into the deserted parking lot and then into a spot near the trail head. Once the truck was parked, he turned to look at her. "I love you, Lois Lane." He kissed her gently.

"I love you, too, Clark Kent." She turned and stared out the window. "Um, Clark?"

"Yeah?"

"What about, uh, birth control?" She'd thought about that a lot overnight. If Clark wasn't coming back, she wanted to have his baby to remember him by. But if he was coming back, that didn't seem like the best plan. And since she refused to consider that he wasn't coming back...

"I, uh, flew to Springfield, Missouri last night. They have an all night Walgreens there and..."

She nodded. "Um, but..." She stifled a scream. "I never thought I'd be uncomfortable talking to *you* about anything."

Clark chuckled. "I know what you mean."

"I'm allergic to latex," she blurted out. "And I really don't want to have a reaction... there."

Clark winced. "Right. I knew that. And you're right, that doesn't sound like a good idea."

"I did some research online last night and I think I found another option, but I guess we'll have to stop at another drug store somewhere."

"I, uh, went somewhere else last night, too."

"Where?"

"Metropolis. I did the whole hover and x-ray thing..."

"X-ray?"

"I can, uh, see through things."

She sighed. "Right."

"So, I hovered around the courthouse and I was right. We only have to be seventeen to get married, but I also saw a memo saying the license people expected to be busy today because they thought a lot of people would want to get married before the asteroid hits."

"Right."

"So, they open at nine, which is eight here, and I was thinking we'd get there a bit early and hopefully be near the front of the line."

She nodded. "Good idea."

They climbed out of the truck and both put their backpacks on.

"I, uh, also stopped at the Lexor while I was there and made us reservations for tonight." He didn't look at her as he said it.

"Really?" she asked, stopping what she was doing.

"I told them we'd want to check in mid-morning and they said that was fine."

"Thank you, Clark." She was unexpectedly touched. She wasn't sure where exactly she thought they'd go after the wedding, but the Lexor wasn't on her possibilities list. It wasn't like they could go home — *they* didn't have a home and it wasn't

like they were going to tell their parents, 'Mom, Dad, we got married so you head out for a while so we can... you know.' She almost snorted at the thought.

"What?"

She shook her head, a small smile on her face. "Just imagine the look on either of our parents' faces if we came home instead and asked if they could give us some time alone since we just got married."

He chuckled. "That'd go over real well. Where did you think we were going to go?"

She shrugged. "I didn't know, really. Mountain meadow?"

He laughed again. "Maybe some other time, but for now... I was thinking we could, um, spend some time alone together first, but then maybe go out for lunch and go see the Daily Planet building or something as long as we're in Metropolis. I mean, we might want to just spend the whole time in our room, but..."

"Right." She hitched her backpack a bit higher before she sidled up in front of him. "You were a busy beaver after you dropped me off last night, weren't you?"

He wrapped her arms around her. "I'm marrying the woman of my dreams. It won't be perfect, but..." He kissed her softly. "I can't wait to be your husband."

"So, let's get going then. How do we do this flying thing?"

"Well, I could scoop you up. Or I could stand behind you but your backpack's in the way for that. I think you'd be able to see more that way, have more of a flying sensation."

"Well, that's easily fixed." She took her backpack off and put it on in front of her. "Let's go, Farmboy. I want to be your wife."

Clark laughed. "Let's go." He moved behind her, holding her tightly. "Here goes nothing."

Fifteen minutes later, he whispered in her ear. "Hang on. I'm going to land really fast."

She nodded and a second later, they were in the alley behind the courthouse.

"The line's not too long," Clark told her. "You ready for this?"

"As ready as I've ever been for anything."

There were about eight couples in front of them when they reached the end of the line.

Clark leaned over to whisper in her ear. "There's a drug store around the corner. Why don't I go get... you know?"

Lois shook her head. "I'll go. I know what I'm looking for. I think. Better than you do anyway."

"Are you sure? I don't mind."

"I'll be back in a few minutes."

"We probably have a couple hours. If each ceremony is five minutes, that's an hour's worth of people in front of us."

"I won't be gone *that* long," she told him with a roll of her eyes.

She gave him a quick kiss before heading off to a store-front drug store nearby. She went to the birth control section and studied the options in front of her, finally selecting a small box and heading towards the checkout.

She hesitated after only a few steps and turned around. She looked carefully at another row of boxes and finally selected one. That was one thing she wouldn't want to buy in Smallville and just to be on the safe side...

She set her selections on the counter but refused to meet the clerk's eyes as she pulled some cash out of her pocket. She was glad she kept a fairly large stash at home, for emergency candy runs mostly, but it came in handy for this, too.

After she walked out of the building, she sat on a nearby bench and buried the purchases under the clothes she'd brought to wear the next morning. A store across the street caught her eye and she crossed, keeping an eye out for traffic as she did.

She groaned when she realized that it wasn't open, but there was someone inside. She banged on the window.

“Please. Can you help me? I need to buy something and I’m in a hurry.” Tears filled her eyes. “Please?” she asked the large man behind the counter.

He sighed and came to the door. “We’re closed, miss.”

She looked at him earnestly. “Please. My fiancé and I are getting married as soon as the courthouse opens and I don’t have a ring for him. Please?” she asked again.

He sighed. “Come on in. Name’s Louie. Let’s see what we can find. What size does he wear?”

Lois followed him, remaining on the customer side of the counter — it housed everything from rings and necklaces to games she hoped were unloaded to video games from every system imaginable.

She closed her eyes and tried to remember what size he’d ordered when he bought his class ring the year before. She told him what size and he reached under the glass counter and pulled out a plain gold band.

“How’s that?”

Lois slipped it onto her thumb. “I think that’ll work fine. Do you have any others in this size?”

He pulled out two other plain gold bands and one that was covered with diamonds. She immediately eliminated the last one — it wasn’t Clark and probably out of her price range. She looked at the other two, picking one up.

“That one’s comfort fitted,” Louie told her. “The edges are rounded rather than straight so if he catches it on something, it won’t dig in.”

She nodded and looked at the engraving on the inside. “‘I’ll love you till the end,’” she read softly. She looked up at him. “How much?” she asked digging into her pocket for the cash she’d put there.

He sighed. “You know what? Take it. If the world ends in a few days, it won’t matter anyway. And if it doesn’t, come back someday and see me.”

“Are you serious?”

Louie nodded. “Yeah. Take it.” He put the other rings back under the counter. “Just don’t tell anyone, would ya? It’ll ruin my reputation with the guys.”

He wrote out a receipt to make it legal and handed it to her. He walked behind her to lock the door after she left.

On impulse, she reached up and gave him a big hug. “Thanks, Louie. I’ll pay you back someday, I promise.”

“No problem, kid,” he said gruffly as she released him.

She wiped the tears from her cheeks. “Thank you.”

“Go get married. Be happy for a couple days and if this thing misses us, I’ll see you around, okay?”

She nodded and left the store.

She slipped the ring in her pocket.

It was time to go marry Clark.

Part 8

Lois rejoined Clark in the line.

“Everything okay?” he asked, concerned. “Have you been crying?”

She hesitated slightly before nodding. “Yeah, but I’m fine. I just talked to someone for a minute. It’s nothing, I promise.” She smiled up at him. “How much longer before this place opens?”

“About fifteen minutes.”

Lois looked behind them and counted. “Fifteen more couples,” she said quietly. “I’m glad we got here when we did.”

The door opened and a lady slipped out. “Can I have your attention please?”

The quiet conversations stopped.

“Things are going to work a little differently today than normal, given the volume of weddings we expect to perform. I’m going to go down the line and give you the paperwork that you need to complete. On the top of the form is a number. Please have

the paperwork completed and in about fifteen minutes, we’ll start calling numbers. You don’t need to stay in line, but you need to stay here in this immediate vicinity. If you aren’t here when we call your number, we’ll have to move on and you’ll go to the back of the line when you return. Most nonessential court cases have been postponed until after Nightfall is resolved so we have four judges who will be performing ceremonies today. Each ceremony lasts about ten minutes. Thank you all for your cooperation.”

She started down the line, handing each couple a packet of forms to fill out. She handed a packet to Lois as Clark dug a pen out of his backpack.

“Number nine,” Lois said. “That’s not too bad.”

“We’ll be in the third set of weddings,” Clark said, taking the packet from her and looking around. The other couples were dispersing to benches and other spots nearby. “Come on.” He led her to a deserted area around the corner and looked around to make sure no one was watching. Two minutes later, he handed the forms back to her. “We don’t sign them until we get inside,” he said.

Lois’ mouth was hanging open. “Wow.”

“The only thing I didn’t know was your Social Security number so you need to fill that in.”

She put her arms around him. “You’re fast.”

He grinned. “See? I can be handy to have around.”

“Well, it’s a good thing I’m planning on keeping you then.” She kissed him before letting him go so she could fill in the one blank in the paperwork.

They went back around the building so they were within sight of the door.

Ten minutes later, the first four couples were called.

“Here we go,” she whispered. “Twenty minutes or so until it’s our turn.”

Clark stood behind her with his arms around her waist. “And then, off to the Lexor.”

She rested the back of her head against his shoulder. “I don’t want you to think I’m thinking about backing out, because I’m not, but have we thought this through? What about when you get back and everything’s okay? Are we going to tell everyone? Move in together? What?”

He sighed. “I don’t know. Remember on your birthday when we were talking about how we dreamed about sleeping in each other’s arms?”

She nodded. “Yeah.”

“You said you dreamed about being in our bed but you weren’t really sure where it was or whatever and I changed the subject and gave you the promise ring. I meant to come back to it, really, I did, but then we started kissing and…”

“Right.”

“Well, when I dreamed of us, in our bed, it was in Gramps and Granny’s house.”

She looked up at him, quizzically. “We’re not moving into a retirement community, Clark!”

“No. The one at the farm. Where they lived *before* they moved to town a few years ago.”

“Oh, right. I don’t think I’ve ever been in there.”

“Well, since I realized that’s where it was, whenever Mom and Dad aren’t home, I’ve been working on getting it fixed up. I mean, it wasn’t in *bad* shape, but I refinished the hard wood floors and used Mom’s carpet cleaner and painted — that kind of thing. It’s nearly done. We could always live there — if my folks’ll let us of course.”

“My parents are going to be mad when I don’t come home tonight. I told them I was spending the day with you but…”

“Well, I left my parents a note saying that we’d be back early in the morning but that we still weren’t having sex until after we got married. I didn’t tell them we were going to get married,

though.”

“Are we going to tell them in the morning?”

He shrugged. “Maybe we should wait until after I get back safely. They’ll be too relieved to be mad. Maybe?”

She nodded. “Maybe that’s a good idea. I think my parents will be more upset than yours. Unless we’re telling them *everything*, of course, and I don’t see us doing that.”

Clark cringed. “I hadn’t planned on telling them an alien was doing their daughter,” he whispered.

“Clark!” she smacked his arm. “You don’t have to put it like that.”

“What? It’s true.”

“Still...” She turned in his arms to look at him. “You’re the most human person I know.”

He started to say something, but just then the lady came out the door. “Numbers nine through twelve, please.”

“That’s us,” Clark said, kissing her lightly. “Let’s go get married.”

They both picked up their backpacks and headed towards the door. Once inside, they handed their paperwork over to one of the clerks who looked it and their identification over and made copies. A minute later, they both signed the paperwork.

The lady smiled at them. “Okay, you need to go to office 125. It’s right down the hall. Judge Wilson will be with you in a few minutes.”

Clark took Lois’ hand and they walked down the wide hall before sitting on the bench outside the door. He put his arm around her. “Are you sure?”

“If you ask me that one more time, I’m going to walk out,” she threatened with a smile. “Yes, I’m sure. Are you? Are you really sure you want to do this now?”

“Yes, I’m sure.” He kissed her softly. “I want you to be my wife.”

“Good, because I want to be your wife.”

The door opened and another couple walked out.

The judge stood there in his black robes. He turned towards them. “Ready?”

They walked into his chambers and handed him their paperwork. They both set their backpacks on the floor near the door.

The judge asked them a series of questions — were they there willingly, did they understand what they were getting into, were they sure this was what they wanted to do.

He nodded after they answered. “Okay then. Stand right there and take each other’s hands.”

They turned to face each other.

The judge looked at the paperwork. “Alright, Mr. Kent, please repeat after me. I, Clark, take thee, Lois...”

Clark smiled at her. “I, Clark, take thee, Lois... to be my lawfully wedded wife... to have and hold from this day forward... for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish... I promise to keep myself only unto you for as long as we both shall live.”

“Ms. Lane, repeat after me. I, Lois, take thee, Clark...”

Tears shone in Lois’ eyes. “I, Lois, take thee, Clark... to be my lawfully wedded husband... to have and hold from this day forward... for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish... I promise to keep myself only unto you for as long as we both shall live.”

“Do you have rings?”

Clark nodded. “I do.”

“I do, too,” Lois told him, pulling the ring out of her pocket.

“What?” Clark looked surprised. “When did you get that?”

“Earlier,” she whispered. “Shhh... We’re in the middle of a wedding.”

The judge smiled at them. “Okay then, Mr. Kent. Please put the ring on Lois’ finger and repeat after me. With this ring, I thee

wed.”

Clark slid it onto her finger. “With this ring, I thee wed,” he said quietly.

“Ms. Lane, please put the ring on Clark’s finger and repeat after me. With this ring, I thee wed.”

Lois took a deep breath. “I hope this fits,” she muttered and both men laughed lightly. She slipped the ring onto his finger breathing a sigh of relief when it did. “With this ring, I thee wed.”

“Then by the power vested in me...”

“Wait,” Lois said suddenly. “Aren’t we supposed to say ‘I do’ at some point?”

The judge laughed. “Okay. Clark, do you take Lois to be your lawfully wedded wife?”

Clark smiled tenderly at Lois. “I do.”

“Lois, do you take Clark to be your lawfully wedded husband?”

She smiled back. “I do.”

“Then *now*, by the power vested in me by the state of New Troy, I now pronounce you husband and wife.” He turned to Clark. “You may kiss your bride.”

Clark cupped her face in his hand and kissed her gently, once, twice, three times, before moving back.

“Mr. and Mrs. Kent, thank you for allowing me to be a part of your special day. You can either leave these forms here with me and an official copy of your marriage certificate will be sent to the address you designated or you can take them out to the clerk. It takes about thirty minutes, but you can have your certificate now.”

“I think we probably ought to do it now,” Clark said.

Lois nodded her agreement. “I think that’s the best plan.” They didn’t want to get home and have their parents question the validity of the marriage.

The judge signed the paperwork and handed it to them. “Good luck.”

“Thank you,” they said in unison.

They headed back down the hall and handed the paperwork to the same clerk they’d worked with before. She entered the information into the computer and about fifteen minutes later handed them a sheet of paper.

“Here you go. All legal. Have a great day.”

They looked at the certificate. “Thank you,” Clark said. “You have a great day as well.”

His hand rested on the small of Lois’ back, under her backpack as they left the office. They reached the street and looked around.

“Which way to the Lexor?” Lois asked.

Clark turned completely around, pointing to the building towering over the others around it. “That way,” he said. “Do you want to get a cab or...” He leaned closer to her and whispered, “...fly?”

She shook her head. “It’s not that far. Let’s walk.” She took his hand and they started down the street.

“Clark and Lois Kent,” Clark said, pulling his wallet out of his pocket as they stood at the counter of the hotel.

“I like the sound of that,” Lois said, resting her head on his shoulder.

“I do, too.” He turned enough to kiss the top of her head. “I like it a lot, Mrs. Kent.”

The lady in front of them tried to hide her smile. “Check out is at eleven tomorrow morning and you can check out from your room. Use the keyboard in the drawer under the television and follow the on screen instructions.”

“Thank you,” Clark said. “We have an early flight in the morning so...”

Lois tried to hide her smirk. Early flight indeed.

She slid a couple of cards through the reader, coding them to

open the door to their room. “Here you go, sir, ma’am. Two keys to the Honeymoon Suite.”

Lois gasped and looked up at him. “The Honeymoon Suite? Clark, do you have that kind of money?”

“For this I do,” he said softly. “It may be our only day together and I wasn’t going to be cheap.”

“Do you need help with your luggage?” the lady behind the counter asked.

“No, we got it,” Clark said. “Is that all?” he asked as he signed the form.

“Enjoy your stay.” She smiled at them. “And congratulations.”

“Thank you,” Lois said as they turned towards the elevator.

Butterflies had taken up residence in her stomach as they waited.

They entered and Clark took her in his arms as the elevator made its way towards the top floor. “Hey, it’s just me.”

She smiled at him. “I know. I’m still a little nervous though. I want this. I’ve wanted this for a long time, but...”

He kissed her softly. “I know. I’m nervous, too, but we have all the time in the world. We’ll take it as slow as we need to. We love each other so we’ll figure it out, okay?”

She rested her head on his shoulder until the doors opened. He took her hand and led her towards the door. He slid his key in and pushed both doors open before turning and scooping her in his arms.

She squealed and clutched his shirt. “Clark!”

“I’m carrying my bride across the threshold,” he told her with a grin before turning and blowing the doors shut.

“Cool,” she whispered. “You’re going to have to tell me more about all this stuff you can do.”

He set her down in front of him and set their backpacks on the floor. “Later,” he whispered, before he kissed her.

“That reminds me,” she said a minute later. “All those stories...”

He nodded. “Yeah. Those were about me growing up. My folks and I talked for a long time about whether it was the right time for me to tell you. I finally decided that I’d give you the stories and if you picked up on the truth, that was fine. If you didn’t, I’d go with the original plan which was to tell you not long after we got engaged. My parents thought it was a good plan. They love you and know you can be trusted not to turn me in. Of course, the asteroid changed everything.”

She nodded. “Yeah, it did.” She looked at her wedding rings, taking them off and resituating them so they fit together properly. She went to put them back on but was stopped by Clark’s hand on hers.

“Let me.” He slid them on, kissing her fingers when they were in place. “Where’d you get a ring for me?”

“I convinced a guy at a pawn shop to open up this morning while you were in line.”

“Did you have this kind of money with you?” he asked surprised.

“I have some, but he gave it to me. He said if the world was about to end it wouldn’t matter and if it didn’t, come back some day and see him.”

“Wow. That was nice.”

She nodded. “It’s engraved. It says ‘I’ll love you till the end.’”

He gently caressed her face with one hand. “That fits because I’ve loved you since the beginning.”

“And I’ll love you till the end,” she whispered as he lowered his face towards hers.

They held each other, kissing softly, for long minutes before Lois finally pulled back. She looked at the top button on his shirt rather than at him. “I, um, brought something with me to change into. I mean, if you want me to.”

“What?”

“I bought it on a dare from Abby after you gave me a promise ring for my birthday. We were at the mall in Independence and...” She was sure she was turning bright red. “Anyway, I brought it with me.”

“You did?” Clark whispered, his voice deeper than she’d ever heard it before.

She looked up at him and was surprised by what she saw there. She knew he wanted to be with her and had for a long time — she’d wanted to be with him — but the raw desire suddenly on his face and in his eyes... That was new.

She nodded, biting her lower lip. “Yeah. I mean, I don’t know if you want me to or what...”

He brought one hand up to cradle her face. “Whatever makes you most comfortable. I know I said all bets were off once we got married, but if you’re not ready for this...”

She shook her head. “I want this as much as you do. I’m just nervous and all that.”

“Are you hungry?”

“Kind of, but my stomach is kind of tied in knots, too.” She moved out of his embrace and looked around the room.

“I could go get us something to eat,” he offered. “A light snack or something.” He stood behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her back to him.

Lois nodded. “I think that might help.” She leaned her head back to rest it against him. “I’m sorry, Clark. I never thought I’d be attacked by nerves on our wedding... morning.”

“This isn’t how we’d planned this,” he offered. “Seventeen and eighteen. Still in high school. Engaged for twelve hours because there’s a asteroid heading directly for us and I’m going to try to destroy it. I’m nervous, too. I guess I’m just better at hiding it. And I have advantages that you don’t. I can hear your heartbeat speed up. I can smell the change in the scent you put off when you’re tired or scared or nervous. You can’t do those things.”

“You can really hear my heartbeat?”

He nodded against her head. “Yep. It’s going a mile a minute right now.”

“I bet. Would you mind going to get something? I don’t even know what but some kind of snack?”

He kissed the side of her head. “Sure. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

She turned in his arms and kissed him lightly. “Thank you.”

“I love you, Lois. And I meant it. If you’re not ready for this...”

“I know.” She smiled. “I’ll be here when you get back. I promise.”

Clark breathed an exaggerated sigh of relief. “That’s good to hear.” He kissed her again and headed out the door.

Lois took her backpack and went to the bathroom. She looked at the large shower and tried to decide if she wanted to take one. She shook her head. There would be enough time for showers later.

She opened her bag and pulled out the clothes she’d brought to wear the next day. Underneath, wrapped in tissue paper, was the nightgown she’d bought. She held it up by the straps and took a deep breath.

She quickly undressed and slipped it on over her head, wrapping the filmy robe around her in a vain attempt to feel slightly less... She wasn’t sure what she felt. Exposed, maybe?

She heard the door to the suite open. “Lois?”

She took a deep breath and left the bathroom.

Clark set the bag and drink holder down on the small table. “Lois?”

He heard the bathroom door open and looked that direction. His breath caught in his throat.

She stood nervously in the doorway between the living area and the bedroom. The white gown hung from slim straps on her shoulders and fell to pool on the floor around her feet. The filmy white robe did little to hide the neckline that revealed more than any shirt — or even swimsuit — he'd ever seen her wear. He could clearly see the small mole on the swell of her breast — the one he'd gotten glimpses of from time to time.

His eyes traveled down her body and back up again to see that she was nervously biting her lip — something he'd always found endearing.

"You look..." He shook his head slightly. "You look amazing."

She wrapped her arms around herself. "Really?"

He nodded. "Give me one second."

Clark was sure he turned into a blur and a couple seconds later he was standing in front of her. His black shirt hung open and he wore only that and a pair of black silk boxers. He'd thought, dreamed, about this moment for years and he'd made another stop the night before that he hadn't mentioned to Lois. He'd thought about getting something for her, but he wasn't sure that was appropriate or how she'd take it. Sure they were getting married, but...

"Wow," Lois whispered. "I hope you don't do everything that fast."

He wrapped his arms around her and she slipped her hands under his shirt and around his waist, her fingers trailing over his skin. "There's only one way to find out." He leaned to the side and scooped her into his arms.

He carried her into the bedroom and laid her carefully in the middle of the bed before he crawled in next to her.

"I love you, Lois Lane Kent," he told her quietly before kissing her.

"I love you, Clark Kent," she said, kissing him back.

And then... The only sounds in the suite were those of two young lovers becoming one.

Part 9

Lois rested her head on Clark's chest as he tugged the satin sheet up over them.

"Wow," she whispered.

"I know," he whispered back, his finger trailing up and down her spine.

"That was..."

He smiled at her. "I mean..."

She sighed. "Exactly." She stretched up to kiss him softly.

"The only thing I'd like more would be..."

"More?" he whispered huskily.

She nodded. "More."

He kissed her softly. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

She shook her head. "A little bit, but I expected that and just for a minute." She rolled to face him more fully. "I think I'd like 'more' now, if that's okay with you."

He pulled her on top of him. "That's fine with me." He floated them off the bed, taking the sheet with them. "But I think I'm going to show off a bit this time, if that's okay with you."

She gasped as she realized they were hovering in mid-air. "Clark!"

"Are you okay with this?" he asked suddenly, lowering them back down towards the bed.

She looked at him sternly. "If you actually land back on that bed, 'more' isn't going to happen."

Clark chuckled as he floated back up. "Your wish is my command, milady."

"And don't you forget it," she whispered, kissing him.

"I won't."

It was well after noon before they ventured out of the suite.

"So, lunch?" Clark asked, holding her hand as they stood on

the sidewalk.

She nodded. "Yeah. I'm hungry." The food Clark had brought back with him hadn't been eaten.

He leaned closer to her. "We did just burn a lot of calories, didn't we?"

She blushed. "Yeah, we did."

"Do you want to get something and take it back with us or eat out?"

She hesitated. "As much as I'm enjoying spending time alone with you, this may be our only trip to Metropolis."

"That's what I was thinking," he said. "Want to go to the Daily Planet?"

She looked at him with a raised brow. "Have we met? What do you think?"

He laughed. "Daily Planet it is."

They walked towards the famous building, stopping at a deli across the street for lunch.

"Do you think we should call your parents?" Lois asked him as she took a sip of her drink. "Do you think they'll be worried or anything?"

He shook his head. "I told them last night that we were going to spend the day together and that, since you knew about me, I'd probably take you places I couldn't before. They probably think we're checking out the pyramids or the Great Wall, maybe hanging out on a deserted island in the Pacific or something so they don't expect us to actually be at the lake."

"You're going to take me all those places and then some you know," she told him.

"Gladly."

They finished their sandwiches and chips and headed out the door. Lois gasped. "That's Norcross and Judd," she whispered, pointing to a couple standing outside the building attempting to hail a cab.

"We're not here to stalk them," Clark reminded her.

"I know *that*," she said exasperated. "But can I help it if I want to tail them and see what they're up to?"

"No, but I've got a better idea." He stood behind her and wrapped his arms around her.

"What's that?"

"Go look around across the street and then go back to the hotel and try out that jacuzzi." He kissed the base of her neck. "How's that sound?"

"I didn't bring a swimsuit," she told him with a grin.

"Me either. Guess we'll have to go skinny dipping."

Lois giggled. "Okay then."

"Jacuzzi it is then?"

"That sounds wonderful," she sighed as he kissed her neck some more. "As long as you promise to do more of that."

"Gladly."

"Tell me about you," Lois said quietly, her head resting on his chest, her fingers drawing random patterns on his stomach.

"What about me?" His hand rubbed up and down her back, pulling the sheet up over them.

"What do you know about yourself? *How* do you know it?"

"Well, my parents found me in Shuster's field when I was about two and a half months old. Dr. Lewis — he was the doctor in Smallville before your dad — got them a birth certificate and all that. They told him the official story. One of Mom's cousins had been in a 'delicate way' is what Mom called it and that's where I'd come from. The reality was that they found me in a space ship. It's about the size of a jet ski or so, I guess. In it is this... globe thing. It looks like a really big marble or something, but when I was about thirteen it started to tell me things. It told me I was from a planet called Krypton."

"Krypton?" Lois whispered, in awe.

He nodded. "That was something I just knew in my head

when I picked it up. It glowed and changed to a globe of this other planet and I just knew it was Krypton. Over the course of the next couple years, every once in a while it would play this holographic type message. Jor-El, my birth father, would tell me things about why I was sent away, about Krypton, about being Kryptonian.” His fingers played with the hair at her temple.

“Why were you sent away?”

“The planet was going to explode — it did not long after my ship was sent off. My father was apparently the First Lord of all of Krypton, but he was also a scientist. So was my birth mother, Lara. They realized the core of the planet was unstable but no one would listen to them so they made a ship big enough for me and sent me here. They thought I might have the kinds of powers that I do because the Earth has a yellow sun and Krypton had a red one. I’m not sure about the science behind that but…” He shrugged. “They were right. And Kryptonians are telepathic. I guess part of that is having some kind of… mental connection or something when they meet the person they’re supposed to be with.”

She propped herself up slightly. “What’s that mean?”

One arm tightened around her waist and the other hand reached up to brush the hair off her face. “It means that when I met you I knew that I wanted to marry you. Knowing immediately is part of being Kryptonian. When Jor-El told me that, I decided to stop focusing so much on convincing you to marry me and just convincing you to let me be your first date and go from there. That’s part of the reason why Lana or anyone else never stood a chance. There was no point in dating someone else — I’d only end up hurting them in the long run, because you’ve always been the only girl for me.”

Lois leaned over and kissed him softly. “Honey, if you ever mention Lana’s name when we’re naked together again…”

He winced. “Yeah?”

“It’ll be the last time we’re naked together for a while.”

He laughed. “Deal.”

She rolled away taking the sheet with her, picked up her nightgown up off the floor and slipped it over her head as she stood up. “But now you must feed me.”

“I take it we’re not going out if you’re wearing that,” he said, finding his boxers and pulling them on.

She sighed. “Actually, we probably should.”

“Why?”

“Because room service is expensive and we’ve already spent so much money today.” She sat on the couch, her feet curled up underneath her. “I mean, the wedding itself was pretty cheap, but this couldn’t be.” She gestured to the room. “This had to have cost at *least* a couple hundred bucks. You work at *Maisie’s*, Clark. It’s a good job for high school, but you’re not making tons of money and I’m not working at all — not really. Just babysitting here and there and for my folks during the summer. How can you afford this?” She shifted so he could sit behind her and she snuggled in next to him.

“Well, you’re right. This wasn’t cheap, but it’s worth it. This is all the honeymoon we’re ever going to get.” He played with her wedding rings. “It could be the only day we have together. I have every intention of coming back tomorrow, but if I don’t, this is all you’ll have — the memory of today and whatever I have left in my bank account. I figured an amazing today together was worth more to you than a few hundred more dollars.”

She nodded, tears in her eyes. “You’re right. I’d much rather have an incredible day together today than a little more money, but what I really want is for you to come home safely.”

“I know and I’m going to do everything in my power to make sure that happens.”

“I know, but did this completely wipe you out?”

“No, not completely. I have some money left. Hopefully enough to help us get on our feet a bit if Mom and Dad let us stay

in Gramps and Granny’s house. Enough to get some garage sale dishes and a bed because as much as I love you, I can’t imagine sleeping on either one of our twin beds long term, though I guess we could push them together and make a king size if they’re close enough to the same height — if our parents let us have them, of course. Enough, I hope, to do stuff like that.” He kissed her head. “Enough to order room service for now.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah.” He reached for the room service menu. “What do you want?”

Lois rested her head on Clark’s shoulder as they drove. The silence in the truck was pervasive. There was no radio, no sound of swishing wipers. There was only the sound of their breathing and the occasional blinker noise.

They pulled into the yard in front of the farm, the darkness enveloping them when he turned off the truck and the headlights.

“I don’t want you to go,” Lois said quietly. “I know that’s selfish and all that, but a big part of me would rather have you here for two more days with me than risk you not coming back at all.”

“I know.”

A light came on inside.

“They’re going to be out here in a minute.” He hesitated for a second and then pulled his wedding band off. “Keep this for me?”

She nodded. “I’ll keep it safe.” She sighed and pulled her wedding rings off, sliding her promise ring back on her left hand. “These, too.” She zipped them into the small back pocket in her purse.

He opened his door and slid out of the truck as the porch light came on. She followed him out the driver’s door, resting her head on his chest as he took her in his arms.

They’d said their good-byes officially before they left Metropolis. It wasn’t supposed to turn into another session of love making, but it had. Tears had flowed down both their cheeks as they’d kissed and touched and loved and were together one more time.

After a long moment in each other’s arms, Clark sighed and reached out to shut the door. “Come on.”

Hand in hand, they went into the living room where Martha and Jonathan were waiting.

“The rockets didn’t work, did they?” Clark asked quietly as they sat on the couch, his arm automatically going around Lois. “We haven’t been anywhere with a TV on.” That much was the truth. They’d left the television off.

“No, they didn’t,” Martha said quietly. “Did you two at least have a nice day together?”

They both nodded but didn’t trust themselves to say more.

“That’s good,” Jonathan said with a sigh. “But Clark I think it’s time we faced reality. If this is going to work, you’ve got to get going.”

He nodded. “I did the math. The average person breathes about twelve times per minute. I can hold my breath for twenty minutes but if I take two tanks with about an hour’s worth of air, that’s about 1440 breaths worth of air so I don’t have to hold my breath that long. If I breathe once a minute, that gives me a full day’s worth of oxygen and I don’t think that I’ll be gone nearly that long.”

“Good,” Lois said quietly.

He sighed. “I’m going to get changed.” He kissed the side of her head and went upstairs.

“How mad are my parents?” Lois asked quietly as he disappeared.

Martha and Jonathan exchanged a glance. “They’re not happy,” Martha told her. “But they understand you wanting to spend time with Clark. They’re least happy, of course, that you

two spent the night together — and I'm not saying that to accuse you of anything so don't think that, but you were out for the whole night. *We* understand why that is, because Clark's leaving, but we couldn't tell your parents that. We could only tell them that Clark had told us not expect him until this morning and that he reiterated that you two weren't going to have sex until after you got married."

Lois nodded, but didn't trust her voice. She looked towards the stairs, grateful that Clark was already back.

She tried not to notice how good he looked in the black wet suit and was sure that his parents would be able to read in her eyes what had transpired between them.

His hiking boots did look more than a bit out of place, though. He picked up the two tanks and checked them over before fixing them to his back.

He looked around the room and sighed. "I guess this is it," he said quietly. "I don't think I should wait any longer."

Lois hung back as Martha and Jonathan gave him hugs and kisses and pats on the back. She knew they didn't want him to go any more than she did, but she also knew that none of them really had a choice.

After hugging both of them for one more long moment, Clark turned to her. "I know we already said good-bye, but I love you."

She nodded, tears finally spilling down her cheeks again. "I know. I love you, too."

He held her close for a long moment. "I have to go."

"I know."

The four of them walked to the porch, where Martha and Jonathan stayed while Lois followed Clark into the farmyard.

He kissed her softly. "I love you, wife," he whispered.

"I love you, husband," she whispered back. "Be safe."

"I will. I'll be home before you know it."

"I hope so."

"You'll see. Before you know it, we'll be telling them..."

She smiled. "You have to be here to help me with that."

"I will be."

He gave her a long, gentle kiss. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

He took a big step back and lifted into the air, putting the breathing regulator in his mouth and then disappearing before their eyes.

Lois watched the sky for a long moment before turning back towards the porch. Tears continued to flow down her cheeks as she watched Jonathan hold Martha in his arms. She walked slowly up the stairs only to find herself enveloped in a three-way hug.

After a long few moments, they headed inside.

Lois finally spoke. "Um, do you mind if I go use Clark's bed? We both kind of dozed off for a while earlier, but I didn't sleep much or well at all."

That was the truth. She'd finally fallen asleep in Clark's arms, but it had been a restless sleep filled with uncomfortable dreams that she couldn't quite remember.

"Of course, honey." Martha put an arm around her and led her up the stairs.

She slipped her shoes off and glanced down at her jeans. She was sure she knew the answer but felt obligated to ask anyway. "Do you think Clark would mind if I borrowed something of his to wear? These aren't exactly my most comfortable pajamas."

Martha gave a forced laugh. "Honey, I think Clark would be just fine with you borrowing some of his clothes." She went to his dresser and pulled out a pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt. "Here. I'm sure you'll want to roll the pant legs, but they've got a drawstring and the shirt will probably swallow you whole, but it'll be much more comfortable."

"Thank you, Martha."

Her mother-in-law gave her a big hug. "Oh, honey, I'm so

glad Clark has you."

"I'm so glad I have him."

Martha let her go and closed the door behind her as she left. Lois quickly changed clothes, taking a long breath with her face buried in Clark's John Deere t-shirt before pulling it over her head.

She crawled under the covers and cried herself to sleep.

Lois sat in the porch swing with a blanket wrapped around her; one leg curled underneath her as she used her other foot to rock herself back and forth.

She stared at the stars, wondering where her husband was and trying desperately not to give in to the tears that threatened. Breaking news had come in several hours earlier that the asteroid had mysteriously exploded.

Given the time that had elapsed between the time Clark left and the time the announcement was made, they believed that Clark should be back before long. Martha and Jonathan were trying to stay busy inside, but there was nothing for her to do. She'd avoided calling her parents but knew Martha had talked to them and told them that she was there but that Clark was off running an errand. She'd told them that Lois was welcome to stay the night and that Clark would make sure she was home in the morning so she could spend some time with them.

"Nothing yet?"

Lois looked up to see Jonathan walking towards her. She shook her head. "No. Nothing yet."

He sat on the other end of the swing. "I don't think I've ever told you how happy I am Clark has you in his life. I know I wasn't crazy about him telling you, but it had nothing to do with you. I've always had this half-rational fear of him being discovered and telling anyone..."

"I understand that," Lois reassured him. She started to say something else when something caught her eye.

"A shooting star," Jonathan said quietly.

Lois nodded. "It's awfully early for part of the asteroid to get here, isn't it?"

They both looked at each other, their eyes suddenly wide. They both looked back at the streak heading towards them.

"Clark," Lois whispered, standing up and running off the porch. "Clark!" she screamed as she hit the ground, running towards where the streak had disappeared.

Jonathan headed towards the house. "Martha, let's go!" He grabbed his keys. "In the truck, Lois."

She was still screaming his name as she climbed into the back of Jonathan's pickup. Martha and Jonathan were only a few steps behind her as they climbed into the cab.

A minute later, they were speeding down Twentieth Road in the general direction of Smallville and where they'd last seen the shooting star.

As they neared Shuster's field, the cattle in the area seemed louder than usual.

"There!" Lois screamed, pointing towards a stand of trees. There seemed to be a small fire in the middle of them. She hopped down and opened the gate leading into the field, climbing back into the bed once she'd closed it. The trunk bounced across the field and she held on for dear life.

Jonathan stopped as close as he could to the trees and Lois jumped out.

"Clark!" she screamed, running through the underbrush.

"Clark, where are you?!"

She could hear his parents behind her calling the same things.

A minute later, she made it to the small clearing where the grass was smoldering.

What she saw stopped her short. "Clark?" she whispered, peering into the crater.

He was there, curled up in a ball in the bottom of the trench

he had dug.

Martha and Jonathan appeared at her side. Seconds later, they were scrambling down into the hole. Lois led the charge, oblivious that most of his clothes had burned up at some point before he landed.

“Clark,” she whispered, her hand resting on the side of his face. “Clark, look at me.” She felt for a pulse. “He’s alive,” she said, relief evident in her voice. “Clark, come on, sweetheart. Wake up.”

He groaned suddenly and moved slightly.

Tears continued to stream down her cheeks as she closed her eyes in relief.

“Clark, honey, wake up.” Martha was on his other side.

He shifted again, just a bit and opened his eyes. He looked from one to the other and back again. He licked his lips and finally spoke.

“Who are you?” He looked back and forth again. “Who am I?”

Part 10

Lois leaned her head against the window of Jonathan’s truck.

They’d helped Clark out of the hole and into the bed of the truck where Lois had covered him with a blanket and cradled his head as Jonathan drove them home. They’d managed to get him up to his room, where he’d collapsed and slept until finally Lois had to leave to go home.

“We’ll call you when he wakes up,” Jonathan said. “Or have him call you.” He rolled to a stop in front of her house.

“Thanks.”

He reached over and squeezed her hand. “He’s going to be fine,” he told her, trying to convince himself as much as her.

“I know.” She squeezed his hand back. “Thanks, Jonathan.” She climbed out of the truck and headed wearily into the house. She’d dozed for a bit on the couch, but she was ready to sleep for about two days straight.

She headed straight up to her room, grateful she was still wearing Clark’s clothes from the morning before. She crawled under the covers, holding tightly to the little black and white bear.

There was a knock on her door. “Lois?”

She sighed and swiped at her cheeks. “Come in.”

Ellen’s face was impassive, then concerned. “What is it, honey?”

Lois shrugged. They’d agreed that, if she needed or wanted to, she would tell her parents Clark had fallen in the barn and hurt his head, but that he had an irrational fear of hospitals and insisted he was okay.

Lois pushed up until she was sitting against the wall. “Please don’t start with me, Mom. I know I should have told you that Clark and I were going to spend a couple days together — and I was at the farm with his parents all day yesterday. We were planning on spending all day today here with you guys — at least until the asteroid exploded. But Clark got hurt yesterday and I’m really not up for a fight.”

Ellen crawled onto the bed and sat next to her. “You’re right. We’re not happy about the way you handled the last two days, but we did talk to Martha and Jonathan and knew you guys were there yesterday and Martha said that even though you two were planning on spending the night together, you still weren’t having sex until after you get married, though I’m not entirely certain why Clark felt the need to mention that specifically.”

“Do you not remember the look on Daddy’s face last summer?” she asked incredulously.

Ellen winced slightly. “Good point.” She sighed. “What happened to Clark? Is he okay?”

She shrugged. “Physically, he seems fine. He hit his head, but he refused to go to the hospital to make sure he didn’t have a concussion. Apparently, he has a hospital phobia none of us knew

about. Anyway, he dozed off late last evening. Neither of us slept much the night before, not with the whole world ending thing. So, after he dozed off, he woke up and doesn’t remember anything. I mean, he knows how to walk and talk and all that, but he doesn’t know who he is, who I am, who his parents are.”

Ellen’s brow furrowed. “That’s odd. Amnesia?”

Lois nodded. “He went back to sleep pretty quickly and was still asleep when Jonathan and I left to come home. I’m not going to school today or tomorrow,” she said suddenly. “Even if you ground me or something. I’m hoping to get some sleep today but unless Clark’s better…”

“They canceled classes for the rest of the week.”

“Good.”

Ellen kissed the side of her head. “Why don’t you get some sleep and we’ll talk more later? I’ll call Martha and see if there’s anything I can do.”

“You mean your psychology reflecting junk might come in handy?” Lois tried to hide her smile.

“You never know. It just might.”

“I love you, Mom.”

“I love you, too, sweetie. Get some sleep.”

Lois nodded and slid back under the covers as Ellen stood up. She turned back and pulled the covers up over Lois before leaving.

Lois held the little bear tightly, tears streaking down her cheeks until she finally fell into a restless sleep.

Clark groaned and rolled over.

“Clark?” Martha was sitting in his desk chair, watching over him.

“Hello?” he whispered.

“How’re you feeling?” she asked, handing him a glass of water.

He took a few sips. “Okay, I think.”

“Do you know who I am?”

He hesitated and then nodded. “You’re my mom, right?”

“So, you don’t really remember?” she asked, her face falling.

“No,” he whispered. “I’m sorry, but I don’t.”

“Well, what do you remember?”

His brow furrowed as he thought. “I remember dark, but that’s it. I mean, obviously, I know how to do stuff but I don’t remember anything about who I am or who you are or who that girl was.”

“Lois,” Martha told him quietly.

“Lois,” he repeated. “Who is she? My sister?”

Martha smiled at that. “No, honey. She’s your girlfriend. She has been for about a year and a half and you two are very much in love.”

He nodded. “Okay. And the guy who was here was Dad?”

“Yes. He’s out on the farm somewhere now. He took Lois home a little while ago. She’s going to be in enough trouble as it is.”

“Why?”

“Because you two spent all day and all night together the day before yesterday and they didn’t know that she was going to be out all night and then she was here all day yesterday.”

“Oh.” His brow furrowed again. “Why did we spend the night together?”

She sighed. “There was an asteroid heading towards Earth. It was supposed to hit in a couple days and would probably have wiped out life as we know it.”

“Is it still coming?”

She hesitated and shook her head. “No. It exploded yesterday. We’re all safe.”

“That’s good.”

She nodded. “Are you hungry?” she asked suddenly.

He thought for a moment. “I don’t think I am, but I want to

eat.”

“Why don’t I go make you something? You can take a shower and get dressed.”

He nodded. “Okay. Thanks... Mom.”

He took a long shower and got dressed, but couldn’t figure out how to shave. There wasn’t even a razor in the bathroom that appeared to be his alone.

He headed downstairs to find a big breakfast waiting for him. His parents were sitting at the table and he sat across from them, digging into the food.

It wasn’t long before it was virtually gone.

“Thank you,” he said. “That was really good.”

They were holding hands, both silent and serious. He could understand that since their son suddenly didn’t remember them.

“Ellen called,” Martha said suddenly. “She’s Lois’ mom and she’s a psychologist. Lois told her that you hurt your head and didn’t remember anything. She wants to come over and see if she can help. How do you feel about that?”

He shrugged. “I don’t know her. I don’t *remember* her.” He sighed. “I think I should defer to your judgment. What do you think?”

They glanced at each other. “I don’t think it could hurt,” Jonathan said. “We trust the Lanes.”

“The Lanes?”

“Lois’ family. Their last name is Lane.”

“Ah.” The silence turned slightly uncomfortable. “Um, I couldn’t find a razor,” he said suddenly. “Shouldn’t I clean up a bit if my girlfriend’s mom is coming over?”

They exchanged another glance. “I think that, given the circumstances, you’re fine,” Jonathan told him. “We’ll talk about it later.”

“They’ll be here in about half an hour,” Martha said. “Lois wanted to come check on you if nothing else.”

“I feel like I should remember her,” he said quietly, swirling the last bit of his buttermilk in the bottom of his glass. “I mean, I feel like I should remember you guys, too, of course, but in a different way.”

“Well,” Jonathan said slowly. “She’s the most important person in your life. You love her. You’re going to marry her someday. You’ve known that for years. It makes sense you feel differently about her than you do about us.”

He frowned. “I thought I’d been dating her for eighteen months.” They nodded. “So, how have I known for years that I was going to marry her?”

Martha gave a wistful smile. “You came home one day when you were in first grade and announced that you’d met the woman you were going to marry. At first, I thought maybe you were talking about your teacher, but the more you talked the more I realized you meant this little girl you’d met that day. Apparently, she kicked you out of the sandbox and you two ended up rescuing Lana together. It was love at first sight.”

“Oh.”

Tires crunched in the driveway.

Clark looked at the clock. “I guess they’re early.”

Lois was still wearing Clark’s clothes as she climbed out of her mom’s car. She hadn’t been able to bring herself to change out of them.

After greetings — and introductions for Clark’s sake — Ellen and Clark headed out onto the porch to talk.

“How is he?” Lois asked quietly.

“Asking how to shave,” Jonathan told her.

“He doesn’t use a regular razor does he?”

“No,” Martha said, “but we decided not to tell him any of that stuff until after he talked to your mom.”

Lois nodded. “I miss him,” she said suddenly. “I mean, I know he’s right there, but I miss Clark already.”

Martha moved to sit next to her, putting her arm around Lois’ shoulders. “I know, sweetie.”

None of them said much during the hour or so that Ellen and Clark spoke, each absorbed in their own thoughts.

They all looked up as Ellen and Clark walked in.

Lois tried to keep tears from her eyes as Clark sat in one of the chairs. Normally, he would have been at her side — there was plenty of room.

Ellen sighed. “Clark said I can tell you guys anything. He’s not technically a client, but... I’m certain that the amnesia is psychological, not physical. I’d like Sam to come out and look him over anyway, just to be sure, but I’ve never seen anything like this. I’ve read about cases of amnesia like this, but I’ve never treated one. He remembers everything but personal details. He knows how to do algebra and could answer questions about the periodic table of elements and who the first president was and how the Electoral College works. Personally, I’m impressed he could explain the Electoral College. Very few people understand it.” She shook her head slightly. “But he doesn’t know *how* he knows those things. He doesn’t remember school or people or anything like that. We flipped through the year book and a few people and places looked or felt familiar, but that was it.”

“So, what now?” Martha asked, gently rubbing Lois’ shoulder.

“Surround him with familiar people and places. If he’s not better by Monday, he should go to school anyway. He and Lois are in all the same classes, so she can help him with that. Look at pictures of growing up, of the two of them together. As much as Sam and I, and possibly the two of you, aren’t incredibly happy about how serious they are at this age, there’s never been any question that Lois was one of the most important things in Clark’s life. Lois can tell him about a lot of things that you probably can’t because she’s been such a huge part of his life and she knows school and things like that that you don’t. You two can go through old photo albums with him, talk about growing up, family vacations, things like that.”

“How long before he remembers?” Lois asked quietly, tears still threatening.

“There’s no timeline, honey,” Ellen said softly. “There’s no way to know what will trigger his memory. It could be a picture or a place or a phrase that means something to the two of you. You just need to be patient and, as much as we were planning on grounding you for the little stunt you two pulled staying out for two days without talking to us, I don’t think that would be good for Clark. I think spending time with the *three* of you is probably the best thing for him at the moment.”

Lois breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank you.”

Ellen stood. “I’m going to head back to town. Sam closed the office for the rest of the week. If anyone has an emergency, they’ll page him. I’ll have him come back out after I get home, if that’s okay with you guys.”

Martha and Jonathan exchanged a glance then nodded. “That’s fine,” Martha told her. “Thank you so much, Ellen.”

“I wish I had a magic cure,” Ellen said.

The rest of them stood and said goodbye. Lois gave her mom a big hug. “Thanks, Mom.”

“We’ll talk about grounding you when he’s better,” Ellen told her with a smile. “Love you. Daddy’ll be here in a little while.”

“Thanks.”

She left and Lois and the three Kents went into the kitchen.

“So,” Clark began. “Where do we start?”

Lois sat on the porch swing. Clark was inside with his parents looking through a photo album from when they went to Niagara Falls when he was ten.

Her dad had come by, bringing a bag with him. He’d said it was okay if she stayed the weekend with the Kents, as long as she

was home by Sunday night. He'd also given Clark a clean bill of health which hadn't surprised any of them, except maybe the patient.

She gazed out at the night sky, not looking up when the door opened. The swing creaked as someone sat next to her.

Whoever it was didn't speak, but she knew who it was without looking.

"Anything?" she finally asked.

"No," Clark said quietly. "A few things were sort of familiar, like a dream you can't quite remember, but that's it."

"I'm sorry. This has to be horrible for you."

Reaching toward her hand, he stopped short of taking it, and chose instead to let his hand rest on the swing. "It can't be easy for you either."

She shrugged. "It's not my memories that are missing."

"No, but it is your boyfriend's."

Lois played idly with the promise ring he'd given her. "No. You're right here," she said quietly, thinking that it wasn't her boyfriend but rather her husband that was missing and wishing she could tell him that and that she could kiss him and make love to him and hope that those things would help him remember.

He reached for her hand again, hesitating for a moment before taking it lightly in his own. "I'm still sorry I don't remember you. I want to. I feel like I should. And I feel... good around you and I wonder what it is that makes me feel that way."

A tear streaked down Lois' cheek.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you cry. I don't think I like to see you cry."

Lois smiled slightly. "You don't. You hate it when I cry."

"What do I usually do?"

"Depends on why I'm crying."

"Right now. What would I do right now?"

She shrugged.

"Please."

Lois sighed. "You'd sit next to me and put your arm around me and just let me cry for a while, probably." She hesitated.

"Eventually, you'd kiss me and I'd feel better."

He sat there for a few minutes more before sliding towards her, wrapping an arm around her. "I'm so sorry."

"It's not your fault."

"Still."

Images of the two of them at the Lexor, floating above the bed the second time they'd made love, flooded her mind and she stood abruptly. She wanted to be close to him, closer than she could be and she couldn't deal with that.

"I think I'm going to go to bed," she said. "I'll see you in the morning."

He stood behind her. "Wait."

"What?" she asked, not turning around.

"What is it?"

She shook her head. "It's nothing."

"No, it's not. I may not remember much, but I know that's not true."

She sighed. "It's just that you're not my Clark right now. You are but you aren't and I don't know how much I should tell you versus let you remember for yourself. And right now all I want to do is kiss you and I can't do that because you don't remember me." She didn't wait for him to respond but walked inside, grabbing the bag her dad had brought and heading for the bathroom.

When she came back out, dressed in her favorite pajamas, she found Clark sitting on the couch, a pillow and blanket on one end.

"Take my room," he said without looking at her.

"It's okay. It's a comfortable couch."

"I have this feeling my parents raised me better than that. I'll be fine. Take it. Seriously."

She nodded. "Thanks."

"Good night."

"Good night," she said softly, heading up the stairs. She stopped at the top of the stairs, turning to look at him one more time. "I love you," she whispered.

He looked up and smiled slightly at her.

She turned and went to his room, closing the door behind her and leaning against it. She struggled against the constant threat of tears, and for the moment was winning the battle. She set her suitcase next to the desk and slumped in the chair.

Write.

She needed to write some of this down, to express her frustrations on paper because there was no one she could truly talk to. She wasn't ready to tell anyone about the wedding. Not yet. Not until Clark could tell them with her.

She opened the center drawer to look for a piece of paper and a pen but instead found something else. The leather bound journal she'd given him for his birthday. On top of it, held in place with a rubber band, was a slip of paper with her name on it.

She lost the new battle with tears as she pulled it out of the drawer. She pulled the slip of paper out and opened it.

"Lois, love, if you find this or my parents give it to you, then something happened to me. Know that my love is forever. I've known since I met you that you were the only one for me and I can't imagine my life without you. Yesterday, this morning, they were the best moments of my life — being with you was more than I could have ever imagined. You're my best friend, my one true love, my wife, my heart. To marry you and leave you in such a short time breaks my heart. As much as it hurts me to say, I hope you can find someone to share the rest of your life with — maybe not anytime soon, but eventually. You deserve to be loved."

Tears streamed down her cheeks. "I know I hurt you deeply the night you gave this to me and I hope you understand now why I wasn't ready to share those stories with you yet. It wasn't because I didn't love you or trust you or anything like that. This has turned into a journal of sorts, starting that night. I want you to have it. I want you to have anything of mine that you want — as my wife, the money in my bank account should be yours, the truck, and anything else you want... I don't have much, but what I have is yours."

"I love you, Lois, more than you'll ever know. I've loved you since the beginning, sweetheart, and I will love you until the end and beyond. Forever your husband, Clark"

She ran her hand over the front cover, trying to bring herself to open it but she couldn't. She reached over and clicked the light switch off, picking up both the book and the bear her mom had packed before heading towards Clark's bed.

She slid under the covers and, holding both of them to her, cried herself to sleep.

Part 11

"How're you holding up?" Martha sat with Lois on the porch swing on Sunday afternoon.

Lois shrugged. "I'm okay. Clark's the one having a hard time."

"It's got to be hard on you, too. He's not treating you the same way he usually would. Has he hugged you at all? Kissed you? It's not the same, sure, but this has to be hard for you, too."

Lois sighed. Martha had no way of really knowing how hard it was on her. "He put his arm around me Friday night while we sat out here for a few minutes, but I had to tell him that's what he'd normally do."

"And you two have always been a fairly physically demonstrative couple so that's a huge change in your relationship. Can you deal with that if it takes a while for him to remember?"

"I don't have a choice," she said quietly. "I love him. If he never remembers, I'll still love him and I hope that he'll love me, too, in this new way."

"I don't see how he can help but love you, honey."

"I hope so." She sighed. "It's weird though. I was looking for a pen and paper in his desk and found that journal I gave him with a note from him saying if I found it, it meant that something had happened to him and that he wanted me to have it. I haven't been able to read it yet, though. In some ways it's like he's gone, but he's not."

For a moment, Lois longed to pour out everything to Martha, but she couldn't bring herself to do it. Not yet. They hadn't talked about this before Clark left. They'd decided either she'd tell their parents if something happened to him or they'd tell them all together after he got back. At no point had they discussed what to do if he didn't remember anything.

"How do you think he's taking it all?" Lois asked, changing the subject. Jonathan and Clark had gone for a long walk while Jonathan told him everything they knew about being Kryptonian.

Martha sighed. "I don't know. It is what it is though. When Clark told you, you always had the option of walking away. Clark doesn't have that option."

"I have to go home soon. Mom said word's getting around town about Clark's memory, and, whether he decides to go or not, I've got school tomorrow. I know he was planning on going before this talk with Jonathan but..."

"Do you want me to go ahead and take you home or do you want to wait for Clark or Jonathan?"

Lois stood up. "Would you mind?"

"Not at all, sweetie. Go get your things and I'll leave the boys a note."

Lois closed her locker as Pete walked up. She hadn't slept well — again — and was at school much earlier than she'd planned.

"How is he?" Pete asked, walking with her towards their first class.

She shrugged. "He's okay. He doesn't remember anything... personal, I guess, for lack of a better term. He knows how to drive, how to get to school, who Marie Antoinette was, but me? Not a clue. He recognized your picture in the sense that he knows he should know you, but that's it."

Pete stopped and put his arm around her. Lois rested her forehead on his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Lo. It's going to be hard that he doesn't know me, but you? I can't imagine if Abby forgot who I was."

Lois moved away from him and started back towards their classroom, stopping in her tracks as she saw Clark standing there. For once, she couldn't read what was on his face. "Hey," she said, surprised. "I wasn't sure you'd be here."

He shrugged. "I didn't have anywhere else to be."

"This is Pete. He's one of your best friends. We go out with him and his girlfriend, Abby, all the time."

Clark nodded. "I remember the yearbook pictures. I'm sorry I don't remember you."

"It's okay. I'm just glad you're okay overall."

"Me, too," Lois said quietly. "That's the most important thing."

Clark looked at Lois. "Can you show me where my locker is and all that?"

She nodded and headed away. "I'll talk to you later, Pete."

"Bye, Lois. Bye, Clark." Pete headed the other way.

They walked in silence for a moment. "We're serious, aren't we?" Clark asked suddenly.

She looked up at him, slightly shocked. "Yeah. Why?"

"So, what was that with Pete? Was I interrupting something?"

"What? Clark! He was giving me a hug because I told him

you wouldn't remember him anymore than you remembered me. He said he didn't know what he'd do if Abby didn't remember him. That's it."

Clark nodded. "Okay."

Lois showed him his locker and told him the combination. She helped him get his books and such for the first part of the day.

"We have all of our classes together, right?" he asked.

"Yeah, we do. You can just stick with me if you want to. All our teachers know what happened so I wouldn't expect them to call on you or anything like that."

"I think I'm okay with content. I looked through a bunch of stuff last night." He looked around to make sure they were nearly alone. "Super fast. I remember all that stuff. It's just people and events and stuff like that."

"Right."

He stopped suddenly. "Is there something else you're not telling me?"

"Like what?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I just get the impression that you're keeping something back from me."

Lois sighed. "There's a lot of things I haven't told you. Telling you every detail of our eighteen month relationship and more than a decade long friendship will take eons. The important thing for you to know is that I love you and I hope that you can figure out some way to still love me."

He reached out and touched her cheek with his fingertips. "There's something about you that feels good, that feels right."

She smiled slightly. "I'm glad, but now we have to get to class."

Clark sat down near the back of the auditorium and sighed. The morning hadn't been *hard*, yet it was tiring at the same time.

Lois had been right — the teachers hadn't called on him and had gone out of their way to accommodate him — offering late turn in dates for assignments due that week and things of that nature.

Lois had quietly told him who the people were, telling him what his relationship — if any — with each person was.

That didn't mean he remembered any of them.

He closed his eyes and leaned his head back, not moving as someone — he assumed Lois — sat next to him.

"Hey."

He didn't recognize the voice so he opened his eyes and looked at the girl sitting next to him. "Hi," he said.

"I'm Lana."

He nodded. "Right. I knew that."

"You remember me?" she asked hopefully. Clark couldn't put his finger on what else was in her voice.

He shook his head. "No. Sorry. I remember your picture and Lois told me who you were but..."

"Oh." She sounded disappointed.

They sat in silence for a moment.

"I'm glad you're not hurt," she finally said.

"Thanks." They sat for another minute. "So, are we... friends? Lois didn't really say."

Lana sighed. "Part of me wants to tell you that you and I... that we have something special, something that you don't want Lois to know about."

Clark didn't know what to say to that.

She looked at her hands. "I've had a huge crush on you since we were little. I had this idea that I could tell you that we had a thing on the side because you didn't want to break Lois' heart but... I can't do that. You love her. You have since she and I were in kindergarten and you were in first grade."

"Thank you for your honesty," Clark said after a minute. "I appreciate it." He rested a hand on her shoulder. "I'm sure there's

someone out there for you.”

Lana turned and smiled at him. “Thanks.”

Lois walked into the auditorium and headed straight to the front where they always sat. She put her backpack on the seat in the row behind Pete and Abby.

“Have you guys seen Clark?” she asked them.

They both shook their heads. “Nope. Sorry,” Pete said. “He wasn’t here when we got here.”

Lois stood next to them and looked around, her eyes landing on Lana.

Sitting next to Clark.

Who had his hand on her shoulder and was smiling at her.

She sighed and brushed past her friends to flop in the seat next to Abby. “Figures,” she muttered.

“What?” Abby asked.

Lois jerked her head slightly towards the back of the auditorium. “I should have expected that Lana would try to move in on Clark while he doesn’t remember anything.”

Abby put her arm around Lois’ shoulders. “It’s okay. He knows you two are a thing and unless he really believes he’d cheat on you there’s no way he’d think something was going on with the two of them.”

Lois rested her head against Abby. “I know, but what if he decides he wants to see if there’s something with her. How does he know I’m the one for him?” Tears filled her eyes.

He was her *husband* and he was sitting with Lana and she didn’t feel like she could go tell Lana to beat it like she would have the week before — not when Clark didn’t remember her.

Mrs. Sanderson called the class to order. She called to Clark and Lana and told them to move towards the front.

A minute later, Clark sat next to Lois as class started.

After school was over, they walked outside.

“Now what?” Clark asked.

Lois shrugged. “Up to you.”

“What would we normally do?”

She sighed. If Clark had his memory, they’d probably go find somewhere to be alone and make love again. She’d dreamed about being together with him every night and she longed to drag him off somewhere — even the back of his truck — and be with him again.

“You okay?”

Lois sighed again. “I’m fine. Normally, you’d come over and study and help my sister with her homework and hang out. You might stay for dinner, you might not. Depends on what we’re having and what your mom is making and how much homework we have or if you have to help your dad on the farm.”

“And today?” he asked quietly.

“It’s up to you. If you want to come over, you’re welcome to, but if not...” She shrugged. “I’d understand.”

“Do I give you a ride home?”

Lois pointed across the street. “I just live right across the street.”

He nodded. “Do you mind if I head home? It’s been a long day.”

“That’s fine. I understand.” She wanted to spend more time with him but at the same time, it *was* more stressful than she would have expected to treat him differently than normal.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly.

Lois shrugged. “It’s not your fault.”

They stood awkwardly for a long moment.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” Lois finally said, turning to walk away.

“Wait.”

She stopped and turned to face him.

“I’m sorry this is hard for you,” he said quietly. “I wish I remembered.”

“I know.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Right. Tomorrow.” Lois turned and practically fled home.

Lois sat on the porch swing at her house, staring into space but not really seeing anything.

It had been nearly two months and Clark still didn’t remember anything.

And she hated the ‘new normal’.

It wasn’t *horrible*, but it wasn’t *normal*.

Most afternoons he went home instead of coming over.

They’d gone out on dates once or twice on the weekends, usually with Abby and Pete. She’d gone out to the farm every Saturday or Sunday or both. They’d looked through photo albums and she’d told him about their relationship.

Most of it.

She hadn’t told him that they were married.

But still nothing.

And now they were graduating.

Class rankings had come out and they were both in the top five. They’d both been asked to give speeches at graduation. She’d worked with Clark on his and had hers written but that wasn’t what occupied her thoughts.

She looked up as the door opened. Sam came to sit beside her.

“I’m proud of you, Princess.”

“Thanks, Daddy.”

“How’s Clark? We miss having him around here.”

Lois shrugged against him. “He’s fine. I miss having him around, too.”

“Mom and I are both looking forward to going out to the farm tomorrow. Your grandparents are, too.”

Before Clark had gone to destroy *Nightfall*, they’d decided to have a joint graduation... dinner. It was really more of a potluck with Clark’s grandparents and any family in the area that wanted to drop by. Lois’ family and both sets of grandparents were coming as well.

“Me, too,” Lois said quietly. “I don’t suppose that dropping Clark out of the barn again would bring his memory back?”

He chuckled lightly. “That’s not how it works.”

“I didn’t think so.”

“Are you feeling okay? You haven’t eaten much lately and you seem pale a lot of the time.”

“Just stress, I guess,” she said. “I don’t have much of an appetite these days.”

“If it gets much worse, I want you to come in and make sure there’s not something else going on.”

She nodded. “I’ll let you know if I think it’s too much.”

He kissed the side of her head. “Go get some sleep, Baby Girl. You’ve got a big day tomorrow.”

She nodded. “Love you, Dad.”

“Love you, too.”

She headed up to her room, closing the door and locking it behind her. She went to her dresser and dug through the bottom drawer until she found what she was looking for. She left it in the drawer, under one of Clark’s sweatshirts she’d borrowed not long after they’d started dating, but she knew for sure where it was.

After closing the drawer, she moved to the top drawer where she pulled out their wedding rings, beginning her nightly ritual. She moved her promise ring and slipped the engagement and wedding rings onto her finger and Clark’s wedding band onto her middle finger. It was too big, but she wasn’t comfortable with it on her thumb, so she’d wrapped yarn around it to make it a bit smaller.

She thought again about reading the journal she’d brought home, but, again, couldn’t bring herself to.

Instead, she pulled out her own journal and began to write.

Lois sat on the chair in the Kent's living room, balancing her plate on her knees.

Graduation had gone smoothly with only a slight hitch in Clark's speech as he stumbled over a memory that he didn't really remember.

They'd taken pictures and headed towards the farm and now there were probably thirty family members in the house.

She picked at the barbecue beef in her sandwich but didn't eat much of it.

"You okay?" Martha asked quietly when she set her plate on the counter a while later.

Lois shook her head, tears feeling in her eyes. "Can I talk to you? Privately?"

Martha set down her plate. "Of course, honey. Come on."

She led Lois upstairs, allowing Lois to enter the master bedroom in front of her.

Lois hesitated before sitting in the middle of the bed. She held tightly to the purse she'd grabbed on her way upstairs.

Martha sat on the bed near her, quietly waiting for her to be ready.

"We didn't tell you everything," Lois blurted out.

Martha nodded. "Okay."

"That day..." Lois took a deep breath. "We didn't go see the world the day before Clark left. We went to Metropolis."

"Metropolis is a great city," Martha said carefully.

Lois nodded. "I've been there before, but mostly the suburbs. We went downtown."

"Daily Planet building?"

"Among other places. The first place we went..." Lois stopped, tears flowing down her cheeks. She took another deep breath. "We went to the court house."

The older woman looked slightly puzzled. "Uh huh," she said warily.

Lois shook her head. The tears flowed faster down her cheeks. "In New Troy, you only have to be seventeen to get married," she whispered.

Martha's eyes widened. "And you two..."

Lois nodded. "We got married," she continued quietly. "Clark had, um, gotten us a room at the Lexor and, um..." She was sure she was bright red. "We were careful," she continued quickly. "I mean, Clark had stopped at a drugstore after he dropped me off the night before, but I'm allergic to latex. Clark waited in line at the court house while I went to another drugstore and got something else. We read the directions like eighteen times and we followed them, I swear we did, but..." Her voice trailed off.

"You're pregnant?" Martha asked quietly.

Lois nodded. "I've wondered for a couple weeks, so I finally took a test this morning. It came back positive pretty quickly, before the two minutes were up." She pulled her purse towards her and pulled out a piece of paper, handing it over to Martha before opening the small zipper pouch and pulling out the rings. She set them on the bed.

Martha looked at the marriage certificate. "I believed you."

"I knew you would but..." Lois wiped the tears off her cheeks. "I've thought about it and we really did follow the instructions — we were careful about that — and the only thing I've come up with..." She hesitated.

Martha covered Lois' hand with her own. "It's okay, honey. I'm sure you were careful."

Lois nodded. "Well, the only thing I've come up with is that, um..." She stared at the comforter. "That Clark's, um, swimmers are invulnerable, too."

Martha nodded. "I suppose that makes sense."

"I don't know what to do," Lois whispered. "I love him, but things are so weird right now. He doesn't touch me. He hasn't really kissed me since he left. He doesn't remember me, but

we're married and he's going to be a father. How do I tell him that? *Do* I tell him that?"

Martha tugged on her hand and Lois moved until she was sitting next to Martha. She rested her head on her mother-in-law's shoulder as she was enveloped in a warm embrace.

"You have to tell him," Martha said quietly.

"I know, but how?"

"That, I don't know."

They sat there for a few more minutes before Martha spoke again. "What was your plan for after he got back?"

"We were hoping you'd let us live in Gramps' and Granny's house. Clark said he'd been fixing up the inside when you guys weren't home. He said he had enough money left after paying for our... 'honeymoon'..." She used finger quotes. "...to get us a few things to set up house, depending on whether you and my folks would let us have our furniture and all that — if you'd let us live there, of course. Otherwise, I don't know what we were going to do. We didn't really talk about it a whole lot. We just knew we wanted to get married before he left and not *just* because of the... honeymoon."

Martha sighed. "Well, we need to make a plan. You have to tell Clark and we'll have to talk to your parents and Jonathan, of course, and go from there."

"Will you help me?" Lois asked quietly. "I don't think I can do this by myself."

"Of course, but I think you need to tell Clark on your own."

She nodded. "Okay."

"Do you want to get this over with today?"

Lois nodded again. "Yeah. Daddy's noticing that I haven't been feeling well. It hasn't been too bad, but I'm queasy most of the time and if I don't eat by six or so, it's not going to happen."

Martha held her for another long moment. "I love you, sweetie. I couldn't ask for anyone better for Clark."

"Thanks, Martha. I love you, too."

Martha hesitated for a moment. "If you want to call me 'Mom', you can. You've always been the daughter I never had."

Lois smiled through her tears. "Thanks, Mom."

Martha stood up. "Why don't you go splash some water on your face and I'll send Clark up, okay?"

Lois nodded. "Thanks."

Martha left and Lois did as she'd suggested, coming back out of the master bathroom just as there was a knock on the door.

Clark came in without waiting for an answer. "Hey," he said. "What's up?"

Lois sat back down on the bed and couldn't look at him. "We need to talk."

Part 12

Clark was quietly observing the room around him. With the exception of Lois' grandparents, he'd met, or re-met rather, everyone prior to this, and he wasn't sure he'd actually ever met Lois' grandparents before.

He'd seen Lois and his mom disappear up the stairs a while earlier and he wondered idly what that was about.

The last two months had been extremely frustrating. He remembered everything since he'd returned to Earth, but nothing before that. Nothing.

What he wanted most was to remember Lois.

Everyone told him how wonderful they were together and how they belonged together and, on some level, he believed that, but he didn't feel like he should lead her on either. The Clark that had left for outer space had known her for over a decade and had fallen in love with her. This new Clark had to figure out if that was still right. He had to fall in love with her all over again.

And he thought he was, but she'd also been strangely quiet and distant for several weeks. He'd asked her about it and she'd said it was just the stress of the end of their senior year in high

school.

He didn't like seeing her like that, but he wasn't sure what to do about it. He cared about her, and he felt a connection with her that he didn't feel with anyone else, but he couldn't honestly say he was in love with her like he guessed he had been before he left. He thought he *could* — he was sure he *would* — but he wasn't there yet.

But he knew he didn't like seeing her like she had been recently.

He was fairly certain that the strain on their relationship was a big part of it as well. What he saw as not moving too fast, she saw as putting the brakes on.

He finished his sandwich and was in the kitchen getting a refill on his drink when his mom came up to him.

"Clark, you need to go upstairs and talk to Lois," she said quietly.

"Is something wrong?"

"She's in our room." He started towards the stairs but she stopped him with a hand on his arm. "Don't be mad at her, sweetie. She wanted you to remember on your own, that's all."

Clark was puzzled but nodded as he headed up the stairs. He knocked on the door to his parents' room, not waiting for a reply before he walked in.

Lois walked out of his parents' bathroom, obviously upset.

He really didn't like seeing her cry — for any reason. "Hey," he said quietly. "What's wrong?"

She sat on the bed and refused to look at him. "We need to talk."

Part of him was scared that there was something wrong — that was why she'd been distant the last few weeks. She was sick or... something. He wasn't sure he'd know how to deal with that.

"I got that much. Mom told me not to be mad at you because you wanted me to remember on my own, so I'd guess you're going to tell me something that I don't know."

She nodded and surprised him a bit with what she said. "No one knew except us and I just told your mom." It wasn't what he was expecting.

He leaned against the dresser and ran a hand through his hair. "What is it?"

She didn't say anything for a long minute and he had to strain to hear her when she finally spoke. "I'm pregnant."

He gave that a minute to sink in before responding and he still wasn't sure he'd heard her right. "What?" he whispered.

"I'm pregnant," she said a bit more loudly.

"I thought we were..." He hesitated. "I thought we were waiting until we got married."

She nodded. "We were."

"So, then who..." Even without his memory, he couldn't complete the thought. He shook his head slightly to clear it. Lois wouldn't cheat on him. He knew that. "I mean, how..."

"You're the father," she said over his last statement, sounding more than slightly indignant — and rightfully so.

He closed his eyes for a second as he rushed to reassure her. "I didn't mean that the way it sounded. I mean, I guess we must have decided that since there was a chance I wouldn't be coming back..."

"We got married," she told him, holding out a piece of paper. "We flew to Metropolis and got married and then spent most of the day in the honeymoon suite at the Lexor. We were careful — we used protection — but..." She sighed. "I took a test this morning and it came back positive."

Clark stared at the marriage license he held in his hand and slumped back against the dresser again as it slowly sunk in.

Married.

He and Lois were married.

And having a baby.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he finally asked quietly.

"No one knew. Just us. And you didn't even remember *me* much less anything else. I just kept hoping you'd remember and then a couple weeks ago, I started to suspect I might be pregnant and I knew if I was I'd have to tell you and we'd have to figure out where we go from here." She took a deep breath and continued, still not looking at him. "I mean, I'd understand if you didn't want to be married to me anymore — you barely want to date me, these days — but you have a right to know that we're married and I'm having your baby, but if you want to call a lawyer, I'd understand."

Would she really understand? The tears indicated 'no'.

They'd been flowing down her cheeks and had been for some time as she spoke.

He sighed. "I'm so sorry I don't remember and that you're going through this alone."

"It's not your fault."

"Still, it would have been different if I'd known we were married," he told her.

"How? You still wouldn't remember me."

"No, I probably wouldn't," he admitted.

Lois scooped up something he couldn't see from the bed and put it in her purse. She stood up. "Anyway, whatever you want to do is fine with me. Just let me know if I need to get a lawyer or whatever. I can't imagine it would be a difficult... divorce. I won't ask for anything from you for the baby so you don't have to worry about that. I just wanted you to know and to let you know that whatever you decide, I'm okay with it." She brushed past him on her way to the door.

He stopped her with a hand on her elbow as she stood by the door. He moved to stand behind her. "You're not okay with whatever I decide, are you?" he asked quietly.

Lois closed her eyes and cursed mentally. He was so close to her. She could feel his breath on her neck and it was sending chills up and down her spine.

"No, I'm not," she finally said. "But I don't see how I have much choice in the matter. You went from having a fairly serious girlfriend you don't remember and don't want to be with to a wife you don't remember and don't want to be with. It just makes the eventual break-up a little more expensive."

"If we weren't married, would you want to break up?" he asked, his hand still burning the skin near her elbow.

"No," she said emphatically with a shake of her head. "Even if we hadn't said for better or worse, sickness or health and all of that, I've always been in it for the long run with you, but you don't remember that. You don't remember saying 'I do' and taking vows and being together that day. How can I hold you to it?"

She could feel him behind her, his solid bulk so close... It would be so easy to relax back against him, so he could wrap his arms around her and hold her close, to tilt her head slightly so he could kiss his way down her neck.

But he wouldn't. He'd made it abundantly clear since he lost his memory that he wasn't comfortable with anything close to the physical relationship they'd shared even before they got married. His hand still rested near her elbow and was the longest continuous, intentional, contact they'd had since he got back.

"Did I mean it?" he whispered. "When we got married, did I mean it or was it just a way to get in your bed when I thought I might die?"

"You meant it," she whispered back.

"Then why would I back out now?"

"Because you're not the same person you were then. You don't remember me, us, being in love. You're not in love with me anymore. I won't hold you to it."

He took a slight step towards her and she could feel his legs against hers, his chest brushing against her back, his breath more

hotly on her neck.

"I didn't really think I'd have married you just to get into bed," he said softly. "I may not be *your* Clark, but I do care about you. I'm not going to back out on my obligations. Not to you, my wife. Not to my baby. You're not getting rid of me."

She turned to look at him, her breath catching at her first good, close-up look at him in weeks. "Don't tell me that now and then back out on me in a few weeks or a few months when neither one of us has slept because the baby's been up all night. If you mean it, fine, but don't feel obligated because of something you said or did before everything changed."

She looked into his chocolate colored eyes. They weren't the same. She didn't see the twinkle that was normally there, the love that had always been in them, even before their first date.

"I mean it," he told her and for an instant, she thought he might kiss her.

A knock on the door interrupted them. "Lois? Clark?" Martha called quietly.

Lois swiped at her cheeks and turned away from him as he stepped back. She opened the door. "We were just finishing up, Martha," Lois told her, trying to paste a smile on her face.

"Everyone else has gone. The only people left right now are your parents," Martha told her gently.

"I guess we should do this then." She brushed past Martha and headed down the stairs.

Her parents and Jonathan were waiting for her in the living room. She sat nervously in one of the chairs and waited for Clark and Martha but they didn't show.

"What is it, Princess?" Sam finally asked. "Martha said you and Clark had something to tell us."

Lois nodded, looking at the stairs again.

"You're not breaking up, are you?" Ellen asked her. "With Clark not remembering and everything?"

Lois shook her head. "No, we're not breaking up, though I offered to let him go if he didn't want to be with me anymore."

Jonathan snorted. "Memory or not, that boy'd be stupid to take you up on that offer."

She smiled slightly. "Thanks, Jonathan."

"So, what is it then?" Ellen asked.

She looked at the stairs one more time. "I guess he's not coming," she muttered before taking a deep breath. "The day before the whole Nightfall thing, when we spent the whole day together — not the day I was here, but the first one — we, um..." She hesitated.

"Decided not to wait until you got married because the world was ending?" Sam asked quietly.

Lois shook her head. "Not exactly."

"But you are pregnant, aren't you?" Ellen reached over to take her hand as she spoke.

Lois nodded. "Yeah, I am. But we got married first. We flew to Metropolis where you only have to be seventeen and we got married and spent the day together before we flew back here. We used birth control, but..." She couldn't tell her parents her theory about why it hadn't worked. Martha might tell Jonathan, but her parents didn't know about Clark.

"So for the last two months, your husband hasn't remembered who you are?" This came from Jonathan.

Lois nodded again. "Yeah."

Ellen tugged on Lois' hand until she stood, pulling until she sat between her parents. Ellen wrapped an arm around her, holding her close. "I think we want to be mad, or at the very least annoyed with you two, but given everything else... How long have you known?" she asked.

"Only for sure since this morning."

Sam scooted closer to her, putting his arm around both his wife and daughter. "What was your plan if the world didn't end?"

"To see if Martha and Jonathan would let us live in Gramps'

and Granny's house. For me to get a real job after graduation, maybe for one of you two. Commute to Midwest University in the fall — which we were planning on anyway. Tell you guys together."

"Martha knew?" Jonathan asked.

Lois shook her head. "Not until a little while ago. I showed her the license and the rings and then she sent Clark upstairs to talk to me. I thought they were right behind me when I came down, but I guess not."

Clark stared at the license in his hand as Lois left the room. They were married.

They were having a baby.

"It's a lot to take in," Martha said as he sunk to the bed.

He nodded. "I don't remember any of it. I wish I did, but I don't."

Martha sat next to him.

"She said if I wanted out, it was okay with her."

"It's not," she said quietly. "No matter what she says, she wouldn't be okay with that."

"I know."

"So, what're you going to do?" Martha rested her head on his shoulder.

Clark shrugged. "Figure out how to make this work. Take care of my pregnant wife."

"We'll have to talk to Dad about the house, if you two can live there. I can't say either one of us is very happy with how this has played out, but we can hardly hold you responsible for that now and we have a grandbaby that's going to need some place to live." They sat there for long moments. "I'd imagine Lois is wondering where we are and if she's going to have to tell them all by herself."

He cocked his head to the side and listened. "She already has." He sighed. "I'm screwing this up already."

He stood and headed downstairs, his hands shoved in his pockets, not looking at anyone. He looked up as the screen door slammed shut.

Lois was nowhere to be seen. He sighed and changed directions, heading instead towards the porch.

She was seated on the porch swing, staring into space.

"You should have waited," he said quietly. "I didn't mean for you to have to tell them by yourself."

She shrugged. "Turns out my parents already suspected I might be pregnant. They didn't know that we got married, though."

"I'm sorry you had to do it by yourself."

"Doesn't matter. They're as okay with it as they would have been if you'd been there, too."

He leaned against the railing. "Still, I should have been there with you."

She sighed. "What's the plan, Clark? Are we moving in together? What if your parents won't let us live here? Do you even want to?"

"I guess, if we don't stay here, we try to find someplace else. An apartment in town or something, I guess."

"I've always worked for my parents in the summers and had planned on it again this year, but if they won't let me, then I'll start looking for another job tomorrow. I don't know how much you have in savings, but I don't have much. And I'm going to have a baby to pay for before you know it. And medical bills and..."

"We are, you mean."

"What?"

"*We're* going to have a baby to pay for before long. Medical bills, all of that. *We* are in this together."

"I'll believe it when I see it," she muttered under her breath.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

“It means that you’re not the same Clark I married two months ago and I get that — I get *why* things are different — but that doesn’t mean I like it. You won’t even hold my hand most of the time, much less kiss me or...” She took a deep breath. “... make love to me. Married isn’t what you want.”

“What do you want?”

“I want Clark back,” she said quietly. “I miss you so much. And I’m so grateful that you’re alive and I love you more now than I did then, but I miss you. I want to be able to touch you, kiss you, make love to you again and I can’t.”

She’d stood up and paced around the porch with her arms wrapped around herself.

Clark moved in front of her, taking her face in his hands and kissing her hard.

Her arms wrapped around his neck and his moved to wrap around her waist, pulling her tight against him as they lost themselves in the kiss.

It was several minutes later that they both pulled back, more than slightly out of breath.

“Is that what you want?” he whispered huskily as she rested her hands on his chest, leaning heavily against him.

She pushed against him, taking a big step back. “No, it’s not what I want. I want you to want it, too, and you don’t. I can tell in the way you kiss. It’s not what you really want.”

She stood with her arms crossed in front of her, staring at the ground between their feet. He shoved one hand in a pocket and ran the other through his hair.

“I want to want it like you want me to,” he told her. “I want...” He stopped as the door opened.

“Lois?” Ellen walked onto the porch. “Honey, it’s almost time for us to go, but we want to talk to the two of you first.”

Clark watched as Lois carefully wiped her cheeks and he sighed, following her into the house.

Lois rested her head against the car window as her dad drove them home in near silence.

They’d gone back inside where they’d been told that Martha and Jonathan would allow them to live in the little house on the other side of the farmyard — at least for the time being. She could have stayed at the farm — or Clark could have stayed at her house — for the night, now that their parents knew they were married, but she had decided to go home alone and pack her things. Clark was doing the same at the farm. She was sure Clark was glad for a few hours’ reprieve before they moved in together.

She didn’t say anything to her parents as she went to the garage to try to find a few boxes she could use to pack a few things in. Clark and Jonathan would be over with their trucks first thing in the morning and she needed to be ready.

“There’s a couple empty tubs in the closet in the basement,” Ellen told her. “We can probably move most of your clothes and things in the drawers, so there’s no need to pack them all.”

“Thanks, Mom.” She turned and headed towards the house.

Ellen put her arm around Lois as they walked inside. She stayed in the living room with Sam, while Lois headed for the basement.

Ten minutes later, Lois had locked herself in her room with a couple of Rubbermaid tubs and a few trash bags. Before she did anything else, she took the rings out of her purse and put them on as she did every night.

Packing her room didn’t take long — pictures came off the walls, a few frames from the top of her dresser and desk she wrapped in T-shirts. She hesitated before she put the first item in one of the tubs. She dug around in her bottom drawer and pulled out the nightgown and robe she’d worn on their only night together as well as Clark’s boxers and the shirt he’d worn. She wrapped them all in a trash bag and put it on the bottom, covering it quickly with other items, burying it beneath them. She didn’t

need the reminders and she didn’t want Clark to find them — not yet.

When she was finished, she looked around her childhood room one more time before she changed into her pajamas and crawled into bed.

Alone.

Part 13

Lois sat in the truck with Clark as they pulled away from her house. No. Her parents’ house. It wasn’t hers anymore. She was glad it was Sunday. The rest of the school had a week to go and if they’d done this on a weekday... Well, she was glad they didn’t have to deal with half the town watching. She was also glad Lucy had spent the night at a friend’s house.

The things from her room were loaded in the back of Clark’s truck. Jonathan’s truck held the couch and love seat from the basement along with the small entertainment center and television that had been down there.

At least they had furniture — some place to sit besides their bed.

And at the moment they were still hoping that they could push their two beds together without a big height disparity.

Or that was the official story at least. Lois suspected that the beds would stay apart if Clark had anything to say about it. Her mom had packed a set of their king sized sheets and a comforter they didn’t use anymore.

“That was nice of your parents,” Clark said suddenly.

“What?”

He nodded towards the truck in front of them. “The furniture from the basement.”

Lois shrugged. “We were the only ones who were ever down there anyway. Mom, Dad, Lucy, they all prefer to be upstairs and really we spent more time down there because we could sit closer and kiss more.”

“Still it’s nice of them.”

“Yeah.”

There was a long silence.

“I appreciate them coming over to help, but it would have been kind of nice if they hadn’t. I could probably have it done a lot faster and easier.”

“Probably.”

The rest of the ride was quiet and a few minutes later they pulled into the farmyard.

“We already moved my stuff in,” Clark said as he got out of the truck.

“When did you have time to do that?” Sam asked.

Clark shrugged. “Last night and this morning. It wasn’t much, really. Dresser, desk, bed, clothes in my closet.”

Lois sighed. It had probably taken him all of about five minutes to do it all. This would probably take longer.

She went around to the back of the truck and lowered the tailgate, picking up one of the tubs as she did.

“Hey!” Clark took it from her. “We got it. You go inside and direct traffic.”

She took it back. “I’m not an invalid. It’s not that heavy.” She turned and walked into the small house.

She’d never been in there, but it looked like Clark had done a good job working on it before... before he’d flown into space and lost his memory.

She shook her head slightly and walked further in. She walked into the living area — on the small side but well situated. There was a fireplace in one corner and room for the entertainment center on the wall next to it. Straight through it was the kitchen with a pass through counter in between the two. She’d look in there later — not that she could cook. She went down the short hall to the right of the living room. On the left was a small bedroom with Clark’s desk in it. In front of her was the small

bathroom. To her right was what she guessed was the master bedroom.

Or the bigger of the two rooms anyway.

She sighed and set the tub in the corner near the fireplace. It wasn't see-through, but shared a chimney with the one in the living room.

"We thought we'd bring the bed in first so you can figure out where you want it," Clark said from behind her, causing her to jump slightly.

"Let's just hope they match up okay." She looked around the room, finally pointing to the other wall. "That's probably our best bet for fitting them next to each other and still having room to walk."

Clark nodded as Jonathan and Sam set the mattress and box springs in the hallway. The metal frame from Clark's bed was already set up and it only took a minute for him to position hers next to it.

"Which side do you want?" Clark asked, moving his box springs easily into position.

"I don't care."

Clark sighed and set it carefully in the frame, positioning his mattress on top of it before moving to get hers out of the hallway.

"Not bad," Ellen said as he set the mattress in place. "They're almost exactly the same height. We'll finish in here, Clark — at least until you get the dresser in here."

He nodded and left.

Ellen pulled the set of sheets out of the bag. They worked together, silently making the bed.

By the time they were finished, the dresser and side table had been brought in. Lois sat on the bed and looked around. "I think this as good as it's going to get."

The bed was on the wall opposite the corner fireplace, flanked by mismatched side tables. Across from the bed, next to the fireplace, was her dresser. On the wall to her left, starting about a foot past the end of the bed, was Clark's chest of drawers. On the right, next to the door, was the small closet. The closet door had just enough room to open without hitting the bed.

Ellen sat next to her. "I think this is probably the best way to arrange it." She put her arm around Lois. "Maybe spending more time together like this is what Clark needs to spark his memory."

"Maybe."

Clark poked his head in the door. "You want your desk in the other bedroom?"

Lois nodded. "That's fine."

"That's about it then."

"Thanks."

Ellen picked up the notepad and pen sitting next to her on the bed. "You guys'll want to get an egg crate for the bed when you go to Independence. They're the right height but it'll help with where they meet if you do."

"Thanks, Mom." Lois took the list from her and blanched slightly. There was easily a hundred dollars worth of items on it and probably closer to two or even three. It wouldn't clean out her bank account, but...

"Dad and I talked about it and we're going to give you guys a little bit of seed money as a late wedding present. It's not much but it should cover most of the list."

Lois gave her mom a big hug. "Thank you," she whispered.

"You're welcome, sweetie."

"Hey, Lois!" Sam called from the other room. "You want to come look at this?"

Lois stood at the hallway and looked around the living room. A few inches to her left was the entertainment center. It was only about four feet long and ended several feet from the fireplace. To her right was the opening to the kitchen and then the pass-through window. On the wall opposite the entertainment center was the sofa, with an end table on either side and an oversized

chair she didn't recognize angled between the couch and the pass through window. Across from the kitchen was the main entrance. From where she was standing the door was in the middle left of the wall. To the right were several windows and there was enough room for the love seat underneath them. If they opened the door much past ninety degrees, it would hit the love seat so she'd have to remember that. A coffee table was in front of the sofa.

"I didn't think you'd want to put the entertainment center any closer to the fireplace," Martha explained.

Lois nodded. "That makes sense. Just in case."

"Right."

She shrugged. "It looks fine to me. I don't have any other ideas. Where'd the tables and that chair come from though?"

"The tables were Granny's mom and dad's," Jonathan said. "They left them here when they moved. There's a small table in the kitchen. The chair was one they left, too."

"Thank you so much," Lois whispered, tears filling her eyes.

"Well, all we're providing is the roof," Martha told her. "The utilities are listed separately on our bill, so we'll let you know each month how much you owe. Same with the phone. If you want to connect to the satellite, we already pay for that, but you would have to pay for the extra receiver and any costs that go with getting it set up out here. And food, gas, clothes, everything for the baby — that's all you guys."

Lois nodded. "I know. Thank you for the roof at least."

Her parents both gave her and Clark hugs and then left, followed quickly by Martha and Jonathan who did invite them over to the house for dinner.

Lois leaned against the entertainment center, trying not to think about what this day would have been like if Clark had his memories.

Carrying her over the threshold into the house.

Carrying her into their room.

Lying with her on their 'new' bed.

Making love together.

She sighed. "I'm going to go take a nap."

Clark looked up from where he was sitting in the oversized chair. "Are you feeling okay?"

She nodded. "Just tired. I didn't sleep well last night."

She turned and went back to her new bedroom, crawled onto her side of the bed and, eventually fell asleep.

Clark sighed as Lois walked towards the back of the house.

He *wanted* to remember, but he just couldn't.

Like a dream that was barely out of reach.

When he'd kissed her the night before, it had felt so right, but awkward at the same time. It was by far the most intense kiss he remembered having with her — though obviously not the most intense she remembered. Not if they'd... made love repeatedly.

Obviously, they'd spent hours over the last couple years perfecting their kissing technique, but he didn't remember it. She knew exactly where and how to touch him — he could tell that it came to her with practiced ease — but he didn't. He felt awkward like a sixteen-year-old on his first real date getting his first real kiss, and in some ways this was true. He'd kissed Lois before, since he'd lost his memory, but not much more than a brush of lips — something she'd informed him was about eight times less than their first kiss on their first date.

Something in him knew they were so right together, but at the same time, he didn't really know her like he felt like he should if he was going to spend half his time making out with her.

Or... more now that he knew they were married.

He looked up as tires crunched in the farmyard. Clark sighed again as he saw Pete's truck. He'd forgotten they were supposed to spend part of the day together.

"Hey," Clark called as Pete hopped out.

Pete looked puzzled. “What’re you doing over there? I didn’t think anyone lived there.”

Clark rubbed the back of his neck. “Um, Lois kinda sprang something on us last night. I mean, she didn’t mean to — she was hoping I’d remember but...” He hesitated. Were they telling people? The whole town would know soon enough but...

“What?”

“Um, apparently, the day before I forgot everything...”

Pete continued for him when he paused. “When we all thought the world was ending...”

“Right. Apparently we flew to Metropolis and got married and...” He ran a hand through his hair. “She’s pregnant.”

Pete leaned against his truck. “Wow.”

“Yeah. No one knows yet — except our folks so...”

“Not even Abby will hear it from me,” Pete promised.

“Anyway, we moved in Gramps’ and Granny’s house this morning. She’s taking a nap. With everything else, I completely forgot that we were supposed to do something today.”

“No problem. I’ll get out of your hair. Congratulations, man.” Pete smacked him on the shoulder.

Clark looked at the small house. “Just let me leave her a note. I know I mentioned it to her yesterday.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.” Clark jogged back inside and scribbled a note for Lois before returning to get in Pete’s truck. “What’re we doing?”

“Josh wanted us to come over and play basketball, if that’s okay with you.”

Clark nodded. “Yeah. I don’t think I’m going to tell him about all this yet, though. I probably shouldn’t have told you. We haven’t talked about telling anyone so...”

“Won’t hear it from me.”

Ten minutes later, they pulled into the yard as Josh bounded down the steps.

“You guys ready to lose?” he asked.

They spent the next hour playing basketball, finally stopping to get a drink and catch their breath.

“So, Clark,” Josh started, “the rumor around town is that two trucks full of furniture left Lois’ house and headed your way.”

Clark sighed. “All around town?”

“Yep. Dad heard it from Jerry at the feed store. I think he heard it from Chad Andrews. So, what’s the deal?”

Clark looked at Pete, who shrugged. “I guess we got married during the whole world ending thing and she just found out she’s pregnant. She was hoping I’d remember before she had to tell me but no such luck.”

Josh winced. “I’m happy for you guys — you’ve always belonged together — but that’s got to be hard on both of you.”

“Harder on Lois, I think,” Clark said quietly. “I don’t remember what I’ve lost. I have this sense that I’m missing something, but I don’t remember it. She does. If I did, it wouldn’t be an issue.”

“Right.”

They headed back out to the court and continued playing.

But Clark’s mind wasn’t on the game and he lost, soundly.

Lois woke up feeling a bit better.

She swung her legs over the side of the bed, stopping in the bathroom before heading out to the living room. Clark was nowhere to be seen, but there was a note on the coffee table.

“Think I got everything put up that I could. Pete came over like we’d planned earlier this week. I think I mentioned it to you last night. I’ll be back in a bit — hope you enjoyed your nap. C”

Lois sighed. Of course he wasn’t just sitting around waiting for her to wake up.

Well, she wasn’t going to sit around waiting for him to get home either. She grabbed the list her mom and Martha had made, found Clark’s keys and the money her parents had given her, and

stopped to write her own note on the bottom of Clark’s before leaving.

She drove to the CostMart in Independence where she started looking for the things on the list. She tried not to imagine what it would be like if she’d been doing this with Clark — her Clark, the one who remembered. She could picture him trying to convince her that the smaller, shorter towels were the way to go instead of the big bath sheets — insisting that they needed another DVD, one that they’d seen a million times and wouldn’t end up actually watching. Maybe he’d even try to convince her that she needed something new from the... intimates department to go with the new house.

She, of course, would try to convince him that he needed something, too.

She happened to pass the men’s socks and underwear as she thought it. She stopped when she saw the boxers. She ran the navy blue St. Louis Cardinals silk boxers through her fingers. They were Clark’s favorite team. The Kansas City Royals were closer but they just weren’t any good and Jonathan had grown up listening to the Cardinals on the radio. He’d passed the love on to his son. She and Clark had even driven to St. Louis with Martha and Jonathan one weekend the year before to go to a couple of games. They’d stayed with Clark’s Aunt Opal and it had been a blast.

On impulse, she dug through the boxers, picking out a couple different pairs and sticking them in the cart. Once he remembered, then she’d give them to him.

It wasn’t long before she had an overflowing cartful and she headed towards the checkout.

She loaded everything into the back of the truck and headed for home.

Her new home.

With Clark.

Would he be there?

Would he sleep with her at night?

Or would she wind up sleeping alone again?

As much as she’d enjoyed making love on their wedding day, she missed being in his arms. The two best nights’ sleep she ever remembered were that night and the night at the lake. They hadn’t really slept *much* either night — for very different reasons — but what sleep she’d gotten had been great. She felt safe in his arms, loved, protected, cared for, in a way she didn’t anywhere else, not even when her dad held her and let her cry when she was hurting — as a little girl with a skinned knee or a practically grown woman whose husband didn’t remember her.

She pulled up near the house and began to unload her purchases. She was on her third trip inside when Pete’s truck pulled in. She grabbed the box of plates and headed for the door, not stopping to greet either one of them, and was glad she’d taken the boxers in first and hidden them.

By the time she’d set the box in the kitchen, they’d brought everything else in.

“So, I guess he told you?” she asked Pete.

Pete nodded. “Yeah, but Josh said it’s all around town already that you moved out here today.”

“Great,” she mumbled. “Just what I need. All of Smallville wondering how pregnant I am and half wondering if we already got married quietly while the other half wonders when Clark’s going to make an honest woman out of me.”

“The pregnant thing isn’t all around town,” Clark told her as he sat on the couch. “For all anyone knows — except Pete and Josh — you’re moving out here to help me remember or something.”

She raised an eyebrow at him. “Really? You have to work tomorrow at Maisie’s. Ten to one the first place everyone will look when they see you is at your ring finger. Then they’ll start asking not-so-subtle questions about us and if we’re still planning

on getting married before too long since you don't remember anything and when we want to start a family and all of that. Believe me, all of Smallville thinks I'm pregnant."

"She's right," Pete said from his spot on the love seat.

Clark looked at his left hand. "I don't even have a wedding band, do I?"

Lois sighed and headed towards the bedroom. She emerged a minute later, unwrapping the yarn from around the ring. "I wore it at night," she told them. She finished with the yarn and handed it to him. "Here."

"Thanks," he said, taking it and looking at it for a minute before sliding it onto his finger. "Did I at least have an engagement ring for you?"

She held up her left hand where she'd put her rings while she was in the other room. "You said you got them the last time you were in Kansas City."

She turned to Pete. "I'm sorry we didn't tell you guys. It was kind of spur of the moment when we thought the world was ending. We were going to tell you that weekend, after we told our folks, but then Clark didn't remember and..."

"Right," Pete said quietly. He looked at his watch. "I gotta get home and shower. Abby and I are going out tonight. You guys wanna make your foray into Smallville society?"

Lois looked at Clark who shrugged. "Mom invited us over for dinner, but I think that was because we don't have any food yet."

"Why don't we call you?" Lois said finally. "Let us talk to them and make sure Martha isn't making extra for us or something. Or I'll call Abby."

Pete nodded, giving her a big hug as he got ready to leave. "Congrats, Lolo."

She smacked him. "You know better than that."

"Sorry." He grinned.

"No, you're not."

"You're right."

"Can we at least go to Parsons or Independence or something if we go?" Lois asked him.

Pete nodded. "Sure."

"Thanks."

After another quick hug and a wave to Clark, he left.

"Which would you rather do?" she asked him quietly, walking into the kitchen, beginning to unpack her purchases.

He followed her and started looking through the bags. "I don't care. What about you? What do you want to do?"

Lois tried to hold back the tears as she stuck the silverware holder in a drawer. "Make love," she mumbled. That was what she really wanted to do. It wasn't going to happen, but that was what she wanted.

"What did you say?"

Part 14

Lois looked up, meeting Clark's wide eyes with her own. "What?" she asked.

"What did you say?"

She shrugged. "Nothing."

"No. It wasn't nothing. You said, 'make love.' Didn't you?"

Lois looked at him, tears shining in her eyes. "So?" she said defiantly. "You're my husband. We just moved into our first house together. Does it really surprise you that I want to make love? That I want you to want to?"

Clark sighed. "I want to remember," he said quietly.

Lois moved towards him, stopping when she was inches from him. She rested her hand on his chest. "Make love to me," she whispered. "Maybe that's what you need to jog your memory."

He gulped as she ran her hand down his chest, over his stomach, before sliding her arms around his waist. His arms automatically went around her. "I don't know," he whispered back. "Are you sure that's what you want? To be with me even if

I don't remember? I care about you, I know that but..." His fingers brushed against her cheek.

"Lois? Clark?" A knock on the screen door interrupted them.

Lois released him and took a step back. "Come in," she called, turning back to the bags on the counter.

Martha walked in. "Hey, you went shopping!"

Clark leaned against the counter. "I went to play basketball with Pete and Josh. Lois was asleep when I left but when we got back..." He gestured around them. "We now have stuff."

Martha laughed. "Well, I wanted to see what sounded good to Lois for dinner."

Clark glanced at her, but she was too busy unloading the plates into the sink. "Actually, Pete asked if we wanted to go out with him and Abby tonight, but we said we'd have to check with you first — see what you had planned for dinner and all that."

Martha breathed a sigh of relief. "It actually would be okay with me. Dad and I had a long day, longer than expected. I was hoping that you guys would be up for cold cuts for dinner, but I knew Dad would expect something more if we were having 'company'." She used finger quotes and rolled her eyes. "Like you guys are company. I'm really not up for cooking though."

"Don't worry about us, Martha," Lois said, moving the box to the table. "We'll be fine."

Martha caught her hand as she walked by. "I didn't get to see these last night, not really." She looked at Lois' wedding set. "It looks like..."

Lois nodded. "Clark said it reminded him of something from his birth family. He never told me what, said he'd tell me later but..."

"It looks like the El family crest, a bit at least," Martha told her. She looked at Clark. "Have you shown her the ship and the globe?"

Clark shrugged. "What ship? What globe? Where are they?"

Martha sighed. "Have your father show you. He's better at getting the trap door open than I am anyway. Didn't he tell you about them when you talked about the whole Kryptonian thing?"

Clark's brow furrowed as he thought. "Yeah, he did. I'd forgotten. He said to tell him when I was ready, but I forgot all about it. I'll ask him tomorrow."

Martha gave Lois a hug. "Okay, well, come over for dinner some night this week, okay?"

They both nodded and she gave Clark a hug as well before leaving.

"So, do you want to call Pete and Abby or should I?" Lois asked, running water in the sink.

"We don't have a phone yet," he pointed out.

"True. Why don't you go over to your folks' house and call them and see where they want to meet?"

He thought about asking her if she wanted to continue their discussion, but she was up to her elbows in suds and he figured the moment had passed. He sighed and headed out the door.

Lois tossed her purse on the loveseat and headed for the bathroom. "Do you need in before I take a shower?" she asked Clark.

"No, go ahead." He grabbed the remote and sat on the couch, propping his feet up on the coffee table.

She went to her — their — room and got her things together. She took as long a shower as she could until the hot water started to run out.

She went through her nighttime routine and then went to their bedroom, putting her laundry in the sorter as she did. She was glad she'd put the egg crate on the bed earlier because she didn't have the energy to do it at that point.

She crawled onto her side of the bed with the new body pillow her mom had recommended.

It wasn't long before sleep claimed her.

She woke to sunlight streaming in the window. She'd have to get Clark to put those blinds and curtains up before the day was out.

Clark.

Her brow furrowed. She didn't remember him coming in but... She rolled to see that his side of the bed was untouched.

Tears started to fill her eyes. He hadn't even slept in the same bed with her.

She closed her eyes and willed them to stay put, then got up, not bothering to close the door before she got dressed for the day. She heard footsteps as she finished putting her bra on but didn't bother to turn around or hurry putting her shirt on.

The footsteps stopped and she glanced up in the mirror as she reached for her shirt.

"Sorry," Clark muttered as he turned around.

She sighed. He was her husband. They'd spent a lot of time naked together that day. It wouldn't bother her in the slightest if she walked in on him without any clothes on. It might make her want to have her way with him, but it wouldn't bother her.

Maybe she needed to buy some sexier pajamas.

She pulled the Lane Clinic shirt over her head, grateful that her parents had let her keep her job, for the time being at least. She changed into her pants, slipped her feet in her tennis shoes, and stopped in the bathroom before she headed for the kitchen.

"Can you give me a ride to work this morning?" she asked Clark as she poured a cup of coffee. She was glad her mom had put a coffee maker with a timer on the list of things for her to get.

"I don't have to go in until ten, but yeah, I guess." Clark was just sitting on the couch, but she noticed a pillow and blanket in the corner behind the chair.

"Well, I have to be at work in forty-five minutes and since we only have one car between us..."

That was something else she was going to need to talk to her dad about. She had her regular savings, which didn't have a whole lot in it, and her car fund, which did. They'd promised that when she was ready to buy a car, they'd match her, dollar for dollar. She needed to find out if that still applied and start looking for a car. If it didn't, she still needed to look, but her options would be much more limited.

A car hadn't seemed to be a big deal before. Not when she lived across the street from school, four blocks from work — when she worked, and had Clark to drive her anywhere else because they went almost everywhere else together.

Clark sighed as he stood. "I'll go get ready then and we can leave in a few minutes."

"Thanks." Lois took a long sip of her coffee. It was the only caffeine she was allowing herself a day and she was determined to enjoy it.

It didn't take Clark long to get ready, and so Lois was at work a bit early.

"Hey, Princess," her dad said as she walked in. "How was your first day at the new house? You guys get everything put up?"

She walked around the counter and stuck her purse in one of the cabinets. "My husband slept on the couch, but otherwise it was just peachy."

Sam's arms were around her in a second. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart. This has to be so hard for you. I can't imagine what it would be like if your mom didn't remember me."

She rested her head on her dad's chest, enjoying being there with him. She'd missed him, even though it had only been twenty-four hours since she'd moved out.

"Thanks, Daddy," she said, moving away from him and carefully wiping her cheeks. "I needed that." She sat in the receptionist's chair. "I do have something I need to talk to you about, though."

"What's that?"

She took a deep breath. "A car. I mean, you always said you'd match the funds and I'd completely understand if you didn't want to anymore, given how the circumstances have changed in the last couple days, but I need a car and so I thought I'd ask because I can afford something nicer if it still applies than if it doesn't and I really need to start looking."

Sam nodded. "I'm glad you understand that the circumstances have changed and that could easily change that decision."

Lois tried not to gulp. They weren't going to. It didn't really surprise her but it would have been nice.

"We talked about it yesterday. Living so much further away... We'd planned on encouraging you to get a car after graduation and adding a bit more to the fund as your graduation present."

"But not anymore," she said quietly. "I understand."

"No." Sam shook his head. "No, we're still willing to help."

That was a commitment we made to you a long time ago. And we're still going to chip in a little bit extra to help with it. That doesn't mean you *need* to spend everything you have saved if you can find something good for cheaper. You're going to need that money before long. I'll be happy to provide your prenatal care for free if you want. I'll even do the delivery if you want me to, though I'd understand if you didn't, but you'll still have hospital costs and my cost for tests that we send out and you're going to need a car seat and a crib and clothes and diapers and everything else a baby needs."

Lois nodded. "Thank you. I'll start looking today and see what I can find. I won't spend everything just because I can," she promised. "And I'll let you know about the prenatal care and all that."

He glanced at the clock. "We have a few minutes. Do you want to do a quick ultrasound?"

Her eyes grew wide. "Can we?"

He nodded. "Sure. Come on."

They headed back to the room with the ultrasound machine. Lois knew this setup was different than big town doctors but small towns were different. 'Dr. Sam' helped with everything from prenatal care to pronouncing deaths at the local nursing home. He and several other doctors from surrounding communities had finally broken ground on a twenty-five bed hospital in Smallville. They'd have medical personnel available twenty-four/seven at that point, reducing the work load for all of them a bit and making some surgeries available closer to home as well as having an emergency room open all the time.

Even then, the closest labor and delivery facilities were in Independence, nearly twenty miles away. Close, but not always close enough. 'Dr. Sam' averaged four or five babies a year and had admitting privileges at Mercy Hospital. Though he rarely did the deliveries once a patient was at the hospital, he did provide prenatal care for a number of patients who would go on to deliver there.

Lois winced as the cold goop covered her lower abdomen. Her dad hesitated before placing the wand on her stomach.

"Do you want Clark to be here for this?"

Lois shook her head. "I'll show him the pictures. I don't know where he is, but I want to do this."

Sam nodded and pressed her stomach with the wand. After a minute, he pointed to the screen. "There you are, Princess. There's your baby." Another minute later, a throb-thwub sound filled the room. "That's the heartbeat."

Lois watched the screen, mesmerized. "Wow," she whispered.

He frowned slightly as he took some measurements.

"What is it, Daddy?"

"Nothing."

"Dad-dy." Lois' voice held a warning tone that even Sam

knew not to mess with.

He sighed. “Nothing big. The baby’s just measuring a few days bigger than I would have expected given what you’ve told us.”

“Don’t even think it,” she hissed. “We were *not* having sex before that day. And we haven’t had it since, so I don’t know why the baby’s measuring a few days big, but don’t even get it in your head that we were lying to you.”

He nodded. “The usual explanation is that a woman forgot the exact date of her period or for some other reason miscalculated when she ovulated or something, but I believe you.” He handed her a washcloth to wipe her stomach off with. When she sat up, he handed her the slips of paper. “There you go, Princess.”

“Thanks, Dad.” Lois gave him a big hug. “You know the town’s already talking, right? Apparently, Wayne Irig heard that I’d moved out to the Kent farm at the feed store yesterday.”

“Which means the town is already wondering if you got pregnant before or after the secret wedding.”

“Exactly.”

Clark waited outside the Lane Clinic for Lois to come out. She’d been right. He’d had a number of questions at Maisie’s about the two of them and whether Lois had a ‘bun in the oven’, as several of the older ladies had put it, smiling slyly the whole time. He’d done his best to remain noncommittal, instead focusing on the wedding two months earlier before he lost his memory and how Lois had been hoping he’d remember on his own but when he hadn’t by graduation, she’d told him the whole story.

Official confirmation of the pregnancy would have to wait. Lois climbed into the truck and laid her head back on the seat.

“You okay?” he asked as he pulled out of the parking lot.

“Long day,” she said. “Spent half my time fending off questions and the other half hiding.”

“Maisie’s was about the same. I tried to avoid the pregnant questions, though.”

“Me, too. But then Jenny saw the ultrasound pictures in my purse and it’s all over the office. They all said they wouldn’t say anything but...”

Had he heard her right? Had she had an ultrasound without him? He tried to keep his voice light. “Ultrasound?”

“Daddy did one this morning before we opened. He said everything looks good except the baby is a few days bigger than he expected. He had the gall to think — even for a minute — that we’d been lying about when we started having sex.”

“Did we?” Clark asked her quietly.

“No!” she answered sharply. “We got married the day before you flew into space and nearly died. We had sex *after* we got married — more than once — and we *didn’t* before then and haven’t since.”

“So, why is the baby bigger than expected?”

“How the hell should I know?” she snapped.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“Liar.”

She sighed and changed the subject. “I need a car. Daddy said they’d still match whatever I spend out of my car savings, plus a little bit more for my graduation present. It needs to be something safe enough for the baby, because — let’s face it — we’re not going to want to put the baby in here if we can avoid it.”

He nodded. “That makes sense.”

“Abby said last night her parents are getting a new car soon — maybe they’d sell me their old one for a reasonable price. It’s a ten-year-old Jeep Cherokee. Silver. It’d be good for a baby and her dad always takes really good care of their cars.”

“Yeah.”

“I’ll call her from your parents’ house tonight and talk to her mom.”

There was silence as they drove towards the farm. “Can I see the pictures?” Clark finally asked.

“When we get home,” Lois said with a sigh. “Not while you’re driving.”

A few minutes later, they pulled into the farmyard. Lois hopped down and headed for his parents’ house.

Clark sighed and followed.

“Martha? Jonathan?” Lois called as she knocked and headed inside, just as she always did.

“In here, sweetie,” Martha called from the kitchen.

Clark continued to follow her until they were seated at the kitchen table. Lois was on the phone with Abby’s mom, making arrangements to go over later in the evening to look at the Jeep.

“Oh!” Lois opened her purse once she hung up. “Daddy did an ultrasound this morning. Here’s the pictures. They’re not great — the baby’s like half the size of a peanut, but there we go. Clark had already left, so he hasn’t seen them yet either,” she explained as she handed them to him.

He looked at one closely before passing it on and then stared at the second for a long time. His mom and Lois had moved on to other topics of conversation.

“Do you think it’s because of me?” he asked suddenly.

“What?” they all asked in unison.

“That the baby’s a few days too big. Is it because of me and, well, me? I mean, maybe Kryptonian pregnancies go faster or something.”

“It’s possible,” Jonathan said slowly.

“Daddy offered to do my prenatal care for free — except expenses on tests and stuff he has to send out,” Lois told them. “He even offered to deliver without a fee, though he’d understand if I didn’t want him to. Given your... differences, maybe that’s the best plan. It’s not like he’d say anything if things got weird and we had to explain why.”

Martha and Jonathan exchanged a long look before finally nodding.

“That’s true,” Jonathan said. “He’d have incentive not to.”

“Unless he can’t stand the idea that an alien is married to his daughter,” Clark said suddenly. “And he wanted to get her away from me or something.” He stood and started to walk towards the back door.

Lois stood after him. “Do you *really* think *so* little of my father? He loves you like the son he never had — he always has — just like your parents have always loved me like the daughter they never had. Do you *really* think he’d jeopardize me or his grandchild?” she practically yelled at him.

“How the hell should I know?” he yelled back. “I don’t know the man. I don’t know you. I don’t know *any* of you.” He swept his arm around the room in a grand gesture — including all of them, and the outside world, in his statement.

“Nothing’s coming back?” Martha asked quietly, trying to ramp down the tension that was suddenly in the room.

“No,” Clark said, frustrated. He ran a hand through his hair. “I don’t remember anything and I’m out of ideas.”

“I had an idea last night,” Lois muttered.

“What?” he asked.

“You heard me, Mr. Kryptonian.”

“What was your idea?” Jonathan asked.

“I suggested that maybe making love to his wife would help,” she said sarcastically. “But, no. He slept on the couch instead.”

“Do we have to do this here?” Clark said. “If you want to fight, we can, but we don’t have to do it in front of my parents.”

“Why not? You won’t talk to me anywhere else. You won’t touch me. Two nights ago is the first time you’ve really kissed me in *months* and it was obvious you didn’t even want to do that.”

Clark glared at her. “You’ve been weird and withdrawn for weeks and I’m supposed to suddenly realize that I’m madly in love with you?”

“I *thought* I might be pregnant, and that a guy who didn’t even remember marrying me had gotten me pregnant. Of course, I was weird and withdrawn. It was *so* reassuring to know that our one day together was so memorable that he didn’t even feel anything for me once he lost his memory.” Her voice was getting louder again just as his had. “But I can’t *say* that. I can’t say how much I hate this. How much I miss *my* Clark. How much I wish your memory of us was back. It’s selfish and all that, but, right now, I don’t care if you *ever* remember anyone else. *Ever*. I just want you to remember *me*. Remember *us*. And I know it’s not your fault and you saved the whole damn world when you lost your memory, but that doesn’t mean I like it.” She took a deep breath, trying to calm herself. “I offered what I thought was a *valid* suggestion — making love to your wife, recreating what — at the time — should have been, and actually was, an incredibly beautiful moment in your life. You didn’t want to even contemplate it because you don’t remember me, you don’t love me and I get that, but that doesn’t mean I *like* it.” She headed for the door. “If you want to *sleep* with me tonight, you’re welcome to, otherwise find somewhere else to be. Maybe the hayloft will jog your memory.”

The screen door slammed behind her as she left.

Clark sank into one of the chairs before looking at his parents. “What do I do?” he whispered. “What do I do?”

Part 15

Lois didn’t care that the screen door slammed behind her. She didn’t care that the screen door to *their* house slammed behind her.

She changed her mind about staying in the little house and turned, grabbing the extra set of keys, and headed back outside. She didn’t care that she didn’t have her purse with her and hopped in the truck anyway, driving towards town. If Clark really wanted to go somewhere, he could fly.

Tears streaked down her cheeks and continued to do so until after she pulled into her parents’ driveway. It wasn’t that she was running home to her parents because she and Clark had a fight; it was that she needed her dad’s help.

She sat there with her head on the steering wheel until a tap on the window startled her. It was her dad.

She rolled down the window. “I need your help.”

“What’s wrong?”

She shrugged. “Clark and I had a big right in front of his parents and I don’t want to talk about that, but I need your help anyway.”

He watched her thoughtfully for a minute. “Okay. What’s up?”

She told him about the Jeep and he agreed to follow her out there and look it over for her before she decided whether to buy it or not.

He agreed but opened her door and pulled her into a long hug.

“Thanks,” she whispered as he moved back.

“Married or not, you’re still my little girl.”

Ten minutes later, they were on their way. She hadn’t even left the truck. She didn’t want to face her mom or Lucy, but her mom had come, too, riding with her dad. That way, if she did get the Jeep that night, they’d have enough drivers to get it and everyone else home.

Abby’s parents’ farm wasn’t too far from the Kents and it wasn’t long before they pulled in. They spent the better part of an hour and a half chatting with Abby and her parents and test driving the Jeep. Sam helped haggle a good price and Lois drove off in Clark’s truck with her dad driving the Jeep behind her.

They pulled into the yard at her new home. She exchanged one more hug with both of them before they left and she headed into the small house.

It was dark — Clark obviously wasn’t there. She sighed and decided that she wanted to take a long bath. She had one of the big towels wrapped around her when she left the bathroom.

“Nice Jeep.”

The voice startled her and she stopped where she was.

“Thanks,” she finally said.

“It’s ours?”

She shrugged. “Technically, it’s still Abby’s parents. I have a week to have it looked at and decide if I want it. Daddy got a good price on it. I’m paying for half of it and they’re paying for the other half and then taxes, title, tags, all that for my graduation present.”

“That’s nice.”

Lois headed towards their room, dropping her clothes in the laundry sorter as she did. They had a space for a washer and dryer but didn’t have any. Martha had said they could use theirs when they needed to.

She put on a favorite pair of shorty pajamas and headed out to the kitchen to get a drink of water before heading to bed. She took the prenatal vitamin her dad had given her and turned towards Clark, leaning against the counter. “I meant what I said,” she told him quietly. “You’re my husband. I’m your wife. If you want to *sleep* with me tonight, you’re welcome to stay. Otherwise, find somewhere else to be.”

She pushed away from the counter and headed down the hallway, crawling under the covers, situating the body pillow just right and holding it and the little black and white bear to her.

A few minutes later, she heard footsteps coming down the hall. She closed her eyes and tried to make sure her breathing was even. He was doing his best to be quiet as he opened and closed a few different drawers. She could hear the rustle of clothes and expected him to leave when he was finished changing.

Instead she felt the covers move and the other mattress depress as Clark climbed into bed.

After a long minute, he spoke. “Good night, Lois.”

She hesitated. “Good night,” she finally whispered.

It would be so easy to roll over, to hold him close to her, to feel his body against hers as she drifted off to sleep.

But she didn’t.

He was only there because she had given him an ultimatum of sorts, not because he wanted to be. He was only there because she’d embarrassed him in front of his parents and he didn’t want to have to tell them he still wasn’t sleeping — just sleeping — with his wife.

It was a long time before she finally fell asleep.

Clark rested his forearms on the table as the door slammed behind Lois. “Please,” he asked his parents. “What do I do?” he repeated again.

Martha snorted as she stood and moved to the fridge. “You could start by sleeping with your wife.”

“Mom...” he started.

“I said *sleeping*, nothing else. I can understand how you don’t feel ready for that, but I can certainly see Lois’ point, too. And it’s pretty obvious you two slept together at some point. You slept together on the beach at the lake that time and she told us that neither of you got *much* sleep the night before you took off — we didn’t know you were married, of course, and we wondered why that might be — but that you got some so I’d imagine you two *slept* together then, too. I’m not even saying you have to be all cuddly with her, but sleeping in the same bed might be a start.”

They looked up as they heard a car door slam and tires crunch out of the yard. Martha and Jonathan shared a look as Clark ran his hands through his hair.

“And what if my memory never comes back?” he asked quietly. “What if I never remember?”

“Then you make new memories,” Jonathan told him. “Start dating her again, for real, and not just the moderately uncomfortable double date with Pete and Abby where you talk around a lot of issues but never actually get to know Lois. Fall in love with her all over again.”

Clark thought about that for a moment. “She offered me a divorce,” he told them, fiddling with his wedding band.

“What?!” The shocked exclamation came from both of them in unison.

“She said she’d understand if I wanted a divorce and said she wouldn’t ask me for anything for the baby and that she’d never tell anyone about me.”

Martha stood behind him and rested her hands on his shoulders. “How’d that make you feel?”

“Lost. I know she’s been weird for a few weeks, and I understand why, but she’s been a constant for me. If I have a question, I ask Lois — unless it’s about these powers or whatever, then I ask you guys. Anything else, I ask Lois. I feel it when I hold her hand and I felt it the other night when I really kissed her — there’s a connection and I felt closer than ever to remembering but...” He shook his head. “That doesn’t mean I feel married to her, in love with her, whatever.”

Martha leaned forward and wrapped her arms around him as Jonathan nodded. “That makes sense.”

“I want to be *her* Clark, but I don’t know how.”

“Listen to your dad. He’s a smart man. Go on real dates with her. Fly her places. We thought you’d done some of that the day before you left, but you didn’t. Go walk part of the Great Wall and just hold her hand and talk to her. Go to a deserted beach in the South Pacific and make a quick trip to pick up Chinese for a picnic, then go swimming — in swimsuits, of course, unless you *want* to go skinny dipping. Go check out the pyramids. See the sites of Europe. Wherever she wants to go. Wherever you want to go.”

Clark sighed and nodded. “That’s as good as anything I’ve come up with.”

“That doesn’t mean that you stop trying to remember, of course. Go through the albums with her again. Watch the videos. Spend some time in the hayloft. You said you feel the connection with her, build on that. Learn how she likes to be kissed, again. You can’t do that if you’re not kissing her. Go from there,” she told him.

He nodded again, squeezing her hand lightly. “Do mind if I watch the baseball game with Dad tonight? At least until Lois gets back?”

Jonathan nodded. “It starts any minute.”

It was over two hours before multiple cars pulled into the yard. Clark lowered his glasses and looked through the wall. “Looks like she got the Jeep,” he said. “Or at least brought it home for a test drive or something.”

More tires crunched in the driveway as he watched Sam and Ellen leave.

He sighed and stood. “I’m going to go talk to her.”

“Good plan.”

He left his parents’ house, stopping long enough to give the Jeep a once-over.

By the time he made it inside, she was already in the bathroom.

He sat on the couch, flipping again through one of the many photo albums and scrapbooks left lying on the coffee table.

Nothing.

He heard the water draining from the tub and a minute later, Lois walked out of the bathroom wrapped only in a big towel.

“Nice Jeep,” he said, stopping her in her tracks.

She was silent for a long minute. “Thanks.”

“It’s ours?” Was it *theirs*? Or hers? Did it matter? For some reason he couldn’t explain, it kind of did.

He saw her shrug. “Technically, it’s still Abby’s parents. I have a week to have it looked at and decide if I want it. Daddy got a good price on it. I’m paying for half of it and they’re paying for the other half.”

“That’s nice.”

She went to their — her? — bedroom and came out a minute later wearing pajamas that actually made Clark’s breath catch in his throat. They weren’t overtly sexy or anything like that, but the spaghetti straps held up a top that was low-cut enough without being too... inappropriate and that was short enough that it didn’t quite reach the waistband of the short shorts. They weren’t quite as short as he thought ‘Daisy Dukes’ were, but they showed off miles and miles of her legs. He was glad she wasn’t really watching him as he stared.

She went into the kitchen and took some kind of pill. She leaned against the counter. “I meant what I said. You’re my husband. I’m your wife. If you want to *sleep* with me tonight, you’re welcome to stay. Otherwise, find somewhere else to be.”

He nodded, but he didn’t think she saw him. He heard the bed springs creak slightly as she settled into bed. Lois and his parents were right — sleeping with his wife was probably as good a place to start as any. He headed to their bedroom and tried to be quiet as he changed into a pair of sweat shorts. He slid onto his side of the bed and pulled the covers over him.

After a moment he spoke. “Good night, Lois.”

The silence was short, but deafening, in his ears. “Good night,” she whispered.

He closed his eyes and willed himself to sleep.

When he woke, he had the strangest sensation of floating and being held down at the same time.

The floating sensation wasn’t new — he’d caught himself doing that a few times since he lost his memory.

But being held down was.

He shifted slightly and the realization hit him.

Lois was on top of him.

Sort of.

Her head rested on his chest and one arm was thrown across his stomach. Her legs were wrapped around one of his, crossed at the ankles to keep the bottom leg from dangling to the mattress, he guessed. His arm was wrapped around her, holding her tightly to his side.

He wasn’t sure what to make of that, so he carefully floated them back down the six or so inches to the mattress. He tried to land as gently as he could but the soft thump made Lois stir.

Her eyes fluttered partly open. “Sorry,” she mumbled and worked to disentangle herself from his side.

“It’s okay,” he whispered back as she rolled over, having never really woken up.

The sense of loss shouldn’t have surprised him but it did. He thought about rolling over and pulling her towards him, but he didn’t. Instead he just stared through the ceiling at the stars until he finally fell asleep again.

Lois didn’t want to open her eyes, opting instead to blindly smack the alarm.

She could sense she was alone. She had some vague, dream-like recollection of being in Clark’s arms at some point during the night, but she wasn’t even sure it was a real memory.

And floating.

She seemed to remember floating.

Was it possible they’d rolled together at some point during the night?

Maybe.

She listened carefully. She couldn’t hear him and didn’t feel his presence in the room. He had to have gotten up already.

She glanced at the clock and groaned. She'd have to hurry, but at least she didn't have to worry about Clark giving her a ride.

She dressed quickly and headed to the kitchen to pour a cup of coffee into a travel mug.

"What're you doing tonight?" Clark asked from the living room.

She shrugged. "Not a clue."

"Will you go out with me?"

She almost thought he was holding his breath waiting for her answer. "Like a date?" she asked, slightly confused.

"Yeah, like a date."

"Sure."

There was a soft sigh. "Okay."

"Where're we going?" she asked, clicking the lid in place.

"Wherever you want."

She thought for a minute. "DiGiacinto's?" She'd told him about their first date there but they hadn't been there since he lost his memory. Maybe recreating it a bit...

He leaned against the living room side of the counter. "I was thinking more like Italy or the Great Wall or a picnic on an island somewhere, but DiGiacinto's works, too."

Her eyes grew wide. "Really?"

"Sure," he shrugged.

She sighed. "I'd love to go to the beach somewhere and have a picnic."

"Picnic it is then. Do you want to pack a basket or stop somewhere and pick something up?"

"Like what?"

"Chinese. Italian. Moroccan. Japanese. Whatever you want."

"Really?"

"Sure."

She stared at him for a long minute. "What's this all about?"

He sighed. "I talked to my parents last night — asked them what I was supposed to do, especially since I don't remember or if I don't for a long time. Dad suggested *real* dates to get to know you and to fall in love with you all over again. Mom suggested a number of options, including a picnic on the beach and swimming. She suggested skinny dipping as an option but..." He didn't look at her as he said it.

"I'll bring a swimsuit," Lois said quietly. She headed into the living room. "I've got to go. I'll be home about five-thirty."

He stood as she walked through the living room, stopping her by the door. "Have a good day," he said quietly, leaning over to brush his lips lightly against her cheek.

Lois looked at him for a long moment. "You, too."

She was surprised that Clark wasn't home when she got there ten minutes earlier than expected. Sam had told her to leave early to get ready for her date with her husband. His truck was in the yard but he was nowhere to be seen.

She decided to take a quick shower, and then locked the door to their room behind her as she got dressed.

She put on the new swimsuit she'd bought the week after Clark lost his memory. It was the first chance she'd had to wear it and she hoped it would have the intended effect. Of course, she'd bought it before she knew she was pregnant and she wondered how long she'd be able to pull it off.

She held her stomach in as far as she could — something she'd already noticed was getting harder to do — and studied herself in the mirror.

She sighed.

It would have to do.

She was sure when she bought it that a memory-filled Clark would love it, but now she wasn't so sure this Clark would.

Her only other option was one of the swim team suits she still had — she'd never really seen the point of buying others when they were almost always with her parents anyway and her parents would certainly not have approved of her wearing this new suit in

public or with Boyfriend Clark.

Husband Clark, however, was a different story all together.

She still doubted she'd wear it on the boat with her parents this summer, but if she was somewhere with Clark...

She sighed and dug through the drawers of her dresser for a pair of short shorts and a shirt that suited her purpose.

She wasn't going to set out to seduce Clark, but she wasn't going to set out not to either. Maybe she could get him to rub sun screen on her back.

She heard a thump on the porch and headed to the living room.

The look on Clark's face when he saw her was all she could have asked for and more.

She smiled to herself. Maybe this would work after all.

Clark had to forcibly keep his eyes from popping out of his head when Lois walked out of the hallway.

He doubted he was entirely successful.

She wasn't watching him as his eyes traveled up and down her body. The shorts were... short. The shirt was really more of a thing to wear over a swim suit or something and not really designed to hide anything underneath it. It hung off one bare shoulder and the maroon string bikini top was clearly visible underneath.

She looked over at him and smiled, slinging a beach bag over her shoulder. "Ready?"

He nodded, not trusting his voice not to squeak or something equally embarrassing. He'd changed into swim trunks and a tank top before he left to fly to the South Pacific and scout out the perfect location for their picnic date. Once he'd found a little deserted island near Vanuatu, he'd come back, hoping to find her ready.

She headed to the porch and he followed.

"Are we taking off from here or going somewhere else?"

"Um, here's fine," he said, finding his voice again as the screen door shut behind him. "I told my parents we wouldn't be home even though the cars are here."

She moved to stand directly in front of him. "Then let's fly, Flyboy."

He wrapped his arms around her, holding her to him. "Here we go."

There was something that felt amazingly right about flying with her in his arms and he flew slower than he thought was strictly necessary to enjoy it a little bit longer.

Finally, he set her down on the beach. She moved away from him and looked around. "Wow. Clark, this is amazing."

The clear blue water sparkled as she pulled the... shirt over her head. She unbuttoned and unzipped her shorts, shimmying out of them.

The sparkle in her eyes matched the water as she darted towards the ocean. "Last one in's a rotten Kryptonian," she called.

He laughed and pulled his shirt over his head, zipping in front of her and stopping when he was knee deep in the surf. Lois slowed and crossed her arms in front of her.

"Cheater." She waded towards him, resting her hand on his chest. "You know what happens to cheaters?"

He shook his head. "No. What?"

"They have to give the other competitor a kiss." Her fingers trailed down towards his stomach.

"Really?" he whispered.

She nodded, slipping her arms around his waist. "Really."

He took a deep breath before lowering his face towards hers, their lips touching gently at first, then more intensely. He pulled her more tightly to him and her arms found their way around his neck, standing, he was sure, on her toes to lessen their height disparity.

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 “Get out.” She stood with her hands on her hips and glared at him.

“Why?”

“Because I *said* so.” Her brown eyes flashed at him.

He glared back. “No! You’re *not* the queen of the sandbox.”

“It’s not a sandbox.”

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He could see her younger self standing there as clear as day as he suddenly found his present self lying on top of her on the edge of the surf, kissing her as though his life depended on it.

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He turned to Lois and landed a kiss right on her surprised lips. “I *am* going to marry you someday, though.”

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He stopped the feverish kiss, resting his forehead on hers, both of them out of breath.

“I remember,” he whispered.

Part 16

Lois stared into his eyes as he rested his weight on his elbows.

“You remember?” she whispered, tears filling her eyes.

He hesitated then nodded. “I remember you. The sandbox. ‘Rescuing’ Lana. Kissing you and telling you I was going to marry you.”

“Anything else?”

He closed his eyes, like he was concentrating, then shook his head and sighed. “No. That’s it.”

He rolled off of her, onto his side as the water continued to lap around them.

“That’s a start,” she said, missing the feel of him.

He rolled further away, onto his back, running his hands through his hair and stifling a scream. “Why can’t I remember? I want to. You have no *idea* how badly I want to.”

She sighed and rolled towards him, propping herself up on her elbow and resting a hand on his stomach. “I know you do.”

“Are you hungry?” he asked.

Lois wanted to say no, but the truth was she hadn’t eaten much lunch and she really was more than ready to eat, so she nodded. “Yeah.”

He stood up and held out a hand to help her up. “What sounds good?”

She thought for a minute. “Italian?”

“That sounds great.” He pulled on his shirt. “Do you want to come with me or wait here?”

“I’ll wait.”

He nodded and took to the sky.

Lois waded far enough in the ocean to rinse the sand out of her hair before heading back to lie down on the blanket Clark had spread out before they arrived.

He’d remembered *something*. That was a start.

And it was something about *her*.

She sighed and rolled over onto her back, not caring for the moment that she hadn’t put sunscreen on yet.

She wasn’t sure how long it had been when she heard a slightly amused voice.

“You’re going to get a sunburn.”

Lois rolled and sat up. “Did you bring me food?”

“Yep.”

“Sit.” She gestured towards the blanket.

He laughed and did as she suggested, pulling assorted dishes out of the bag.

She grabbed a breadstick. “What’d you bring?” she asked around her first bite.

“Ravioli, ziti, salad, chocolate cake.”

Her eyes lit up. “Really?”

He nodded. “Yep. But not until after you finish your meal, young lady.”

She gave an exaggerated sigh. “Fine.” She opened one of the containers and carefully picked up a slippery ravioli between her fingers. “Mmm,” she murmured with her eyes closed. “This is delicious. Where’d you get it?”

“An Italian restaurant in San Diego,” he admitted sheepishly. “I don’t know anything about currency exchange or how to speak Italian or anything like that so…”

She licked the sauce off her fingers. “Well, you did good.”

“Thanks.” He handed her a fork. “Want this?”

She glared at the amused grin on his face. “Thanks.”

She ate about half the ravioli while he ate half the ziti and then they traded.

“Full?” he asked as she groaned after taking another bite.

“Stuffed.”

“So, I can have the cake?”

She lay down on the blanket, stretching out in the sun. “I know your memory isn’t that far gone.”

He laughed. “No. It’s not.”

She rolled back onto her stomach. “Then put some sunscreen on me, would ya?”

Clark squirted the lotion onto his palm and rubbed his hands together before moving to start rubbing it onto her lower back.

He somehow wasn’t surprised when she reached behind her and pulled on the end of one of the strings that held the suit on until it came untied. She brushed both ends aside leaving her back bare before reaching up to untie the bow at her neck.

“Tan lines,” she said simply, as a way of explanation.

She was trying to kill him. That was all there was to it.

He swallowed hard. “Right. Tan lines.” He’d finished with her back when she asked if he’d do the same to her legs. He complied then settled on the blanket next to her.

“Thanks.”

“Anytime,” he told her, closing his eyes.

“So, what else are we doing on this date?” she asked from her side of the blanket.

“Whatever you want.”

“Are you going to kiss me again?”

He hesitated. “Maybe. I, um, stopped at the house when I went to get dinner and brought a few photo albums back with me. Do you think we could go through them again? See if something jogs my memory?”

“Sure.”

He breathed a sigh of relief when she reached up and retied the swimsuit around her neck and then her back before she rolled over.

“What?” she asked, looking at him and rolling her eyes. “I would be fine going skinny dipping or sitting here slightly less clothed than I already am, but I know you’re not okay with that so I’m not going to just flash you or anything.”

For a minute, he wasn’t sure why that was a good thing. He pulled out one of the books and flipped to the first page. “Our first date, right?”

Lois ran a finger over the picture of them with Clark’s arm around her and a genuine smile on her face. “I was annoyed at my mom for taking these.”

“I kissed you that night.” It was a statement not a question.

“Yeah,” she answered softly. “It was an amazing first kiss. There’s been a lot of *better* kisses since then but few as memorable. That was the night you promised me we’d wait until we got married to make love.”

She flipped the page. “‘Our Town’.”

“I watched the video again the other day.” There were a couple dozen pictures from the play. “You look annoyed in this one,” he said, pointing to one of George and Emily running off

after the wedding. “I don’t think I noticed that before.”

Lois sighed. “Well, Lana had given you more of a kiss than she was supposed to at the wedding. Then, when you two were supposed to run off, you were supposed to grab her hand and be the eager one and all that, but instead she grabbed you and dragged you off. I don’t know why it annoyed me, but it did. Maybe because I was the only one who was supposed to be dragging you anywhere. You pulling her off the stage and down the aisle was the way the play was written. Her dragging you was different. Don’t ask me to explain it.”

Clark chuckled. “Explain it or not, it annoyed you.”

She nodded. “Yeah.”

They spent another hour flipping through the albums he’d brought with him, but nothing else came back to him.

“I want cake,” she said suddenly.

Clark took the cake out and then dug through the bag looking for another fork. “Um, there’s only one fork left. I must have incinerated all the other ones when I turned our trash to ashes.”

Lois shrugged. “We can share.”

He dug into the cake then held it out towards her. “You get the first bite.”

“See? I knew your memory was coming back.” She closed her lips around the cake and her eyes closed as he pulled the fork out of her mouth. “Mmmm,” she sighed. “You’re getting us more cake from there on a regular basis.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He took a bite. “It is good.”

“More,” she practically ordered, opening her mouth and waiting for more.

As he slid the fork out of her mouth again, he knew for sure.

She was trying to kill him.

Or seduce him.

Whichever came first.

Lois sighed as she took the last bite. “We should probably get back soon.”

“Yeah.”

She stood and stretched. “I want to get back in the water first, though.” She headed towards the ocean, wading in until she reached nearly waist level. She turned back towards the beach. “You coming?”

Clark looked up from where he was packing the books back into the bag. “Lois! Look out!”

A moderately sized wave slammed into her back, catching her off-guard and knocking her over. In an instant, Clark was in the ocean, holding her in his arms.

She clung to him, coughing from the water she’d inhaled.

He cradled her to him as he walked towards the beach. “Are you okay?”

She rested her head against his shoulder and managed to nod in-between coughs. “I think so.”

He set her on her feet, water still lapping around her ankles.

He brushed her hair off her face. “Are you sure?”

She nodded, wrapping her arms around his waist. He rested his chin on her head.

“Really sure?”

She moved back enough to glare at him.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” He brushed her hair back from her face again. “I want to remember,” he whispered.

She looked into his eyes. “Make love to me.”

“What if that doesn’t work?”

Her eyes sparkled at him. “As much as I want you to remember, who cares if it works?”

Clark chuckled. “You’re just trying to get me into bed?”

She shook her head. “No. I’m trying to get you to that blanket over there. Even as fast as you fly, ‘bed’ is too far away.”

He hesitated. “Lois...”

She stopped him with her fingers on his lips. “Just kiss me and go from there,” she whispered. “If we make love, we make

love. Right now, just kiss...”

Whatever else she was going to say was cut off when his lips covered hers. His hands ran up and down her nearly bare back, pulling her closer to him. His lips left hers and trailed down her jaw line.

She moaned slightly when he reached the base of her neck.

That was his breaking point. He scooped her into his arms, his head still buried in her neck as he carried her over to the blanket. His lips never left her skin as he lowered them to the covered sand. Her hands ran over his back, his arms, tangling themselves in his hair as she wordlessly urged him on.

She pulled his face back to hers, kissing him again until they were both breathless and before he knew what happened, she was stretched out on top of him. Her lips followed much the same path his had as his hands ran over her back, over the bottom of her swimsuit to her legs and back again, stopping when he reached the slim string that stretched around the middle of her back.

“It’s okay,” she whispered, as she kissed her way along his collarbone.

His eyes were closed as rational thought continued to flee.

“Are you sure?” he whispered back.

He felt lost as she pulled away from him until she was sitting up, straddling his stomach. She reached behind her and untied that bow before reaching behind her neck and pulling on that one.

The top of her suit fell away. “I’m sure,” she told him, leaning forward to kiss him.

Somehow — he wasn’t really sure how — he managed to flip them over so she was underneath him again, her skin against his.

“I want this,” he told her between kisses.

><><>< “Come on, Lois,” he cajoled. “Let me be your first date.”

She rolled her eyes at him. “I’m only fourteen. It’s going to be a year and a half before I can date. Besides, I thought you were trying to convince me we were going to get married.”

He grinned at her. “I’ll settle for being your first date right now.”

She sighed. “Will you leave me alone about if I agree?”

“Sure.”

“Fine. You can be my first date.”

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“Look at me.” They moved until he could look in her eyes. One hand cradled the side of her face, his fingers tangling in her hair. “I will *never* push you for... sex, ever. Or push you past whatever limits we decide to put on our physical relationship, once we have one. I think I’ve been falling in love with you for a decade now and I can wait until you’re ready — until *we’re* ready. You’re worth it. *We’re* worth it.”

“You really mean that?”

“Yeah, I do.” He grinned suddenly. “But once we get married, all bets are off.”

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He wasn’t sure how they’d both ended up completely undressed, but he didn’t really care either. All he cared about was the feel of the woman in his arms.

And she was his wife. They were married.

All bets were off.

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He lowered his face to hers, his lips brushing against hers before they both came back for another long, sweet first real kiss. A minute later, they both pulled back, slightly breathless.

“Wow,” they both whispered in unison.

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“I love you, Clark,” the woman in his arms whispered. “I know you don’t remember, but I love you.”

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“I think I’ve fallen in love with you,” she said quietly,

earnestly, as she looked into his eyes. “I know I have.”

His other hand played with the hair at her temple. “That’s good,” he told her, his tone matching hers. “Because I fall in love with you a little more every day. I know we haven’t officially said it yet, but I love you, Lois Lane.”

She smiled back at him. “I love you, Clark Kent.”

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“It’s a promise ring,” he said, taking it out of the box. “It matches your necklace and it means that I intend to marry you some day.”

“That’s good, because I intend to marry you someday, too.”

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She turned towards the ladder only to find him in front of her, hovering in midair over the main floor of the barn.

Her jaw dropped. “Clark?” she whispered.

He moved back towards her, coming to a stop in front of her with his hands resting on her shoulders. “This isn’t how I planned on telling you. I’ve planned on telling you for a long time, but not like this. Not until after I’d proposed to you after graduation. Then I was going to tell you and pray that you still wanted to marry me.”

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“I’ve known I wanted to marry you since you kicked me out of the sandbox when you were in kindergarten.” She wiped tears from her cheeks as she laughed. “I love you. I can’t promise you beyond tomorrow, but, Lois Lane... Will you marry me?”

She nodded. “Of course I will.”

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He looked at Lois. “I love you.”

She opened her eyes and looked at him. “I know you do.”

He kissed her again, losing himself in it as the memories continued to stream back.

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His breath caught in his throat.

She stood nervously in the doorway between the living area and the bedroom. The white gown hung from slim straps on her shoulders and fell to pool on the floor around her feet. The filmy white robe did little to hide the neckline that revealed more than any shirt — or even swimsuit — he’d ever seen her wear. He could clearly see the small mole on the swell of her breast — the one he’d gotten glimpses of from time to time.

His eyes traveled down her body and back up again to see that she was nervously biting her lip — something he’d always found endearing.

“You look...” He shook his head slightly. “You look amazing.”

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He kissed her softly. “I love you, wife,” he whispered.

“I love you, husband,” she whispered back. “Be safe.”

“I will. I’ll be home before you know it.”

“I hope so.”

“You’ll see. Before you know it, we’ll be telling them...”

She smiled. “You have to be here to help me with that.”

“I will be.”

He gave her a long, gentle kiss. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

He took a big step back and lifted into the air, putting the breathing regulator in his mouth and then disappearing before their eyes.

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She rested her head on his chest — a light sheen of sweat covered both of them. “That was...” she started.

He cradled the side of her face in his hand, making her look at him. “I remember,” he whispered.

Her eyes grew wide. “What?”

“You were right the other night when you suggested that making love might bring my memory back.”

“What?” she asked again.

“I remember, sweetheart. I remember *everything*.”

“Everything?” she whispered.

“Everything,” he confirmed.

Tears streamed down both their cheeks as she moved to kiss him.

One of his hands went to her stomach. “And you’re having my baby.”

“I am.”

He kissed her again. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

He kissed her or she kissed him — neither was sure which one of them moved first — but one kiss turned into two and two into three and three into another round of passionate love making.

Clark cradled her against his side.

“I’ve missed you,” she said quietly, one finger tracing random patterns on his chest.

“I know. I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault.”

He sighed. “I know, but I’m sorry you’ve had to go through all this essentially alone.”

“I knew you’d be back.”

Clark grinned at her. “And we really live in Granny and Gramps’ house.”

She nodded. “With a big ole bed that’s all ours.”

“Hmmm... I know you said it was too far but...” He kissed her again.

Lois giggled. “We need to get home and tell your parents and *then* we can break in that new bed, Farmboy.”

“What about your folks?”

Lois shrugged. “We’ll call them. Not like we can just land on the back porch, but we should tell your parents right away.

She moved away from him and put her swimsuit back on and then her shorts and shirt. Once his clothes were on, he stood behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her to him.

He kissed the base of her neck. “You knew exactly what you were doing wearing that suit, didn’t you?”

She shrugged. “Whatever worked.”

“Well, it worked.”

“I’m glad.” She turned in his arms. “But even if you hadn’t remembered, I’d still love you.”

“I know, but I’m glad I remember.”

She kissed him softly. “Me, too.”

He released her and a second later was back with everything packed into the bags they brought. “You want to hold these?”

She nodded and a minute later they were airborne.

Lois let Clark cradle her in his arms as they flew back towards Kansas. As much as she loved the sensation of flying, she loved being in his arms more.

Slow tears continued to streak down her cheeks and before she knew it, they were landing on the porch of his parents’ house. He set her on her feet before kissing her again.

She glanced down at herself. “Clark! I can’t go in there wearing this,” she hissed.

He chuckled. “Hang on.” He took the bags from her and zipped to their house. A second later, he was back, one of his t-shirts in his hand. “Here.”

She grabbed the John Deere shirt from him and slipped it over what she was already wearing. “Much better.”

His arms went around her as she headed for the door. “I found that in one of your drawers.”

She nodded. “Yep. I snagged it after you left.”

He released one arm from around her to knock on the screen door. “Mom? Dad?” he called.

“In the kitchen,” Martha called back.

His arms stayed around her as they walked into the kitchen. Martha and Jonathan shared a look. “The date went well?” Jonathan asked.

Clark grinned at them. “I remember everything.”

His parents both gasped. “You remember?” they said in unison.

He nodded, releasing Lois to pull both of them into a big hug. “I remember everything.”

Ten minutes later, Lois was sitting on his lap in the living room as they talked to his parents.

Jonathan chuckled. “This is the Lois and Clark that we remember,” he said, nodding towards them as they sat together.

“Do you remember the asteroid?” Lois asked quietly, fiddling with his wedding band.

He nodded. “I do. I remember flying towards it and ramming it as hard as I could and then managing to get myself on a course towards Earth. I remember entering the atmosphere and making sure I was headed towards home but that’s it. The next thing I remember is waking up here with Mom in my room but not remembering anything before that.”

“So, what was it that finally triggered your memories?” Martha asked.

Lois turned her head towards Clark, burying her face against him. She was sure they were both bright red and it had nothing to do with the sun she’d gotten.

Both of his parents laughed. Martha sat on the arm of the couch next to Jonathan, his arm resting on her leg and her arm wrapped around his shoulders as they exchanged a look.

Jonathan tried to hold in a laugh as he spoke in a stage whisper. “I’d guess Lois’ suggestion from the other night worked,” he told Martha.

Lois groaned. “I wonder if it’s possible to die of embarrassment,” she muttered.

Neither one of the elder Kents could hold back a laugh.

“Oh, honey,” Martha said a minute later. “You two are married adults now. We’d expect that you two would make love regularly. It’s nothing to be embarrassed about, especially when it brought Clark’s memory back.”

“Still,” Lois said, not looking at them.

They talked for a while longer before Lois and Clark headed for their new home.

He stopped her on the front porch. “I didn’t do this yet,” he told her, sweeping her into his arms.

She squealed and grabbed hold of him. “Clark!”

He carried her inside, not stopping until he reached their room, setting her in the middle of the bed and floating over her.

Clark grinned down at her. “Now, I think we have some unfinished business to take care of.”

She raised an eyebrow at him. “Unfinished? Clark, we’ve already made love twice.”

“Not in *our* bed, in *our* house,” he told her, reaching a hand out to brush his fingers against her cheek.

She took a deep breath and rolled towards her nightstand. “There’s something I need to tell you first.” She pulled the leather bound notebook out of the drawer. “I found this after you got back but I never gave it to you.” She wiped a tear off her cheek. “I never read it either. I could never bring myself to — in my mind it was like saying you were never coming back, never going to remember. I know it doesn’t make any sense, but that’s what I was afraid of. If I’d given it to you... Maybe it would have helped.”

He lowered himself to her side. “There’s no way to know if it would have helped or not. Part of me thinks that only making love to you would have brought my memory back.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you we were married a lot sooner then,” she whispered.

“Sh,” he told her, a finger on her lips. “There’s no way to

know what would have happened in any situation. What matters is that I remember that you’re my wife and I’m your husband and we’re having a baby together.” He kissed her softly. “I love you. Even when I didn’t remember, part of me still knew that I loved you even if I wasn’t sure I should act on that.”

“I love you.” She bit her bottom lip as her eyes twinkled mischievously. “Hang on.”

“What?” he asked disappointedly.

She scooted off the bed and headed for her dresser. She pulled a package out of the bottom drawer. She opened it and tossed the black boxers and shirt towards him. “Those are yours.”

He chuckled. “Thanks.”

“I got something else for you,” she added shyly. “The other day when I went shopping.”

“Really?” he asked with a raised brow. “Something for you to wear to help initiate our new house?”

She pulled out one pair of the boxers she’d bought. “These are for you.” She threw them at him.

He laughed again. “Thanks. What’re the other ones?”

She shrugged. “Matching ones for me. I even got a Cardinals baby doll tee to go with them.”

He groaned and flopped back on the bed. “Nice.” He held out a hand. “I don’t care about all that right now though. Come here.”

She climbed back onto the bed cradling his face in her hand as she settled in next to him.

“I’ve loved you since the beginning,” he whispered, kissing her lightly.

“And I’ll love you till the end,” she whispered back before kissing him again.

And then... the only sounds in the little house were those of young lovers once again becoming one.

THE END

End notes:

General notes:

Neodesha/Smallville, KS:

http://www.lcficmbs.com/cgi-bin/boards/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic;f=1;t=010202

Smallville to Kent Farm:

http://www.lcficmbs.com/cgi-bin/boards/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic;f=1;t=010219

Kent Farm:

http://www.lcficmbs.com/ubb/ultimatebb.php?ubb=get_topic;f=1;t=010225

Kent farm, closer view:

http://www.lcficmbs.com/cgi-bin/boards/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic;f=1;t=010239

Chapter 4:

<http://www.limogesjewelry.com/custom.asp?productid=11615>

Chapter 5:

head lamp

<http://www.gearworld.com/black-diamond-black-diamond-gizmo-headlamp-spring-free-with-any-black-diamond-purchase-of-titanium-only-2615p.html>

Chapter 6:

<http://www.limogesjewelry.com/Custom.asp?productid=10763>

[the silver version has the silver version of the necklace/ring listed as ‘matching necklace/ring’]

Chapter 7:

<http://www.overstock.com/Jewelry-Watches/14k-Yellow-Gold-3-8ct-TDW-Diamond-Bridal-Ring-Set-G-I-SI-I1/1853969/product.html>