

# I Sense That I Love You 4: Four Scents' Worth

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Rated: G

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Summary: A list of the scents that most impacted Clark's life and how that changed when he met Lois.

Disclaimer: Inspired by a lot of episodes and dialogue, none of which are mine. No copyright infringement is intended.

A/N: I've always been especially entranced by the chemistry between Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher; it fascinates me anew every time I watch the show. So, in a way, these five Sense stories are something of a tribute to them, as well as the writers of this excellent show! Also, I've been remiss in my last few stories by not properly thanking my General Editor, Deja Vu, for her great help, work, and encouragement, not to mention a lot of guidance as I stumbled my way around. Thanks a lot!

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Of all my senses — heightened due to my alien physiology — the sense of smell has always been my least favorite, more a liability than a blessing.

Sight allows me to see things no other person can, from the intricacies of tiny molecules to the elaborate beauty of the northern lights in the opposite hemisphere.

My hearing, though problematic at times, has almost always aided me, warning me if anyone suspects that I am more than I seem or allowing me to hear the cries for help that only I can answer.

Touch connects me to this world that I love so dearly and that has, against all odds, accepted me, albeit in a splintered form.

And taste ... well, Mom says I enjoy that sense a bit too much, but since I don't have to worry about calories or cavities, I don't really see a reason to limit it.

But smell? Smell had never done anything for me in the past.

I remember the first time my enhanced sense of smell kicked in. I was helping Dad chop up some wood, picking up the firewood he splintered and stacking them alongside the house. I clearly remember bending to pick up a log and hearing a sound that didn't fit with the steady rhythm of the axe slicing through the air, cutting through the wood, and being pulled back up into the air. I looked up and saw splashes of red marring the pristine snow as Dad let out a delayed yelp of pain.

That, however, hardly penetrated ... because there was something else assaulting me.

Sharp. Metallic. Salty. Overpowering.

My first supersmell, if you will, and it was the sickening scent of blood.

I hated it.

Its stench permeated my nostrils until I had to run from Dad, covering my retreat by calling for Mom.

And because of that, because I ran instead of staying to help my Dad, I always associated the piercing, stinging smell of blood with shame and failure.

That was when I was just learning to control the powers erupting from me, and thereafter I fought doubly hard to keep my sense of smell contained, terrified that I would once again fail someone when they needed me most.

But that didn't save me from smelling the tears Mom shed when I named the tree-house Dad and I had built over the summer of that year — my Fortress of Solitude.

Tears smell just as salty as blood, but there is a gentler, mellow quality to the clear liquid.

It's funny. I should have known that before I came across Mom alone in the kitchen. I should have smelled my own tears, should have shed them so that I could compare their scent to that of blood.

But I didn't cry. And I didn't bleed. For a long time, I was convinced that one was just as bad as the other, both equally a sign of my strangeness ... my alienness.

And my mother's tears were, in a way, a result of those differences. And so the smell of tears evoked fear and isolation, an irrevocable connection that didn't make sense but was there nonetheless.

Traveling around the world, seeing the sights Earth had to offer, was an opportunity I'm glad I took, yet it didn't always bring me into contact with the most fragrant of places. Or rather, I should say they *were* fragrant, just not the kind of fragrance you want to encounter when you have a sense of smell a thousand times better than the average person. Not that all of the odors were necessarily bad, but there were so many of them, and they all mixed together, heavy perfumes with cloying spices and musky animals and sticky humidity and decaying garbage.

And though I could shut off my superhearing, could counter my supersight, could avoid things that would irritate my supertouch, could refuse to eat anything I didn't want to taste ... there was nothing I could do to protect myself from the various scents that wafted around me and wound their way inside me. Smells from every corner of the world — smells I couldn't always endure.

Just another reminder that I wasn't like everyone else. That I had a secret I could never reveal to anyone. That I could never stay in one place. That I was a stranger no matter where I went.

I tried, in those pre-Superman days, to keep my flying to a minimum. I didn't want to chance being spotted. And yet, sometimes, just to get away from the stench of an overcrowded population and nature's byproducts and bad ventilation, I would wait until night and then flee to the solace of space. Occasionally, disdaining the stars, I would retreat to one of the arctic poles, eager to cleanse my head by way of the blanketing, stark scent of the cold.

Space and ice — so different, and yet they both were able to tear away the foreign smells — the disgusting and exotic alike — and leave me feeling refreshed.

But I didn't want to live alone. I didn't want to have to hide in the North Pole. And I certainly didn't want to contemplate anything to do with outer space. I was already different enough — no need to voluntarily seek out the very place aliens generally came from.

And so — grasping at straws, eager for a miracle — I finally made the enormous leap and traveled to Metropolis. To the Daily Planet. And, though I didn't know it at the time, to Lois Lane.

At first, the Big Apricot seemed to be the same as most other urban cities I had visited. Each city has its own unique flavor, and Metropolis is no different, an amalgamation of all the peoples and cultures and merchandise and commodities it offers, as well as the added spice of its geographical position — the nearness of the ocean, the hint of forests and meadows past its suburbs, the types of rock and land on which it is built. No scent particularly stood out above the rest.

Until Luthor blew up a building to test Superman's invulnerability.

There were no serious injuries, thank God, but small nicks, minor gashes, and little scratches had been inflicted on those too near the force of the explosion. Like tiny stinging pinpricks in my consciousness, I could smell the blood on the onlookers, piercing me with darts of attributed guilt. A normal enough occurrence ...

until Lois walked over to me and the scent almost knocked me back a step.

She was bleeding.

Red marred the pale hue of her forehead, stained the white of the swab held absentmindedly in her hand ... and obliterated every other thought in my head. I tried to think past it, tried not to give away how much it hurt, tried to conceal that I felt as if all the breath had been knocked out of me. But I was drowning in the smell of her blood, its sharp, metallic, salty aroma reawakening all my guilt and shame and sense of failure.

I had failed her.

I hadn't stopped the bomb ... and Lois had bled.

It was a tiny wound, to be sure, almost inconsequential. And yet it was the first time I had smelled her blood. The first time I had seen physical marks of violence on her.

That incident was bad enough. Two years later, when she bled in nearly the same exact spot on her temple due to Bob Fences' insanity, I went crazy.

I had been right there with her; I was crouching right next to her — yet still she had bled. That fact had terrified me, haunted me, and evoked, yet again, all the feelings of utter failure that I couldn't shake. It had shaken me to the depths of my being and left me weak and broken and lost.

It took a long time for us both to recover from the effects of that scent in my nostrils.

Lois's tears affected me in a totally different way.

Her blood paralyzed me with guilt.

Her tears hypnotized me.

I caught a whiff of her tears several times before their full impact really made itself known in my life.

She began to cry while we were Baines' prisoners, yet the scent of her tears was overpowered by the chemicals around us.

She fought back tears while we were investigating the boxing scandal — and her father — yet her inner strength kept them hidden from me.

She might have wept when she was left alone during Luthor's heat-wave, but I wasn't there.

It wasn't until she witnessed a murder and became a target that I came into full contact with her tears. When she clung to me and begged me not to leave her. When she sought me out at my place and threw herself into my arms to hide — and, contradictorily, share — her fear. When it was my embrace she craved and my arms that drove her fears away.

I alone was allowed to see her weep. I alone could gently wipe the tears away and venture to bring her beautiful smile back to her face.

The smell of her tears was always enough to send me to my knees, yet the fact that she trusted me enough to let me see them, that she gave me the power to rid her of them ... that was enough to let me fly even without my superpowers.

For the first time, I didn't have to flee to the solitude of either space or ice to cleanse the aroma of salty liquid from my mind.

For the first time, I could erase that smell myself.

She, who belonged here, needed *me*.

It was empowering. It was unbelievable. It was ... liberating.

Lois enticed me with her simple presence, drawing me to her no matter whether she smelled of the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility or the delicate perfume she wore to the charity event where she bid for a date with Superman. The aromas that surrounded her — the rotten vegetables that had filled the dumpster in which I once deposited her or the honey-scented soap she used in Smallville during the Corn Festival — they were equally impossible for me to resist no matter what their combination or flavor.

Because they were ... her.

Where the contradictory maelstrom of odors that the world possesses made me feel isolated and alone, the swirling, changing

bouquet of scents that Lois offers grounds me, claims me, accepts me.

I no longer need to flee to a desolate iceberg to find comfort. I don't have to hang in the vastness of empty space to find uneasy peace.

Instead, I can flee to the solace of my wife's arms and receive all the immeasurable comfort she freely offers me. I can step inside our home — *my* home, the one I never thought I could have — and take in a deep breath of the air that smells and tastes of Lois, flavored and enhanced by the sensory proof of her presence.

There is nothing in all this universe that could equal the worth of those four scents — blood, tears, perfume, and the simple essence that is her alone. Because taken altogether, those four scents comprise the shape and being of the woman who holds my heart and has given me hers in return.

She *is* my home.

She is my everything.

Guilt, fear, isolation, uncertainty — she banished them all.

And now she guards me, warding those things off, shielding me behind the safety of her presence and the sureness of her love.

And I no longer fear any of my senses ... because she inhabits them all.

And, finally, I belong.

THE END