

Dr. Friskin's Letter

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Rated G

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Summary: Dr. Friskin learns more about Superman than he ever intended she know.

Comments and constructive feedback welcome, but be gentle, please... I have only been a FoLC for a couple months and this is only my second LC fanfic. It is also one of my first ever pieces of fiction. (I also wrote a few short stories and several filk in the Forever Knight universe.)

My thanks to my BRs: DocJill suggested the addition involving the medical records, and the sentence containing the phrase "dissociative identity disorder" is an almost verbatim quote from her. Thanks for adding the professional touches to this story. :-) Jeanine helped improve my choice of wording and helped curb my tendency towards run-on sentences. Carol M. also helped with wording and with keeping me true to the series. Ray kept an eye out for character consistency. Thanks to all! :-)

Semi-standard disclaimers apply: I don't own anyone or anything in Metropolis. I'm just borrowing a few Metropolitans (Metropolitans? Metropolitites? Metropolisians? ;-)) for a few pages. I promise to put them back when I am finished with them. I have also borrowed some phrases from the episodes "Individual Responsibility" and "Whine, Whine, Whine".

I am writing this letter knowing full well that I will have to destroy it immediately upon completion -- the contents will be too volatile to do otherwise. Nevertheless, I need an outlet. I can not even turn to a professional colleague in this circumstance, since it would be impossible for me to say what I need to say without violating doctor-patient confidentiality. And for the first time in my career, I am not even entering pertinent information into one of my patient's medical records, lest someone else see it. Therefore, I will "speak" freely in this letter, since I alone will read it.

I know who Superman is. I had strongly suspected that he might have another life, one outside the cape, when he mentioned "hypothetically" taking up a secret identity. His nonverbal communication made it evident that he was NOT speaking hypothetically; but that he had in fact already done exactly what he was proposing to do.

The next piece of the puzzle fell into place when I pondered Superman's response to my question of whether or not he had a girlfriend and coupled his reply with Lois Lane's discussion of her "complicated" relationship to Superman. In that discussion, she also mentioned Dan Scardino and Clark. So she considered herself to have three potential suitors. However, Superman, when discussing her by name, mentioned only having one other romantic competitor. My first reaction was to think that Superman may have either been ignorant of the third suitor or else in denial about him.

I pondered the possibilities on my bus ride home for lunch today. While I was idly staring out the window, I saw one of the Planet's "Hottest Team in Town" posters plastered onto a bus stop shelter. Although Lois never mentioned her suitor Clark's last name, it wouldn't take a Sherlock Holmes to figure out to whom she was referring, especially once one saw one of those posters.

Part of my professional training involved learning how to really see the people I am looking at - not to be distracted by incidentals such as glasses or hair styles. I made use of that training then; and as I studied Clark Kent's image, I saw Superman's face looking back at me. I am glad I was travelling by myself at the time. Of course I have developed a professional demeanor designed not to let my patients know what I am really thinking or feeling; but my ability to keep that poker face on was pushed to the limits at that moment.

Once I got over the initial surprise, I considered the implications. I now knew why Superman only thought he had a single romantic competitor! Of course he did not consider Clark as competition. Further bits of Superman's and Lois Lane's counseling sessions came to my mind -- Superman bemoaned the fact that every time he tried to talk with Lois, he had to dash off and rescue somebody. But when Lois discussed the problems with her suitors, she didn't complain about Superman's disappearances at emotionally charged moments; instead, she indicated that that was a shortfall of one of her other two suitors. This would make perfect sense if the suitor she were referring to were Clark Kent, and if he had to dash off to do something in his Superman persona. (Lois Lane clearly is not aware that Clark Kent and Superman are actually the same individual.)

So these are the facts. Now, since I can not talk about this with anyone else, I must live up to the old admonition, "Physician, heal thyself!" I will therefore ask myself a question I have repeatedly ask my patients, "How does this make you feel?" And there is no simple answer to that question: I am excited by the joy of discovery, fearful that I might let it slip, and curious about how Superman engages so fully in his two personae, and is able to switch of his own volition between them so successfully and so rapidly. His situation appears to be similar to an intriguing variation on dissociative identity disorder, but one in which both personae are aware of, and even participating in, the presence of the other. I have had the privilege of seeing Superman as a client a few times, although I doubt I will see him again professionally. I would love to have Clark Kent as a patient; to be able to observe that persona up close and to compare and contrast it with his Superman one. Let's face it, I would love to be able to observe either persona; after all, my entire professional training, and, until recently, my entire professional practice, have involved the mental workings of humans. From the few sessions I have had with Superman, it would appear that Kryptonian psyches are remarkably similar to human ones; but it would be fascinating to have a more in-depth exploration to see whether my initial impressions of the similarities hold, and what, if any, differences there would be. Knowing that I am not likely ever to have this opportunity is extremely frustrating.

Indeed, of all the feelings I have right now, frustration dominates; I am frustrated that I can not act on my curiosity, frustrated that I am not likely to have another chance to learn more about the inner workings of the Kryptonian mind, and, most of all, frustrated that I can not even share any of this with anyone. As I wrote at the start of this letter, I know that I can not even keep this missive, lest someone else come upon it and read it. Superman obviously values the privacy he is able to achieve by maintaining a secret identity; it would be the height of unprofessionalism for me to do anything to jeopardize that privacy by letting his secret out. I am therefore writing this not for other eyes

to read, but solely for the catharsis which the writing affords. And that, too, is frustrating -- The case study I could write up would easily be accepted for publication in the most prestigious of professional journals; except, of course, for one glaring detail -- the impossibility of protecting the subject's identity.

And now that I have almost finished writing, I will try to practice what I preach: It is not productive to dwell on counterfactual scenarios when one has no power either to produce or to avert them. I will therefore face my current reality. And the reality of the situation is that no matter how much I may want to practice further xenopsychotherapy, it is up to Clark Kent/Superman to initiate a request for such sessions. It is not my place to do so. Since I have no control over whether, or when, such an event may transpire, it would be a better use of my energy to put such thoughts aside and to focus on the patients I actually do have. I hereby resolve to do just that, starting now.

Dr. Friskin put down her pen, picked up the letter, and put it in the fireplace. As the flames turned the paper to ash, she sighed, straightened up, and looked at her watch. She had one hour free before her next appointment.

THE END