

That Little Sister of Mine

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Summary: In this twist on TOGOM (the episode “That Old Gang of Mine”), Lucy lends a hand to help Lois see what Clark really means to her.

A/N: Thanks to CarolM for BRing this fic.

Standard disclaimers apply. This story uses some of the script and plot from ‘That Old Gang of Mine’ by Gene Miller and Karen Kavner.

Clark left the police station with a smile on his face. Another criminal was about to be brought to justice due to the evidence gathered by Lane and Kent. He always felt better about helping as Clark somehow. Sometimes catching crooks as Superman felt like cheating — plus if Clark Kent did it, he usually did it with Lois at his side. Or slightly to the front; their partnership was equal, he knew that and yet she still managed to be the one in control, but only because he let her. He sighed contentedly as thoughts of Lois filled his head. She was busy quizzing Bobby Bigmouth about their next big story and he had been sent to give their evidence to Henderson as her interests had turned to their forthcoming breakthrough.

A heartbroken sob broke through into Clark’s consciousness and he looked round to try and find the source on instinct. On a nearby bench sat a young brunette, whose head was hidden in her hands as she tried to stop the tears that had brought her to the reporter’s attention. Clark glanced down at his watch. He was supposed to be meeting up with Lois at the Planet in five minutes, although he knew it would only take him a few seconds to fly there, but he would feel bad about just walking by and ignoring the poor woman who was obviously distressed. He weighed up between his guilt and Lois’ wrath, and decided to risk it.

“Is everything all right?” He asked as he stopped beside the bench.

“Oh,” she sniffed and rubbed her eyes. “Yeah. Sure, I just... Clark!” She exclaimed as she finally looked up and recognised the man standing in front of her.

“Lucy!” He was equally surprised to discover the identity of the woman. “I didn’t realise it was you. Lois didn’t tell me you were back in Metropolis.”

“She doesn’t know,” Lucy’s eyes darted wildly as she looked around the street. “She isn’t with you, is she?”

“No.”

“Good. I just... I’m not ready to see her yet.”

Lucy’s shoulders slumped again and Clark could see she was trying to hold back her tears. They didn’t know each other that well; Lucy had left for California before he and Lois had really become friends, but he couldn’t leave Lois’ little sister sitting there crying.

He sat down beside her, carefully leaving a noticeable gap between them. “Do you want to tell me what the problem is?”

Her head moved in what he supposed was a shake. “Not really. No offence, Clark, I know you’re a nice guy, I just don’t

really know you.”

“Fair enough,” he agreed. “I don’t know that I’d want to tell a stranger my problems either. Do you want to come with me back to the Planet? I’m sure Lois—”

She snorted as she interrupted him. “—Would take great delight in telling me ‘I told you so’. I’d rather talk to you than her about this.”

The following silence stretched out between them. Clark was certain that Lucy was wishing he’d go away and leave her alone and he was determined not to until he was certain she really was OK. He was shocked when she broke the silence by asking him, “Are you and Lois dating yet?”

“Huh? No, why would you think that?”

Lucy sniffed and lifted her reddened eyes to look at him. “You’re all she talks about. Not that we talk that much but when we do and she’s done telling me what I’m doing wrong, all I hear is ‘Clark and I did this’ and ‘Clark told me that’. She hasn’t sounded as happy for years as she is now.”

“Really?”

Clark couldn’t help the grin that spread itself across his face until he caught sight of the glint in Lucy’s eye. He’d seen it before in Lois’. It meant that she was deliberately trying to sideline him in an attempt to change the subject. “Well, it’s just as well one of you is happy because it would be a terrible thing if Lois was as upset as you seem to be.”

“I’m not telling you,” Lucy mumbled in a rather Lois-like way.

“I’m not asking you to, not if you don’t want to. I’m just not going to leave you here like this.”

“Boy, you really are a boy-scout.” Lucy rubbed her eyes on her sodden tissue before putting it back in her jeans’ pocket. She stood up and stretched. “Fine. I want ice-cream. Coming?”

“Thanks, Jimmy. I owe you one,” Clark said as he turned off his cell phone and returned to his new companion.

Lucy was much happier now than she had been when he’d first stumbled across her. She’d gone to the bathroom and fixed her make-up so that it was hard to tell that she had been crying and she was currently vigorously attacking her vanilla ice-cream. She could tell that Clark had been surprised when she had asked for vanilla.

“I’m not Lois,” was all she had told him, with a sharp look in her eyes that told him she knew exactly what he’d been thinking. He said nothing and paid for their treat, then rang Jimmy as soon as they had sat down to tell him he’d be late back to work.

Lucy licked the back of her spoon and studied her unwanted companion. She understood now why Lois found the guy so frustrating, he was *too* good. Not only had he not walked past and ignored the crying woman like other normal people did, he’d even called work to tell them that he’d been held up. She knew that she wouldn’t have bothered and she couldn’t see Lois doing it either.

What she didn’t understand was why her sister hadn’t snapped him up. It was obvious that he was completely in love with her sister and she was extremely fond of him in return, probably to the point of being in love with him as well; plus the guy was a total hunk. Clark Kent was the kind of man Lucy thought only lived in books, the complete opposite to every single boyfriend she’d ever had. In fact, it was amazing that he was still single when he first came to Metropolis.

Lucy looked back down at her bowl as she dug her spoon into the ice-cream. Maybe he had an ex-wife and kids hidden away somewhere that no one knew about. “Are you the exception that proves the rule?”

Clark shook his head. “I’m sorry?”

“You know. All men are jerks, apart from you apparently. So are you a jerk but really good at covering it up, or the exception?”

Clark smiled in triumph. “Aha. You’ve got boyfriend trouble, right?”

Lucy dropped the spoon into the bowl and sighed. He worked with Lois, of course he wouldn’t miss a hint like that. “Don’t you need a boyfriend to have boyfriend trouble?”

“Not necessarily,” he replied. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said anything.”

“No,” she sighed, “I guess it would be nice to talk about it. I just wish there was someone to talk to. I know I can talk to Lois and she’ll listen and be all nice ... until I get over it and then she’ll have a go at my bad taste in men. Like hers is any better! I mean, OK, so half of my ex’s are behind bars but none of them were anywhere close to Lex Luthor...” Lucy trailed off as she saw a brief look of pain flutter across Clark’s face. “Sorry. I guess Lex is kind of a sore point for you. I didn’t think—”

“It’s OK. Really.”

Lucy didn’t really believe him but she didn’t want to press the matter. “My most recent ex, recent in the sense that we broke up last night, just before he was arrested for a robbery... That’s not the worst part, though. I was kind of fed up with him anyway. The trouble is, I’m supposed to go double-dating with him tomorrow night.”

“Can’t you just call it off? Say you’re ill or something?”

She shook her head. “No. It’s with my best friend from high school, Rebecca. We had that kind of love/hate friendship, you know?”

“A little.” Clark replied unconvincingly.

“So, she’s just gotten married to the greatest guy in the world. Honestly, you’d think he was Superman the way she talked about him! So I told her that I was in this really serious relationship and we came back to Metropolis to see Rebecca and her guy. Then Anthony had to go and rob that store and now she’s going to rub her fantastic new husband in my face when I’m sitting at dinner on my own.” She started attacking her melting ice-cream again in frustration.

“You’re not really that upset about Anthony, are you?” Clark asked her with a grin.

“No. He really annoyed me on the flight.” She paused as a thought struck her. “You know Superman, right? Lois said you had this amazing talent for being able to contact the guy.”

“Yeeesss...” Clark replied in slow horror.

“Any chance he’d be my date? That would definitely put me one up on Rebecca.”

“I doubt it.”

“Yeah, I didn’t think so either.” Lucy smiled at him, hoping to prove to Clark that she had only been joking about him asking Superman. From the dazzling smile she received back, the message had been received and understood. Wow, Lucy was glad she was sitting down because that smile had turned her legs to jelly. Seriously, how had her sister been able to stop herself from... Lucy’s thoughts were turning in a direction that was best suited to when she wasn’t in a crowded cafe with the object of them.

“What about you?” The question was out of her mouth before she could really consider the impact of it. Damn that smile of his!

His face suddenly became suspicious. “What do you mean, ‘what about me?’”

“You’re not seeing Lois, right? So, you’re single?”

“Er, Lucy, I—”

“No!” She quickly interrupted him, not wanting to hear another man tell her he wasn’t interested. “I didn’t mean... you know. I need a date for tomorrow night and I want Rebecca to see me with a really great guy, which you seem to be. And as my sister is currently too dense to realise that she wants you, because she does in case you were wondering, so unless you are seeing someone else, which you could be for all I know—” She cut herself off and rolled her eyes. “God, I’m sounding like Lois

now. I don’t know any really nice guys, they’re all jerks. So, if you’re free tomorrow night, I’d really appreciate it if you’d pretend to be my date. I know you’re not interested in me like that, I’m Lois’ kid sister to you. And that’s fine, I just—”

“OK. I do have one question, though. How mad would Lois get if I pretended to be your boyfriend for the evening?” Clark asked her, with a wicked glint in his eyes.

Lucy recognised it and matched it with one of her own. “Oh, very. You *are* her best friend, and I’m sure she’s very possessive over your time.”

“Yes,” was all the reply she got.

“Although, winding up Lois can be very hazardous to your health.”

“I’m aware of the risks,” Clark replied with a smile. “So, tell me about this dinner.”

Lois closed down the document on her computer and rubbed her tired eyes. She picked up the note she’d found on her desk when she’d returned from her meeting with Bobby. ‘CK said he’s going to be late getting back. Sends his apologies — Jimmy’.

An hour later she’d asked Jimmy to tell her exactly what Clark had said when he’d called. “Just that something had come up and he wasn’t sure when he’d be back,” was all the reply she’d received.

Now two hours had gone by and she really needed Clark to look over the article they were supposed to be writing together. She ripped the note in half and flung it in the trash in an effort to try and make herself feel better. It didn’t work.

She was just about to call Clark’s cell phone, when the elevator doors opened and into the newsroom walked Clark, laughing with a woman. Jealousy surged through her at seeing him so happy with another woman, but she managed to convince herself that she was just angry that he’d skipped work to go on a date. With Lucy? The pair arrived at Clark’s desk and neither one of them had looked across at her even once. Anger fuelling her steps, she strode over to them as another wave of laughter rippled through the pair.

“So this is what was more important than your job. You know I’m seriously considering handing the story into Perry without your name on it.”

Clark leant back in his chair and smiled at his irate partner. “You don’t consider your sister’s happiness important?”

Lois gave her a cold glance. “She looks happy enough to me.”

Lucy gave Clark an affectionate smile. “Sure, I am now. I wasn’t when Clark found me. He’s been like my knight in shining armour this afternoon.”

“What happened? Got dumped by another rat of a boyfriend again?” Lois unconsciously moved closer to Clark as she spoke, her body language staking him as hers.

Lucy’s face darkened and she gave her an evil stare. “No. I dumped him. Clark found me crying and wouldn’t leave me alone until I’d cheered up. Can I stay with you for a few days?”

With an annoyed growl, Lois went back to her desk and picked up her keys. Freeing the Jeep’s key from its fellows, she handed them to Lucy. “Don’t leave until I get home. I will not be locked out of my own house ... *again*.”

Lucy pouted as she put the keys in her handbag. “I don’t get to drive the Jeep back to yours?”

“No-one drives the Jeep but me.”

Clark cleared his throat but said nothing as he went through the messages that had been left on his desk during his absence. Lucy gaped open-mouthed at her sister. “Clark’s driven your Jeep!”

“Not often,” Lois admitted, a little sheepishly.

Lucy took a breath to retort but then decided not to. She scooted off the edge of Clark’s desk where she’d been sitting and

gave him a sultry smile. “Thanks for everything, Clark. You’re so sweet. So, you’re going to pick me up at Lois’ at seven tomorrow night?”

Lois couldn’t stop the very loud gasp that sprung from her mouth as Clark carried on their conversation regardless of her shock. “That’s what we agreed. I don’t have my own car, so we’ll have to get a cab... unless Lois will lend us her Jeep.”

Lucy exhaled and rolled her eyes upwards. “Maybe, if we’re both very nice to her and *you* promise to not let me drive.”

He laughed. “Miracles do happen.”

“Bye,” Lucy started to walk towards the elevators.

“Bye, Lucy. I’ll see you tomorrow.” Clark watched her until the elevator doors closed behind her.

Lois’ silence broke as soon as the doors had shut and Lucy was officially elsewhere. “You’re dating Lucy?”

“Kind of,” Clark looked up at her. “Did you want me to look at that article before you send it to Perry?”

“Yeah, it’s on my computer. You, my partner, are going on a date with my little sister?”

Clark stood up and walked over to Lois’ desk, with Lois following mindlessly behind him in a state of shock. “As I said, kind of. Why, is that a problem?”

“I—” Lois shook her head as she watched him bring up the file. “It’s just... Aren’t you seeing Mayson?”

“No.”

“Does Mayson know this?”

“Lois,” Clark sighed in frustration. “I am a free-agent. I can see anyone I like.”

“But my little sister?”

“Look at it this way. If everything goes well, I could end up as your brother!”

Brother! The word sunk into Lois’ head and she tried to imagine it as a label for Clark. It didn’t work. Contrary to what she had once told him, Clark did *not* feel like her brother. <What word would suit him better, then?> her inner-monologue asked her with a smirk very similar to the one that Clark and Lucy had been using.

<Friend. Best-friend. He’s my best-friend.>

<Those are not mutually exclusive, brother and best-friend.>

<What word do you suggest then?>

Lois watched distractedly as Clark’s fingers moved rapidly against her keypad, correcting their article. <I don’t know, Lois? How about boyfriend, lover, husband?>

<No!> Lois nearly put her hand over her mouth when she realised how close she had been to saying that word out loud.

<No.>

<Why not?>

<Because—>

“Does that look like it makes sense?” Clark’s question broke through her probing thought process bringing Lois instant relief.

“Huh? Oh, yeah. That makes much more sense than what I wrote. Why Lucy?”

Clark sighed and pulled a chair out for her to sit on. “It’s not a real date,” he told her as she took the hint and sat beside him.

Lois let out a small laugh of partial relief. “Oh. What is it then?”

“It’s me helping out your sister. She was supposed to be having a dinner with her recently-married friend and her husband. Trouble is, Lucy’s latest beau is behind bars, so I agreed to pretend to be her new boyfriend for the evening.”

“Still, why would you do that?”

He chuckled. “Because I’m a boy scout and like helping people out. So can we borrow your Jeep?”

“I’ll think about it,” Lois told him, suddenly feeling much happier about the situation. So Clark was just being Clark and Lucy was pretty much just being Lucy. It was a shame really, Clark would be good for Lucy but she was amazed at how glad

she was that it was all a sham. She wasn’t going to dwell on that, however. Clark *wasn’t* dating Lucy, or Mayson, or anyone and that was good enough for her. Was it wrong of her to want it to stay that way forever?

“He is the most singularly dull person I have ever had the misfortune to meet,” Lucy groaned as soon as her friend’s cab had driven out of sight with the happy couple safely encapsulated within it.

Clark laughed at her. “No, certainly not the most exciting man in the world but he does seem to be good for your friend.”

Lucy rolled her eyes at the idea of a boring man being good for *any* woman. “If only I could be so fortunate as to find a man like him.”

“I don’t think a man like him would suit you somehow.”

She smiled inquisitively at him. “What sort of man do you think would suit me?”

He opened his mouth to answer her question, then shook his head, “No, I don’t think I should say anything.”

“Why?” Lucy giggled and slipped an arm through his. “Are you worried that I’ll follow your advice, then it’ll all go horribly wrong and Lois’ll blame you?”

Clark hung his head in shame. “Yes,” he admitted.

“Coward! My sister has you wrapped around her finger, doesn’t she? You know, Lois thinks too much of herself.”

“I don’t want to upset your sister, what’s so wrong with that?”

“You’re scared of her!”

Clark ignored Lucy’s comments and moved forward to hail a cab, slipping his arm away from hers as he turned.

“No!” she exclaimed and took hold of his elbow, dragging him along with her as she marched off down the street. “I want to walk. It’s not that far to Lois’ and it’s a nice evening. Plus I know you’re far too much of a gentleman to let a young lady walk alone in the city at night.”

He said nothing but let himself be led along by Lucy, wishing that Lois had let them borrow her car. The fact that she hadn’t wasn’t exactly a shock but the sooner he could get away from Lucy and her teasing the better.

He had actually enjoyed the evening up until this point. He had got on relatively well with the husband, although he could see how he would seem boring to a character like Lucy’s. The girls had been very entertaining to watch. He had found Lucy particularly fascinating, mainly because she appeared to be another piece of the puzzle that was Lois Lane. Age and temperament were obvious dividing factors in the sisters. He knew that they rarely had anything to do with each other and both were scornful of the other’s lifestyle. He often had to sit and listen to Lois rant about her sister’s choices, normally after the few rare occasions that Lucy had called to speak to her. And he was now getting a chance to hear things from the other end.

He sighed as Lucy continued telling him the list of ‘101 things that Lois does wrong’ after the intermission of dinner. It had started after he had picked Lucy up for the evening. Lois had been there, naturally, scowling at them, when he had gotten to her apartment. Lucy had been running late and was still searching for her coat and one of her shoes, which had given Lois ample opportunity to make snide comments about each of them and lecture Clark on what he was and was not allowed to let Lucy do. Clark wondered if she had given Lucy the list of what *he* was and wasn’t allowed to do before he had arrived. He had also noticed that Lois kept looking at him, almost as if she was checking him out, and then her lips would purse together and she’d look like she had just bitten into a lemon.

Still, in a very bizarre way, Lucy did remind him of Lois, or perhaps how Lois could have been. Both women seemed insecure in their own ways, perhaps Lucy a little less so than her sister,

which Clark suspected was all down to Lois. With all the problems their parents had, Lois had always taken it upon herself to try to look after Lucy and shield her from the worst of them and let her know that someone cared, even if it was just her bossy big sister. Lois hadn't had that.

However, where Lois tended to push people away in fear of letting them get too close and hurting her, Lucy seemed to take the opposite tact and push herself onto people, desperately seeking comfort from them.

"You're not even listening to me, are you?" Lucy barked at him.

"What? Of course I am."

"Liar."

Clark sighed and tugged on her arm, which had somehow once again found its place in the crook of his. "Come on, we're nearly there."

Lucy fell into step silently beside him as they rounded the corner and went up the steps into Lois' building. Clark stopped as Lucy started up, then she turned around to look at him. "Aren't you coming up?"

"Er..."

She rolled her eyes. "I'm not inviting you in for coffee, Clark, I just thought that's what you did. It's one of your annoying traits, apparently."

Clark relented and followed her inside. "Just how much has Lois told you about me?"

Lucy just laughed as she got into the elevator. Clark followed and pressed the button for Lois' floor without even looking at the pad, to which Lucy merely raised an intrigued eyebrow.

"So," she began after a moment's silence, "did you have a good time tonight?"

"I did, actually. Thanks."

"You're welcome. I had fun too. You know, you're not as boring as I thought you were."

Clark looked bemused at her phrasing. "Thank you, I think."

Lucy giggled. "I mean, whenever Lois talks about you she makes you sound like a total killjoy but you're not. Maybe you could do with being a little more wild sometimes but you somehow manage to combine being a good guy with a sense of humour. Lois leaves out the fact that you're nice to be around when she talks about you."

"Oh."

"Hey, Clark," Lucy piped up as the elevator doors pinged open and they stepped out into the hallway.

"Hm?"

"Do you want to go out again sometime? Just as friends," she hastily added.

Clark blinked. He suddenly realised that maybe he knew Lois better than he thought. At least half the time she made sense. Lucy was an odd mix of extroverted Lois and Cat Grant, pushy and flirty. He wasn't really sure if her flirting was just how she interacted with men and that he was not to take it personally, or if she was serious. The second scenario could prove deadly for him if he didn't handle it correctly.

"Sure. Sometime. I'm busy a lot with work, though, so—"

"You're not working tomorrow night, right? Lois has taekwon-do and I assume you guys work the same hours, being partners and all."

"No, I'm not working but—" he did have a couple of engagements as Superman but he couldn't tell Lucy that. Not that he had a chance to.

"Great! How about you pick me up at seven again?"

"No, I can't," Clark told her.

"Why not?"

"I'm busy then. I have a couple of things I need to do tomorrow."

"But not all evening, right? So when are you free?"

"I should be done by nine-thirty, ten, but—"

"That's OK. Come and pick me up then," Lucy took out Lois' spare set of keys as they reached the door. "Do you want to come in, or are you going to leave me to face the wrath of Lois alone?"

A cry for help broke into Clark's consciousness and he practically leapt for joy. "I can't, I forgot, I promised to feed the neighbour's cat. It expects its food at certain times or it starts wrecking the place and I'm late and they've just got this new rug and I really don't want to be responsible for it being scratched to death, so I'll see you tomorrow. Say 'hi' to Lois for me."

And with that, he raced off, tugging on his tie as he did.

"Huh," Lucy mused as she watched him disappear down the staircase, instead of using the elevator which would have been faster. "So the lame excuses and running away in difficult situations really are that bad. Guess Lois wasn't exaggerating."

Lucy shook her head and went inside, thinking about Clark. The guy really was in love with her sister. She felt a surge of jealousy. It wasn't fair. Here was the nicest guy in the world, who also happened to be really good-looking, and he was completely smitten with her cold-hearted sister who saw him only as a friend and a nuisance. Why couldn't she find a man like Clark? If Lucy was in Lois' position, she would have married Clark and gotten pregnant by now in a desperate attempt to keep him. Well, maybe not gotten pregnant and possibly not married. She was *way* too young for all that, but she would definitely be wearing a ring on her finger, even if it was just an engagement one.

She had realised all that earlier on in the evening, then realised that technically Clark was still up for grabs. She knew that she wouldn't *marry* her sister's man, that would be too cruel, but maybe she could date him for a little bit so that she could find out what it was like to be treated right for a change. Then Lois would realise what a fool she'd been not to snap Clark up sooner and after she'd split up with him, they'd *finally* get together and live happily ever after. It would be a win-win situation, wouldn't it?

However, getting that date hadn't been that easy. Every single time Clark realised she was flirting with him or hinting as something more than friends, he looked like she'd just asked him to kill someone. The guy couldn't be that straight-laced, could he? Honestly, you'd think he'd never had a girlfriend the way he reacted to her.

Still, he had agreed to go out with her tomorrow night, albeit as friends. Friends was good, it didn't need to be 'official' for her plan to work. She'd still get a taste of what dating Clark would be like, and Lois would most definitely still get jealous. There was no way this plan could fail.

Somehow Lucy had managed to turn a fake-date into something a bit more substantial. Clark still wasn't sure how. She had railroaded him into going out with her three more nights since, and had turned up on his doorstep yesterday evening and made herself at home there 'til midnight.

He yawned, which earned him a swift glare from Lois, who obviously knew why he'd been kept up late. In response he rolled his eyes at her and she swiftly returned her gaze to her computer, pretending not to have noticed him at all.

It had been like that ever since Lucy arrived in Metropolis. Whatever advancement he had made with Lois in the past year seemed to have dissolved and she was now only civil to him when they were working. This had to stop.

He rose and walked over to her desk "Lois—"

"I'm busy," she snapped at him, wishing more than anything that he'd just go away.

"About Lucy—"

"Clark, I—" Lois began before she was interrupted by Perry's voice following him as he tore through the newsroom into his office.

“Lois! Clark! In my office!”

Jimmy was hot on Perry’s tail, grinning from ear to ear like a child after their first roller coaster ride. Lois and Clark automatically followed behind them.

“What’s up, Chief?” Lois asked, apparently glad of the distraction.

It was Jimmy who replied. “You’re not going to believe what happened to us this morning. We were almost killed, but I was able to save us.”

“What?!” Clark exclaimed with a look that was almost guilt in his eyes.

“The boy’s leaving out a few details,” Perry told them, trying to restore some calm to the proceedings, “but bottom line is we were car jacked.”

Lois was concerned, “Are you all right?”

“Yeah, we’re fine. But they got away with that vintage Ford we were using to promote the celebration.”

“Let me tell you how I saved us!” Jimmy was still overexcited and eager to talk about his role as a hero. “Picture this! We were locked in the garage...”

“Jimmy! Go slap some cold water on your face.”

“But...”

“Go. Now.”

Jimmy’s face fell and he left. “I’ll tell you about it later,” he muttered.

“Did you get a good look at them?” Clark asked.

“Sure. I gave the police a detailed description. And then they looked at me like I had three heads.”

“Why?”

“Cause I told them I’d been car jacked by Bonnie and Clyde.”

Lois tried not to laugh. “Chief, Bonnie and Clyde died over sixty years ago.”

“I know that, Lois. My car was taken, not my senses. But these two were dead ringers for ‘em. They did quite a job. Make-up, costumes, the whole shebang.”

“Do you remember anything specific about the costumes?”

“Lois, I’m not real big on fashion accessories. Especially when there’s a gun pointed at me.”

“It’s just, well... there was this call on the police scanner last week... a man in a brown felt fedora and alligator spats held up a private gun collector.”

“That’s right.” Clark remembered. “He got away with an arsenal of antique weapons. Tommy guns, Colt forty five automatics...”

“There could be a connection.”

Perry looked at the two. “See what you can dig up. That car was a piece of this paper’s history. It belonged to one of our great publishers. And more important... it’s not insured.”

The whole day hadn’t really turned up much. Clark sighed as he watched Lucy eat her food, not feeling all that hungry himself. A bank had been robbed by John Dillinger, with help from Bonnie and Clyde, while he and Lois were talking to a look-a-like agent. Lois, however, was still not talking to him. He really could have done without this tonight, but once again Lucy wasn’t going to let him back out. He would much rather be sharing a pizza with Lois.

“Not eating?”

He shook his head. “Not hungry. My head’s full of work.”

“Mm,” Lucy took a sip of her wine. “Lois told me about it. Weird, huh?”

“Yeah,” he sighed, “weird.”

They lapsed into an uncomfortable silence, each lost in their own thoughts. As his mind wandered, Clark picked up the sound of a siren and cries for help.

“Er, Lucy, look, I really don’t want to run off and leave you,

but I really need to go and do some research on—”

“Go,” she smiled at him as he rushed off, leaving some money on their table. He didn’t even hear her when she finished her sentence by whispering: “Superman.”

Lois and Clark sat in silence in Lois’ jeep as they waited for their source. Lois looked over at her partner, and the bag of food on his lap. “Mmm. That ravioli smells great.”

Clark stopped her hand before it managed to sneak its way into the bag. “Lois, it’s for Bobby.”

“He won’t know.”

“Oh yeah? Remember what happened that time you picked some of the cheese off his pizza? He got all pouty and wouldn’t tell us anything...”

“I still don’t know how he knew that cheese was missing. I was very careful not to disturb the pepperoni.”

Clark’s pocket beeped. He pulled out his pager. “That’s the office. I better call in.”

Lois watched him rush off. Somehow they had fallen into their old ways today. She’d almost forgotten that he was doing... whatever it was he was doing with her little sister. She sighed. Maybe not forgotten at all. Still, food might take her mind off it...

“Hey, hey, hey!”

Lois quickly pulled her hand out of the bag and turned to see Bobby eyeing up the food from her back-seat. “Bobby... how did you get back there?!”

“Trade secret.”

“And how dare you eavesdrop on my conversation.”

“I can’t help it. I’m a professional snitch.” He picked up the bags they had brought for him. “What’d you bring me?”

Lois narrowed her eyes at him. “A wide variety of culinary delights. As always.”

He grinned at her. “Hey, do I detect an attitude? You know, I don’t have to snitch for you. There’s a reporter at The Star who’d give me my own chef if I started working for them.”

He started eating a breadstick as Clark returned. “Hi, Bobby.”

“Mmmph.”

“That was Jimmy. You’re not going to believe this. Al Capone paid Perry a visit.”

“What?” Lois exclaimed. “How many more of these characters are out there?”

“I don’t know. But Capone tried to bribe him. Apparently, the Mayor got the same offer. Bobby, what do you know about all this? Who are these people?”

The snitch was busy eating and stowing away items of food. “From what I hear, they’re an experiment gone bad.”

Clark blinked. “Hamilton really did it.”

“Oh, and this regenerated Capone character? Not a big fan of the no smoking laws.”

“What else?” Lois asked.

Bobby stared at her in amazement. “For this food? That’s all you get. You didn’t even bring me dessert.”

“Lois...”

She glared at the men, then sighed and produced the hidden bag from under her seat which she handed to Bobby. He happily opened it and looked at the contents. “Ooo! Tortes!”

“So talk.” Lois snapped.

Bobby swallowed his food. “Okay. There’s this guy, runs an illegal gaming club down on Hobbs street... Georgie Hairdo. Capone’s thugs have been leaning on him pretty hard.”

“What’s Capone’s interest in the club?” Clark asked.

“He wants a piece of the action. Like the old days. Anybody want the pickle?” Lois grabbed the food item from him without Clark getting a look in. “Look, there’s something goin’ down tonight at the club. That’s all I know. I gotta run. Oh, and next time, bring me something to drink. And I don’t mean none of that

imported water. Something American.”

Bobby left the car, leaving the two reporters alone, in silence once again.

Clark decided to break it. “So what do you think?”

Lois pulled a face as she put the pickle away. “I think this pickle’s awful... and I think we should visit that club. Y’know, if you’re not too busy with my sister tonight.”

He sighed in a mixture of fear and possible relief. “Are we finally going to talk about this?”

She laughed bitterly. “What’s there to talk about? You’re dating my sister, it’s no big deal.”

Clark rolled his eyes, “Well, it obviously is and I’m not dating Lucy. She—”

“No!” Lois hastily interrupted him. “If you’re not *dating* her, then I certainly don’t want to know what you’ve been doing. I know what Lucy’s like. I mean, I thought you weren’t like that, but then you are a man, aren’t you?”

“It’s not what you think.”

Lois glared at him. “Please! Give me some credit. Lucy spent a whole evening, alone with you, in your apartment, and you’re telling me it’s not what I think?”

“You spend whole evenings with me in my apartment.”

“*Spent*, Clark, past tense. Besides, I am not my sister. It’s *never* platonic with Lucy.”

“OK, so say you’re right, I still don’t get what your problem is!”

“It’s...” Lois spluttered as her brain tried in vain to explain itself to her. “It’s just weird, OK? And I don’t like it, and I don’t think I ever will.”

“What?”

“It’s wrong, that’s what it is. You and Lucy being together is just the wrongest thing in the universe!”

Clark opened the car door and stuck one foot out onto the road. “Am I not good enough for your sister, is that it? You know, Lois, I thought you thought better of me than that.”

The slamming of her car door rung her ears as she watched Clark march off, his temper quickening his stride. Lois was surprised to find herself crying. She sniffed and rubbed the tears into her cheeks.

“I do,” she whispered. “She’s not good enough for *you*.”

“You’re not going out with Clark tonight.” The front door slammed behind Lois as she rushed into her apartment.

Lucy looked up from where she was sitting on the sofa, watching the television. “Huh?”

“Clark and I have to work.”

“OK. Whatcha doing?” Lucy watched as Lois strode past, into her bedroom. She got up, followed her and lounged in the doorway, watching as her sister raided her wardrobe.

“Going to an illegal gaming club to get information on Capone.”

“Al Capone? Has he been resurrected too? Cool!”

Lois groaned. “Only you would think that Al Capone was cool. What’s a girl with your taste in men doing with my partner?”

“You’re the one who wants me to date nice, normal guys. Clark’s a nice guy.”

Lois said nothing as she got her outfit ready for the evening.

“You’re not wearing that, are you?”

Lois whirled on her sister. “What’s wrong with my red dress?”

Lucy looked at it.

“Well, nothing, but it’s very eye-catching and it’s my feller you’re going with. Or is there some gangster’s eye you want to catch?” she asked with a twinkle in her eye.

She rolled her eyes. “I do not want to catch anyone’s eye, Lucy. I just want to fit in.”

“Sure,” Lucy took in a deep breath, then looked away. “You know, if you did want to catch someone’s eye, you could tell me. I—”

“Lucy!” Lois snapped. “I’m busy. I’ve got to get ready and then go and pick Clark up. OK?”

Lucy watched her sister for a few more seconds, before Lucy gave up and returned to her previous position on the couch. She needed to tell Lois that she’d happily step aside and let her have Clark, if she’d just be honest and tell her that she wanted him. And she needed to tell her soon, before she made irreparable damage to either relationship.

The sound of voices jolted Lucy out of her doze, then the door opened. Lois came traipsing in as if she was drunk, held up by some stoic-looking guy Lucy didn’t know. Something was up.

She leapt to her feet and walked over to help guide Lois to the sofa, where she sank down, weeping. Lucy couldn’t smell any alcohol on her breath but Lois definitely wasn’t herself.

“You gonna be OK now, Lane?” The strange man asked Lois.

“Guess,” Lois mumbled.

Lucy sat beside her distraught sister and put an arm across her shoulder in comfort but she held herself too stiffly to allow Lucy to pull her into an embrace.

“What happened?” Lucy asked.

The man sized her up. “You Lane’s kid sister?”

“Yeah, I’m Lucy.”

“He’s dead,” Lois sobbed, interrupting them. “It’s all my fault and... Oh, God, Lucy, I’m so sorry. I killed him!” She completely broke down in tears.

The man knelt down to look at Lois, who was hiding her head in her hands. “Listen, Lois, you didn’t kill him. You didn’t pull the trigger or even hold the gun. We’ve got Detective Wolfe trying to track them down, he’s the best. We’ll get them and make them pay. That’s a promise, Lane.”

Lucy looked at the two figures. “OK, can someone *please* tell me what happened?”

The man straightened up. “Clark Kent was shot dead this evening.”

“What? That’s impos—” Lucy checked herself. “Are you sure?”

“Shot right in the heart, died almost instantly apparently. Unfortunately Capone and the others took the body with them, so we also have to try and recover it.”

Lucy glanced at her sister. She really had no idea about her partner’s double life. Lucy had followed Clark once, after he had made one of his weak excuses. She hadn’t seen Clark, but she had seen Superman take off. After the same thing happened every other time he ran off and she thought to follow him, Lucy figured it out. Obviously, despite having known Clark and Superman for over a year, Lois still hadn’t.

“I see.”

“I’ll leave you to look after her. I’ll call White and let him know. I assume he’s got contact details for Kent’s parents?”

Lucy nodded, following the stranger to the door. “Yeah, I guess so. Thanks for looking after her, er...”

“Henderson. Bill Henderson.”

She smiled. “Thanks Bill.”

Henderson nodded curtly then left. Lucy locked and bolted the door, then looked back at her sister. Lois looked up at her.

“He’s dead!” she repeated.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“Don’t you care?! You were dating him, for crying out loud, and you’re just... just,” Lois apparently couldn’t think of a suitable word, so instead she started thumping a cushion as she cried.

“In shock.” It was true. Knowing that he was alive wasn’t allowing her to grieve properly but she also realised that he

couldn't easily walk back in to work the next morning like nothing had happened.

"I hate you," Lois mumbled into the beaten cushion.

Lucy sighed. "I think you need to go to bed."

"Things won't seem better in the morning."

"No. But it's late, and you're not really fit for anything else."

Lois nodded dumbly and let Lucy take her through to her room. Neither sister spoke again until the morning.

Lois slumped down at her desk the next morning. She wasn't up for work but she couldn't stay at home with Lucy. Clark's death had left a massive hole in Lois, far bigger than it should have been. She couldn't help it. He was Lucy's boyfriend, not hers, yet she was the one falling apart. It wasn't her place to be acting like the grieving widow but that was how she felt. Like Clark's widow. She sniffed and pursed her eyes together in a desperate attempt to not let the newly-formed tears leave her eyes.

"Lois, you didn't have to come in today."

She looked up to see Perry looking at her, concerned and upset. She looked away. "I couldn't stay home. All I could think about was Clark... lying there. I can't help feeling it was all my fault Clark was killed."

"Honey, you can't blame yourself. You had no way of knowing what was going to happen."

"Clark died trying to protect me. In one lousy second, they took away my partner... and my best friend."

Perry nodded in understanding. "How's Lucy takin' it? I know she and Clark were getting close."

Lois shook her head. Of course. Lucy. They were all concerned about Lucy.

"I don't know. Well, I suppose. She's upset, but..." she tailed off. How could she tell *anyone* how she was feeling? She felt like a bitch but the thought of her sister's easy acceptance made her angry.

"Miss Lane?" They looked over as a man walked over to her. "Sorry to bother you. I'm Detective Wolfe. Homicide. I need to get your signature on the statement you gave last night."

He gave her the form, which she mindlessly signed as Perry asked him if they had any leads.

"Not yet. But we will." Wolfe was interrupted as he was informed that he had a phone call. He picked up Lois' phone, and made notes on her notepad. "Wolfe. Yeah... Has it been confirmed?... Look, we've got fourteen possibles on Capone's whereabouts... OK. Add it to the list." He ripped off his note as he put the phone down. "Listen, uh... we're gonna work on this round the clock. I'll uh... keep you posted."

Perry watched as the detective left, then he turned back to his friend. "You want to go get some coffee, talk about it?"

She shook her head. Perry patted her shoulder then returned to his office. Lois felt her gaze draw to the notepad on the desk, where she could just about make out the carbon copy of the address Wolfe had jotted down.

1500 Old North Road.

She snatched the paper off the pad and made her way out of the Planet. If she had to get rid of all this anger, she might as well do it in a worthwhile way and catch the bastards that had murdered her partner.

Clark paced restlessly in the Kent's cellar as his parents watched him, concerned. "I didn't know what else to do. I had to pretend I was dead or everyone would know I was Superman. Now everything I've worked for... my job, my friends, my life... is over."

"Mr. White called this morning while you were in the shower," Martha told him. "He was very nice, wanted to know if there was anything he could do for us."

His face lit up a little. "Did he say anything about Lois?" Martha smiled at him. "Just that she was taking it pretty hard."

"I guess that should make me feel a little better... but it doesn't. I wish I could be there for her."

"What about Lucy?" Jonathan piped up.

Clark sighed. He almost wished he hadn't confided in his parents his worries about the youngest Lane's behaviour, but then he didn't have anyone else to talk to. Lois wasn't willing to listen to him and oddly enough Jimmy was acting colder towards him as well.

"I guess that problem's sorted itself out now. I'm dead. Whatever game she was playing, whatever she really wanted from me, it's not important now." His face fell. "I'll never get the chance to make things up to Lois now. I won't get to speak to her again."

"You will... as Superman."

"It won't be the same, Dad. I can't explain Clark Kent's behaviour to her as Superman. Being *him* won't be a way back into my old life. Superman doesn't work at the Daily Planet. He doesn't go to ball games with Perry and Jimmy. He doesn't listen to Lois go off on some weird tangent... and secretly love it."

"But you'll still be able to see them," Martha told him.

"Yeah but not the way I want. They treat me so differently as Superman. Especially Lois..." He sank onto a bale of hay.

"Clark," his father began, "I wish we could tell you that everything will work out. But we can't. All we *can* say is a lot of people you care about are still in danger. And Metropolis needs Superman."

He was right. Clark sighed. "Yeah, well... I wouldn't even know where to start looking for them. All I have to go on is a ticket stub that Dillinger dropped."

Jonathan's eyes widened in excitement. "Clark, don't you know? That's how they caught him sixty years ago. He was coming out of a theatre. Dillinger's a real movie buff."

Suddenly a look of hope flared in Clark's eyes.

Lois grimaced as another one of Professor Hamilton's sneezes condensed against her skin.

"Instead of DNA you should have found a cure for allergies," she sniped at him, but her words did little to abate the flow of constant sneezes beside her. She rolled her eyes. Was she really this useless without Clark's help? Oh, she had found the gangsters easily enough, and now she was stuck in a hole with this man who was allergic to everything as cement slowly covered them. In fact it was now racing up their chests towards their faces.

Just a few feet away lay her beeper which, adding insult to injury, was constantly beeping away. This was not the way she wanted to die. However, the thought of calling Superman for help never entered her mind. As much as she wasn't looking forward to an ending encased in cement, she didn't really feel much like living either. At least this way, she'd be reunited with Clark.

God, she really was pathetic without him, wasn't she?

The cement had made it up to her chin before she felt herself being pulled out of the pit, along with Hamilton. Then she noticed that Superman was there, breaking the ropes that the gangsters had tied them up with.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

Lois rubbed her arms. "Just a little stiff," was her emotionless response.

"I'd take you home but there's something I have to do first," Superman told her before he swiftly flew off.

A memory came back to Lois, Capone talking about the Planet.

"Superman! Wait!" she called but it was too late, he was gone. She felt herself begin to break down again, not caring that

Hamilton was there to witness her weakness. “I can’t believe this is happening. First they take Clark away from me, and now if Capone has his way, I’ll never see Perry or Jimmy again.”

Hamilton seemed a little uncomfortable with her sudden burst of emotion and also looked a little guilty for her loss. “I want you to know, I’m really sorry about your partner.”

Lois made no reply. His eyes caught a glimpse of movement in the darkness. She focused in on it, and it took the form of a man who was walking towards them. A very familiar shape.

“Clark?” she whispered to herself in disbelief, then as the figure emerging from the shadows took on more and more the form of her partner, she let go of her emotions and ran into his arms, sobbing, hugging and kissing him.

“Clark! Clark! I can’t believe it! You’re alive! You’re here. How’s that possible?”

“Well, Superman found me just after they dumped my body. He froze me with his super-breath to preserve my tissue, then took me to Professor Hamilton’s lab and followed the procedures in his manuscript...”

Hamilton seemed to get excited at Clark’s explanation, “Of course! Freezing the tissue means no permanent damage.”

“So it’s as if I never died.”

“Exactly.”

“Oh Clark, I don’t care if he used Crazy Glue. You’re back!” She hugged him again.

“Mr. Kent, you have no idea how glad I am to see you. Thank God some good finally came of my work.” The Professor seemed almost as happy to see Clark as Lois was.

The reason Lois had been crying the last time suddenly came back to her and she grabbed Clark’s arm importantly. “Clark!... The Planet! We’ve got to warn them! Capone and his gang are going to kill everyone at the party tonight!”

“You two go. I’ve got something very important I have to do.” Hamilton rushed towards his lab, leaving the reporters alone.

Lois started walking off, but Clark seemed reluctant to follow her. “Lois, I’ll meet you there. I just have to...”

“Don’t even think about it.” She gripped his arm, determined to keep a hold of him, “I’m not letting you out of my sight. C’m on.”

Clark paused as he exited the Planet after all the excitement of Capone’s gang gate crashing and being stopped by Superman with the help of the rest of the Planet staff. A few cops were still hanging around, both out and inside the building; the blue flashing lights caught his eye as he followed Lois outside.

This was it, the life he’d thought he’d lost. He’d gotten it back. And it wasn’t just he who was happy about it: Lois, Jimmy, Perry, even the guy investigating his murder was happy to see him alive again.

He felt a brief pang of guilt as he thought about his past. It wasn’t the first time he’d been in a position where he’d been forced to leave the life he’d built for himself. It was the first time he’d gone back. He’d always assumed that he’d never made much of an impression on people; that they’d get on with their lives after a very short mourning period. He got the impression that it would have been a long time before Lois, Jimmy and Perry had forgotten about him, if ever. But then, the only place he had lived longer than Metropolis was Smallville, so maybe he hadn’t left a trail of sorrow behind him in his travels. Still...

“Clark?”

“Huh?”

Lois smiled at him, “Get in the car.”

He followed her advice. Sure, he’d just come back from the dead, but he really didn’t care if that was the reason. Lois was talking to him again, more than civilly. In fact, he couldn’t think of any previous time when Lois had seemed so sociable. He liked it.

“Do you wanna go straight home or do you want to pop by my apartment first?”

Clark looked quizzically at Lois as she drove away from the Planet.

She glanced at him and caught his eye. “To see Lucy.”

He sighed. So much for things getting back to normal.

He looked back at her then he worked it out. She wasn’t thinking about Lucy at all, she just wasn’t ready to lose him again so soon. Truth be told, Clark wasn’t looking forward to saying goodbye to her either. He wasn’t sure if it was because he’d been convinced that he’d completely lost her with his ‘death’, or just because he knew that once she’d gotten over his resurrection she’d go back to the cold and spiky woman who hated him because her sister had forced him into almost dating her.

“I suppose I could.” He yawned and a sudden wave of tiredness overtook him. “If I don’t fall asleep first.”

“I’ll wake you up,” Lois assured him.

“Lucy!” Lois called as she entered the apartment, Clark following in her wake. “Lucy, you’ll never believe what’s happened!”

Clark lowered his glasses and scanned through the apartment when Lucy made no response. It was empty.

“It doesn’t look like she’s here,” he told her.

Lois made a strange noise that Clark could only interpret as disapproval. “It could be afternoon before she returns. I cannot believe how well she dealt with your death. It was like she didn’t even care.”

“People deal with things differently, Lois.”

“There isn’t much point in you staying. I might as well drive you home.”

She had actually picked up her keys and turned back to the door. Clark grabbed her arm and stopped her in her tracks. “No, it’s OK. I can hang around a bit longer and wait. I don’t mind.”

The simple touch from her best friend brought tears to her eyes. “I hate her.”

“Who?”

“Lucy.”

Clark smiled at her. “Come on, you don’t mean that.”

“Sure I do.”

“Why?”

She gazed up at him, and almost involuntarily she reached up and claimed his lips for hers. Clark moved his arms so that he held her body close to his as he caught her top lip and nibbled gently on it.

Lois pressed herself into him, pushing him backwards towards her bedroom. All coherent thought left the pair as they gave in to the passion that had been simmering beneath the surface of their relationship since the moment they met.

“Lois?”

The door hadn’t been locked properly and there was an odd array of lights on in the apartment. There were articles of clothing discarded on the floor. Worry gripped Lucy. Surely Lois hadn’t gone and picked up some guy to use to get over her grief for Clark? She’d hate herself if she had. This couldn’t be good.

Lucy plucked up her courage and walked over to her sister’s bedroom door, pushing it open with one decisive shove. “Lois?”

“Lucy!” her sister gasped in a bizarre mixture of horror and ecstasy.

As Lucy’s eyes adjusted to the dimness of the room, she recognised the man who had been pleasuring her sister so much. Her throat went dry.

“Um, I’ll just go and... go.” Lucy gently shut the door as she returned to the living room in a state of shock.

Lois pushed Clark away as she hunted for her robe, desperate

to do something to alleviate her feelings of guilt.

“Lois—”

“Don’t,” she hissed.

“We need to talk,” Clark insisted.

“I need to talk to Lucy first. She’s my sister.”

“OK,” Clark replied, his voice small. Lois finally looked over at him. He was sitting on her bed wearing only his glasses with his pants in his hands.

He looked up at her, sorrow written across his flushed face. “I’ll be out in a minute.”

Lois pulled securely on the belt that held her robe together. She nodded. “OK.”

She left the room and was confronted by Lucy pacing across the carpet. She didn’t look shocked anymore, she looked angry. Her pacing stopped when she noticed Lois watching her.

“Lucy.”

“What?”

Lois shook her head. “I don’t know what to say. I didn’t mean to.”

“Do you know what hurts?” Lucy’s gaze flickered to include Clark as he finally followed Lois out of the bedroom. “That you didn’t tell me. Clark and I were never anything. I was only dating him to try and get you to realise that you were in love with him. And ‘cause he was nice to me, a genuine nice guy. Like you keep telling me to date. All you needed to do, Lois, was tell me that you liked Clark as more than a friend. Didn’t you know that? I like him but I don’t love him. I don’t like that he slept with my sister behind my back but not because I’m in love with him, but because you should have told me. And it hurts.”

“How was I supposed to know that?” Lois snapped. “Lucy, I didn’t even know what I felt for Clark until he died.”

“He didn’t die!”

“Lucy, I was there. I saw him get shot. There was no way he didn’t die. Dr. Hamilton—”

Lucy’s gaze had turned ice cold. “I can’t believe you slept with my sister without telling her that you were Superman!”

“Clark’s not—” Lois turned to look at Clark and her voice caught in her throat. His eyes were practically popping out of his head as he stared at Lucy in horror. “Oh my God.”

“H..how?” His voice was practically a whisper.

“I followed you. I wanted to know what those excuses were really about. I can’t believe Lois didn’t. I mean, I could never keep up with you but I normally saw Superman fly off from somewhere nearby and you’d completely vanished.”

“You didn’t die?” Lois hugged the robe tighter around her body.

Clark moved to touch her, but she practically ran to her sister’s side. “Get out.”

“Please, let me explain,” he begged.

“You let me think you’d died. Then you took advantage of my grief and joy at having you alive again to get me into bed.”

Clark looked horrified. “No, it wasn’t like that. You can’t think that I’d—”

“I thought I told you to leave,” Lois snapped, unwilling to look at him. “Use the door or the window, I don’t care, just get out.”

Lois didn’t care that most of his clothes were still scattered about the apartment, she wanted him out. Luckily he seemed to notice this. His shirt happened to be draped across the back of her couch, so he grabbed it and wordlessly left the apartment.

“Maybe you shouldn’t have kicked him out,” Lucy said as he left. “You need to talk. I think we all need to talk.”

Lois sniffed and looked coldly at her sister. “I’m going to bed. I’m not kicking you out tonight, that wouldn’t be fair. But I expect you to find somewhere else to stay from now on. I can’t be around you.”

“Hey, what did I do?!” Lucy called after her but Lois didn’t

even falter in her steps that took her back to her room, alone.

Lucy had tried to speak to her the next morning. Lois had steadfastly ignored her. That was until she was about to shut the door as she left for work. Then she simply reminded her sister that she expected to find her gone when she came home.

And that was the easy part of the fallout from the night before. Now, as Lois stood in the elevator, waiting for the doors to open onto the newsroom, now was the hard part.

Any hope that Clark had chosen to fly away to some far corner of the world to escape her wrath vanished as her eyes automatically fell on his desk. Where he was sitting. Working. Among a rainforest of cards and flowers. Lois didn’t even know that they made cards with the message ‘Congratulations on Coming Back from the Dead’ emblazoned across them, but the Planet’s employees must have found the one store that stocked them.

She strode directly over to his desk. Her face never faulted from her hard, steely stare, even when his hopeful, chocolate eyes gazed up at her with intense longing.

“You’re my colleague,” was her opening statement, “and there’s nothing I can do to change that. I’m not going to quit my job over you, you’re not worth it. But that’s all you are and that’s all I’ll treat you as. I will talk to you as little as I need to in order to get my work done. You will accept that and not expect, hope or pray for more. That is the price of my silence.”

He turned his gaze away, sadly. “So, if I tell everyone the truth of why I’m alive, you’ll be my friend again?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” she snapped. “I’ll never tell, you should know that. Apparently you didn’t, otherwise I’m sure you would have told me. The revelation of your secret wouldn’t change anything in our relationship, but it would change your life irrevocably.”

“I know. And I also know that you’d never—”

“Good. Then there’s no more reason for us to talk.”

Clark bit down so hard on his lip that it actually hurt as he watched her walk away. He should have argued the point, then she would have stayed and spoken to him. Maybe she would have listened. He sighed sadly. No, she wouldn’t. She wasn’t ready for that yet.

Two weeks, he suddenly decided. If things with Lois hadn’t improved at all in two weeks time, he’d leave. He’d only been subjected to this for less than two minutes and he couldn’t stand it anymore. If Lois truly meant that she now saw him as nothing more than Ralph, he had no desire to work at the Daily Planet anymore.

“I told you I didn’t want to see you again,” Lois’ voice said.

Clark looked up from his work and saw Lucy, who appeared to be on a path to his desk, turn to look at her sister.

“I didn’t come to see you. I came to see Clark. Besides,” Lucy’s voice grew louder, “I don’t know what your problem is with me. I’m the one who came home to find my sister in bed with my boyfriend.”

There was no doubt in Clark’s mind that Lucy’s statement had been heard by the entire newsroom. He could have been blind and deaf and he’d have known. For a split second his eyes met Lois’ over the deafening silence as they mirror each other’s fear and horror at what Lucy had just said. The tension between Lois and Clark had been obvious to everyone, and he had heard more than a few people speculate on what the problem was this time. Rumours were one thing, this was something else.

“Sisters! Way to go Kent!” Ralph’s callous voice carried across the silent void that should have been normal background noise.

“Hey,” Jimmy’s voice piped up in his friend’s defence. “The guy’s just come back from the dead. Give him a break.”

This little exchange seemed to break up the atmosphere enough for people to start talking amongst themselves again, although Clark could tell that there was little chance of anyone concentrating on anything else while the three of them were still in the room together. He stood up and strode over to Lucy, unmasked anger clear on his face.

“Lucy, why don’t we discuss this somewhere a little more private?” He grabbed her arm and pulled her into an empty conference room.

He shut the door and blinds, while Lucy rubbed her arm in shock. He hoped he hadn’t hurt her but he hadn’t spared his strength in bringing her into the room. He had practically carried her by her arm. Happy that they were as invisible as they were going to come, he turned his attention back to her.

“Well?”

“I... I came to speak to you.”

“I heard. What about?”

Lucy, who had been leaning against the table, collapsed into a chair. “Everything. I want you to know that your secret’s safe with me, first off.”

Clark laughed, but it was a bitter laugh. “Lucy, you’ve just blurted out to all our colleagues that Lois and I slept together. Last night you showed no hesitation in telling my secret to Lois. Why on earth should I trust that my secret’s safe with you?”

“That was a mistake, what happened just now. I just got annoyed with Lois taking this out on me, it’s not my fault. And I told Lois because I thought she had a right to know.”

Clark sighed as he sat down and morphed back into the easygoing, yet utterly miserable Clark he had been before Lucy’s outburst.

“You know, Lucy, I have to trust you with my secret, because you know it. There’s nothing that can be done on that point.” He buried his head in his hands briefly before looking up again. “And you’re right. Lois had a right to know. I should have told her a long time ago but I didn’t because I was afraid. Of this.” He gestured to the door of the newsroom.

Lucy leant out and touched his arm. “She’ll forgive you.”

He shook his head. “No. She’ll forgive *you*. Blood is thicker than water. She’ll never forgive me for lying to her. You know, I should feel some validation in being proved right but I can’t. I’ve only had to endure one morning of this and I can’t go on any more. I knew that she’d be angry when she finally found out, I expected her to lash out at me, but I don’t understand this cold Lois. She’s so detached. I know I’ve lost her for good. I love her so much Lucy, and it’s killing me.”

No-one had been more shocked than Lois when Clark grabbed Lucy and pulled her into the conference room. She didn’t doubt that he’d had to use some of his super strength to do it. She had prepared herself to scream and shout and fight against him when he used the same tactic on her, but he didn’t. He just took Lucy and he never came back for her. Didn’t she have as much right to be in there as her sister, more, because she had been one of the ones who had... committed that act that had caused the current atmosphere?

She resisted the urge to go and try and peer through the gaps of the blinds into the conference room to find out what was happening. Hundreds of possibilities ran through her mind, none of them pleasant. The most likely thing was that Clark was angry with her for telling the whole newsroom... what they had done and didn’t want to have it out with her in public. But he had looked angrier than she had ever seen him and not exactly in control. What if he went too far and hurt her, killed her?

No. No, not Clark. He’d never do that.

And what about Lucy, she’d been so blasé about the whole thing. What if she’d come to kill him in revenge for cheating on her? No, because if she’d had kryptonite he would have at least

flinched when he grabbed her. Unless she had a lead box.

Or even worse, maybe Ralph’s comment hadn’t been so far off the mark. Maybe Clark had only slept with her so that he had been with sisters and Lucy had already forgiven him. She’d taken less time to forgive worse crimes before, and she meant crimes quite literally. What if, right now, at this very moment, they were rolling around on the table, tugging at each other’s clothes? Lucy could be experiencing the pleasure of Clark’s kisses as he devoured her like he had done Lois only a few, long, hours earlier; the weight of his firm, muscled body pressing her little sister against a table she had sat at countless times and would have to again...

Lois stood up, aware that the sudden movement brought all pairs of eyes back to her. They had been torn between watching Lois, and the door and window of the conference room until that moment. Now the newsroom held a collective breath as they waited to see what the reporter would do next.

Lois took a deep breath and tried to convince herself that she didn’t care that she was being watched, that she wasn’t shaking with some unacknowledged emotion, that the image of her partner being intimate with her sister wasn’t worse than the image of his apparently lifeless body being dragged away by gangsters. She tried to convince herself that she knew what she was going to do once she was in that room.

At that point, she burst into the room, and even faster closed the door again behind her, feeling oddly safer now that she was away from her colleagues even knowing that she was walking into the lion’s den.

“...I know I’ve lost her for good. I love her so much Lucy, and it’s killing me.”

Lois honestly had no idea how to react. Lucy and Clark were staring at her, Clark looking for all the world like a man who’d had his heart torn in half. Where did he get off, feeling like that? He was the guilty party here in *every* single way!

And Lucy. Now Lucy was the angry one.

“Excuse me, it’s called knocking.”

“Drop the bad teenage attitude, Lucy.” Although, Lois was secretly pleased with this way into the events. All their relationships were in the process of change, except one. Lois would always be Lucy’s big sister.

“Why are you here? We’re talking.”

“You two just left me out there to face *that* on my own, thank you very much. Don’t I have a right to be included in the conversation?”

“Does it matter? You didn’t have a right to sleep with my boyfriend—”

“OK, that’s it!” Clark jumped up and stood between the sisters. “Let’s sort this out once and for all. Lucy, I was never your boyfriend. How you managed to make it seem like we were dating I’ll never know but you always knew that I felt nothing more than friendship for you. I should have made it clearer, to everyone else. To Lois.”

He turned to face his partner. “Although, I did try to tell you but as usual, you didn’t listen.”

Lois flicked her hair back. “It doesn’t make any difference to me. I didn’t listen because it didn’t matter.”

“Really? So what was bothering you, then?” Lucy teasingly questioned her.

Lois looked from one to another, fighting the urge to perform her goldfish imitation. Lucy smiled victoriously at her silent sister. “While we’re starting with this, perhaps you would like to know why I did it? Why I tried to date Clark?”

She received no response from the pair, just questioning looks. So she continued. “I did it because my sister is a fool. Clark, you are just about the kindest, most generous, and dare I say it, good-looking man in existence. You are every girl’s dream and that’s just Clark Kent, if you catch my drift. Unfortunately

for every girl, there's only one you're interested in. I knew within spending five minutes with you that my sister meant more to you than anything else in the world and I was jealous. I'm not in love with you, or anything like that. Don't get me wrong I am fond of you, Clark, in a brotherly way though."

Clark laughed. "That's all I ever hear from Lane sisters."

"Trust me when I say half of us are lying. I'll admit that I liked being treated properly for a change. You're the kind of guy Lois keeps telling me I should be with. So I decided to give it a shot and, no offence, but I really think I need someone with a wilder streak in him. However, I also did it because I know that Lois is in love with you."

Lucy paused to watch as Lois opened her mouth to argue, then smiled at her as no words left her mouth. "And I knew that Lois would never admit, might not even see it. Unless someone took you away from her. I have no doubt that there could be women lining up to date you, Clark, but I knew that I would step aside for Lois. If only she'd speak up and tell me that you were her man, that you were more than her best-friend."

<"You know, if you did want to catch someone's eye, you could tell me."> Lucy's interrupted speech on the night that Clark was shot came back to Lois. She hadn't really listened to a word she had said then but obviously her subconscious had filed it away. Lucy had been about to tell her then, that she was waiting for Lois to tell her that she wanted Clark. That she had no interest in Clark at all, except to annoy her sister.

And it had worked. It really had worked, because the problem had never been that Clark was with *Lucy*, it was because Lucy was with *Clark*. Clark was hers. She'd grieved for Clark as if he was her husband as well, hadn't she? Only, it was Lucy that got most of the sympathy. Oh, people expected Lois to be upset, everyone knew they were close but it was Lucy they all enquired after, and that was why she had hated her. It wasn't Lucy's easy acceptance of Clark's death, although that made complete sense *now*—it was that even Perry had assumed that it was worse for Lucy than Lois. Which it wasn't, because Lois was the one who had been in lo—

"That's awful." Lucy's deviousness horrified Lois, that her own sister would knowingly inflict that much pain on her.

Lucy grimaced. "Well, yeah, I can see that now. It wasn't supposed to go like that, though. Clark wasn't supposed to *die*. You were supposed to get all worked up, then explode and say in the heat of the moment that you loved Clark. That's why you're not speaking to me, isn't it? Because I stole Clark away."

"No!" Lois answered, much too hastily. "It's because you lied to me."

Lucy's face was blank. "About what?"

"About Clark being Su—" Lois stopped herself as she realised that, while it seemed private in there, anyone could be listening in. Lois and Clark weren't the only investigative reporters the Planet had.

"I didn't lie. You never asked me about Clark's secret."

"You should have told me as soon as you knew," Lois replied firmly.

Lucy glanced guiltily at Clark. "I never knew. I never had concrete proof. I'd suspected it for a couple of days before he got shot."

"You knew well enough to not grieve."

"I also knew that it didn't matter. You're so wrapped up in your anger at not being told that you're not seeing the situation properly. No human could have survived what happened to Clark. If Clark had lived, everyone would have known, and essentially Clark Kent would still have died. He would have been swallowed up by his other life and he still wouldn't have been yours."

Lois stamped her foot in irritation. "Will you get over this idea of me wanting Clark."

"The first thing you did after he was 'resurrected' was sleep

with him. Are you seriously trying to convince me that you don't want him?"

"That wasn't the first thing we did," Lois pouted.

"Great. I'm glad you included foreplay. I'm sorry for playing the boyfriend card, Clark." Lucy stood up and brushed past Lois to the door. "That was unfair to you. I was hurt, even though we weren't really dating. I knew that Lois thought we were and that still makes it look like you two cheated on me, even if technically you didn't. And, yeah, I didn't like it."

Suddenly she laughed. "Hey, maybe it's me. Even Clark Kent cheated on me!"

Clark risked a smile, as her mirth seemed genuine. "Maybe you just haven't found the right guy, yet. I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking straight at the time. Even though I made it clear on several occasions that there was nothing going on between us, I shouldn't have given in to my feelings like that, and not just because of you."

"Thanks," Lucy smiled at them. "I think I've played my part here, the rest is down to you two. I'll leave you to it. Feel free to have a romp on the table."

Lois watched as her sister left the room, desperately wanting to scream at her to return. Dealing with her sister was one thing, dealing with Clark was something else entirely. The silence stretched to infinity.

"Do you want to sit down?" He eventually asked. Lois was surprised to find herself still standing.

"No. I'm OK."

"Please. We need to talk and with you standing by the door, I'm just expecting you to bolt."

Lois relented and sat down in Lucy's seat. "I don't think we need to talk."

Clark let out a huge sigh and ran his hand through his hair. Then he took his glasses off, rubbed his eyes, and looked at Lois.

She stared at him, Clark Kent sans glasses. She'd had a friend in high school who'd worn glasses and she'd never got used to seeing her in those brief moments when she'd taken them off. She remembered changing for gym, talking to her friend, then looking up and seeing a stranger with small eyes. Yet, it hadn't been a stranger, and she still would have recognised her as her friend. This felt exactly the same. And completely different.

"Here," he said, and swept his hair back into its Superman style. "Better?"

She smiled slightly as she realised that he was trying to help her see it. "Your face is still different. Softer."

Clark let his hair flop back. "I try and remain detached when I'm him. I can't do it right now."

"I guess I can see why. I don't know that I want you to become him anyway. I want you to be you. But the whole you."

"Why, when you want nothing to do with me?"

Lois fought the impulse to get up and pace. "I need to know. I need... closure."

A look of pain and despair appeared on Clark's face at her words. For a moment he seemed lost in thought, then he spoke again. "Just tell me one thing, truthfully. Was Lucy right?"

Her mouth went dry. That was the one thing she *didn't* want to talk about. The rest, even sleeping with him, was easier to deal with than her feelings. "I slept with you."

Clark nodded. "I see. That's the best I'm going to get."

Lois sighed. "I don't know, Clark. I really just don't know what I feel about you. I do know that you were my best friend and you let me believe you were dead. Then you came back and I was so happy to see you back that I fell into bed with you. Which was a huge mistake. I thought... OK, I wasn't thinking at all but I think I would have put it down to some reanimation euphoria. Except it wasn't, Clark. You hadn't just come back from the dead and were consequently celebrating life. You had to have known what was happening, you must have known it wasn't right. And

you did it anyway. I wouldn't have thought that of you, either of you."

"You were right," he said quietly. "It was some sort of reanimation euphoria. Lois, I was dead. Lucy was right. I had died even if my body hadn't. I had grieved for Clark Kent and he was alive again. I was feeling exactly what you were. And you're right, if I was thinking properly we wouldn't have slept together. It doesn't change a thing, though."

"No, you're wrong. It changes everything."

Although, it didn't feel that way to Clark. Lois was treating him just as coldly as she had when Lucy was in the picture. Two days later and she still barely spoke to him. In fact, it was worse than it had been before because she did nothing to mask the pain she was feeling. Her inner-walls were still in reconstruction when it came to him and the builders seemed too depressed to even try to work.

Perry had obviously caught wind of the confrontation in the newsroom and had been kind enough to give them separate stories until they sorted themselves out but that wouldn't last forever. If it came down to him having to choose between them, Clark knew that it would be Lois who would stay employed at the Planet. He still wasn't convinced he wanted to be in Metropolis anymore anyway.

"Hey," came a soft voice from in front of him. He turned his eyes away from Lois to see Mayson watching him. Yeah, Perry was going to hand him his notice real soon.

"Hi," he returned.

Mayson had been to see him the evening after Lucy's revelation. It had been strange, for a woman who had been constantly throwing herself at him she had been a little reserved that night. In fact, her gentle concerns and happiness at his resurrection had done him a world of good. Of course, she didn't know that he hadn't died. Or that he'd been almost-dating Lucy Lane. Or that he'd slept with Lois Lane the night before.

He heard the stomping of feet and noticed Lois marching her way out of the newsroom. She'd taken her coat and bag but she'd left her computer on. It wasn't his problem anymore, he reminded himself. Lois had made it abundantly clear that they were no longer friends. It wasn't his job to go running after her to check that she was all right.

Mayson smiled at him, oblivious to Lois' hurried exit. "I was thinking, maybe we should go out sometime. You've been given a second chance to live, you should grab it. We should grab it. Both of our jobs are on the dangerous side, who knows how long we've got left together?"

"Er, Mayson..." Clark began, but he was interrupted by Ralph. A man who was very close to being the first man Superman ever killed.

"Hey, the D.A. I forgot about you. Two sisters and a blonde. Kent, I seriously underestimated you. They say it's always the quiet ones, don't they?"

Mayson smiled uncomfortably, looking from Clark to Ralph and back again. "What's he going on about?"

"Nothing," Clark grated out through his tightly clenched jaw.

"Nothing," Ralph clapped him on the back. "Yeah, right. You date two women then have sex with a third and you call it nothing?"

"What?" asked Mayson, her voice cold.

Clark looked up imploringly at her. "It's not as bad as he's making it sound."

"Sure," Mayson nodded, then looked at Ralph. "So these other two women, the sisters? Who exactly are they?"

"Lois and her sister. He was dating the sister, then after he got all resurrection he nailed Lois."

"Did he?"

Ralph nodded emphatically. "Sure did. Lois' sister came

home and caught them in the act."

"I don't believe you!" Mayson exclaimed. "How could you do that, Clark?!"

Clark stood up as Mayson began to back away. "Technically, *technically* I didn't do anything wrong. I wasn't really dating Lucy, you and I..." he tailed off as he saw the look in Mayson's eyes.

"I see. You and I weren't dating either, not really. I knew you liked Lois more than me, I'm not an idiot. But you knew that I liked you and you did nothing to dissuade me. I guess you just like messing with women's feelings."

"No, it's not like that, Mayson!"

But she was already gone. Clark turned on Ralph. "I suggest that if you value your life at all, you keep away from me for a while."

Ralph turned as white as a sheet. "Sure thing, Kent. I just... it's cool, though. Being with lots of women. You're like a stud or something now, isn't that a good thing?"

Clark shook his head. "No, Ralph, it really is not. Tell Perry I'm taking the rest of the day off. I don't feel too good."

Two minutes later, Superman sat in his childhood treehouse, staring blankly at the wooden wall, trying desperately to think of a way of salvaging what remained of his life.

That night Superman found himself flying close to Lois' apartment. He wasn't sure if it was instinct, habit or something else that had drawn him there, all he knew was that if he had been conscious of the decision, he wouldn't have come anywhere near. There were no lights on in her apartment, but he could hear her sobbing. Unable to bear the thought that he was the reason Lois Lane was reduced to crying alone in the dark, he flew into her apartment, too concerned to wonder at the open window.

She stared up at him in shock.

"What are you doing here?" She snapped at him.

"I heard you crying."

Lois sniffed. "Yeah, well, I've been doing a lot of that recently. You've never seemed concerned before."

He shrugged dejectedly. "I've always been concerned, Lois. I just don't know what to do to make it better. Please, tell me how I can stop you from hurting."

He was shaking, Lois noticed, and there was such intensity from his pleading eyes that she started to cry all over again.

"I..." was all she managed to get out.

She found herself suddenly in his arms, her face crushed against his warm spandex covered chest. She moved her unsteady arms so that she could grip his shoulders, clinging to him as a storm of emotions overwhelmed her. Time stopped as he just held her until she ran out of tears. She pulled away and saw the sheen of tears that graced his own eyes.

"I don't know how to stop it from hurting, Clark."

He pulled a few strands of hair away from her tearstained face. "I can't cope knowing that I've hurt you like this, Lois. I love you. I've always loved you, only you. I want to keep you safe and if I'm the one who's hurting you—"

"Don't you dare. Don't you dare say you'll leave. I've already lost you too many times. I'm not letting you go again."

"But—"

"Did you ever question how you managed to hurt me so much? I didn't, not really. Not until this afternoon."

"What happened this afternoon?"

"Mayson," She bit her lip as she fought the anger that appeared on her face. "I thought I didn't want you Clark. After all that, I had decided to let you go and forget about you. Then she came to see you and the pain was just as intense. Because my stupid sister was right. I love you, too. I love you too much. I hate you but only because I love you. I'm not ready to be your girlfriend but I can't have Lucy or Mayson or whoever come

walking in and start dating you,” she sniffed. “I want to try dating you. Next time there’s some stupid party at the Planet, I want Perry to think ‘do I give Lois and Clark two tickets each, or will they be going together?’ That way, it’s not serious, but you’re not available to go to dinner with another woman.”

Clark shifted on her couch and pulled her onto his lap, cradling her in his arms. “That sounds good to me.”

Lois snuggled deeper into his comforting hug. “Good. I wasn’t planning on giving you a choice. You’re not forgiven yet, though.”

“I’ll make it up to you, I promise. Anything you want.”

She sighed. “Right now I just want you, and this. I just want you to hold me.”

He placed a soft kiss on the top of her head. “I’ll never let you go,” he promised.

THE END