

# Taste

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Rated: PG

Submitted: April 2011

Summary: It's been nearly six months since Perry forced Lois to partner with Clark Kent. She's still adjusting to working with Mr. Green Jeans, when they are both sent to a seminar covering unusual investigation techniques. One of those methods might provide unexpected insights to some of the men in her life.

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Spring 2011 ficathon story: This is for Classicalla

Requests for fic are at the end of the story.

Time Frame: Season 1 — Late in the season but before "Fly Hard"

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A few months ago when Perry insisted on teaming her up with Clark, Lois had been a team player and gone along. Not exactly willingly, but she had "taken one" for the team and accepted Mr. Green Jeans for a partner. While she had to admit that partnering with Clark had worked out much better than she'd expected, she'd intended that her "be a member of the team" attitude would be a one-time act. However, since no good deed goes unpunished, Perry had selected her as one of the participants in a week-long team-building seminar.

The Planet had sent four people. Lois understood why Perry would send her and Clark, since they were the paper's top reporting team. The other two choices, Cat Grant and Jimmy Olsen, had left her confused. She had pressed Perry for the logic behind the selection of the participants, but all that he would tell her was that this seminar had some very specific requirements for the makeup of a team.

As for the seminar itself, Lois had to admit that there was some good stuff here. This seminar was intended for investigators, and the attendees were a mix of private investigators and journalists. Over the course of the past week, there had been discussion groups on everything from general ethics to the role of an investigator in society. The classes were all fairly useful too. Most of them covered issues like observation and information gathering procedures. There had even been a seminar on lock picking.

Naturally the seminar included team-oriented exercises. At least twice every day there would be a challenge. One time, they were all handed cameras, sent into a busy shopping center and told to come back with a picture of what they each found most interesting. Lois had spent the time looking for a crime and hadn't taken a single picture. Cat and Jimmy took pictures of men and women respectively. Clark had spotted a loose handrail on an employee staircase. That was his only picture. According to the leader of the seminar, that was the

only newsworthy item their team found.

Today was the last day, and it had been an exceptionally long morning. All of the attendees were confined in a large meeting room, and the only thing they had to drink was water.

Clark was sitting next to her. Maybe she could get him to go boy scout and sneak some coffee in for her. "Clark," she hissed.

"What?" he whispered back.

"I need some coffee," she said.

"We aren't allowed to have any. Don't you remember the instructions?"

"Yeah," she answered. "Chew those mints, and then we get nothing but water until lunch. What is this, survivalist training? I want some coffee."

Lois heard a caustic Cat Grant from her other side. "We all want coffee, Lois. Stop whining about it and listen."

Great. Now she was getting lectured by Cat. "Clark, please sneak out and get me some coffee." He was weakening. She could see it in his eyes. Maybe a claim that she was getting a caffeine headache would tip the balance. She was just about to put her most practiced, 'I'm in pain,' look on her face when a word from the front of the room drew her attention. "...coffee?"

The man standing at the front of the room appeared to be looking around. "I asked, would any of you like some coffee?" He raised his hand to entice others in the room to do so. Lois's hand shot up before she knew what happened. It appeared that much of the rest of the room had a similar reaction.

The man up front laughed. "I thought so," he said. "I assure you that there is a reason for this segment. Part of every investigation is understanding the range of motivations when crimes are committed. After all, it's not always about greed. A number of years ago, I was investigating a series of domestic-violence crimes, and I stumbled across an interesting concept: biological compatibility."

Lois was starting to tune him out again. What did biological compatibility have to do with getting her some coffee?

He continued. "This idea has helped me correctly solve over thirty crimes where the spouse was the prime suspect. It isn't a crystal ball that will magically give you the answer, but it is a surprisingly strong indicator."

Well, he had her attention. When the speaker stopped to sip some water, Lois leaned in toward Clark. "Do you have any idea what he's talking about?"

"No clue," her partner responded. "But he is supposed to be a master of advanced and unusual techniques. I think he's about to drop one of his secrets on us."

Lois turned her attention back to the front of the room. "In the course of investigating crimes where a spouse or partner is a suspect, who here has asked how the suspect felt about their partner?"

Lois raised her hand. It was easy to see than nearly every person in the room had done the same.

The presenter just smiled. That was an obvious response. "Fair enough. Now, how many of you have ever asked this person how their significant other tasted?"

Tasted? Was he crazy? He was looking around the room.

"Anyone?" he asked. After another moment, he gave up.

"That's about what I expected. It turns out that everyone has a base level of biological compatibility with other people. On the conscious level, this usually manifests as smell. Many of

us have met people who, even though they were clean, seem to smell bad. That's an extreme case of biological incompatibility. Now, you're probably wondering what this has to do with investigating a crime. Well, I've seen the evidence, and the rate of spousal crime is inversely proportional to the relative compatibility. In other words, if a spouse reports that their partner didn't taste good, the chances are much higher that there may have been foul play."

This sounded like fake science to Lois. He might as well be checking their astrological signs for compatibility. It would probably be more accurate. There was a buzz around the room that suggested that she wasn't alone in that opinion.

"I can hear your skepticism," he said. "But before we get to our exercise, consider this. Remember those thirty crimes I mentioned earlier? In every one of those cases, the superficial evidence contradicted the answer to my, 'How does your partner taste?' question. In all of those, the answer to that single question was the key that kept me digging and ultimately proved to be the turning point in the case."

He delivered that last statement with a tone of confidence that was hard to ignore. Lois had never asked a question like that. She started to ask Clark what he thought when the speaker continued. "Now the exercise. Earlier in the week we had you trek through the Metropolis Sewage treatment facility, I promise this won't be nearly so unpleasant."

In some ways that had been Lois's favorite part of the week. The memory of the wild goose chase Clark had sent her on to that location was still clear in her mind. However, thanks to Clark, she knew that facility better than anyone. While no one came out exactly clean, she'd clearly been the master of that territory.

The presenter was still speaking. "You all know that one of the requirements for this seminar was four person teams divided evenly between men and women. There are actually a number of reasons for that restriction, but now is where it comes in handy. Each of you is to kiss two other members of your team. And these need to be real kisses where you can get a feel for how the other person tastes. That's why we pulled the coffee. Those neutral mints we gave you this morning should have eliminated any residual food flavors, so all you should taste is the person. For the most part, the tastes will be subtle, but they will be there, so concentrate. I'll give you fifteen-minutes to, um... perform the tests. After each kiss, take a moment to discuss what you tasted with your teammates. Be truthful. I'll speak to how to interpret the results after you're finished."

Well, Lois wasn't about to back down. Kissing Clark was no big deal. They'd kissed before so... well, it was no big deal. She really didn't remember thinking about what he tasted like. Kissing Jimmy, well, she'd done worse things. She was about to ask who should go first when Cat pounced on Clark. Her partner was looking terrified as Cat's arms went around his shoulders. "You managed to avoid me all those times early on," she said. "Well, I've got you now. I expect to finally find out how you taste."

Lois watched as Clark composed himself and moved to kiss Cat. Then it hit her... Cat just admitted that she'd never kissed Clark. She'd lied about that time when Bureau 39 raided. Clark had been telling the truth that nothing had happened. That made her feel better about Clark. He hadn't taken advantage of Cat's... invitation.

She watched as Cat and Clark started their kiss. Cat was certainly getting the most for her money. But Clark also

seemed to be... enjoying himself. Too much, in fact.

When they finally broke apart, neither of them had the expression she'd expected. "Well?" Lois asked Clark.

He only glanced in her direction then turned to Cat. "I didn't know you smoked," he said.

Cat looked indigent. "I don't."

"Strange," Clark said. "There was a faint taste of tobacco or something like that. It was almost like you'd been smoking."

Cat looked confused for a minute. "Well, I don't smoke. Have you been sucking salt tablets?"

"Salt? No. I haven't had salt today at all."

"That's what I tasted," Cat said with a sour look on her face. "You were salty." Then Cat turned to Lois. "Your turn," she said, tipping her head at Jimmy.

Lois turned to Jimmy. She felt nervous, but he looked terrified. "Let's do this," she said in what she hoped was a reassuring tone. As she moved toward him, she realized just how uncomfortable this was.

As she kissed the young intern, she had to force herself to deepen the kiss enough to taste him. This was really weird. Finally, she relaxed enough to focus on tastes. Then it hit her. Jimmy tasted like soap. What was he doing, eating soap for breakfast? After another second, she started to pull back. Jimmy seemed comfortable — even anxious — to do the same.

"Well? What does Lois taste like?" Cat asked. Then Cat gave Clark what had to be a dirty look. "And please don't say cigarettes."

"No," he replied defensively. "It reminded me of the last time I drove by a place where they were resurfacing a road."

Cat laughed at this. "You mean Lois tastes like a road?"

Jimmy was too nervous to answer. "Jimmy," Lois interjected. "This is a test to see how we react to each other. Cat doesn't smoke, but Clark tasted tobacco. So tell us what you tasted."

"Tar," Jimmy said quickly. "Or asphalt, or something like that. At least that was what came to mind."

"So Lois, what did you taste?" Clark asked.

"Soap," she answered. "It was very distinctive. I'd swear Jimmy ate a bar of soap in the last half hour."

This seemed to relieve Jimmy, and he managed a laugh. "No, I promise I haven't been nibbling on bars of soap to pass the time."

"Well, I haven't been drinking tar either." Lois turned to Cat. "So, Cat, I think you're up."

Cat turned to Jimmy. Jimmy looked as nervous as ever, and Cat could see it. "Relax, James. I do bite, but I won't this time."

Their kiss clearly lacked the intensity that was present when Clark and Cat kissed. It was over very quickly. "So, James, is it cigarettes or tar?" Cat asked.

"Um, neither," he replied. "It was a spicy or an acidic taste." He turned to Clark, "I didn't taste anything like cigarettes at all."

Clark thought for a moment. "He said that what we tasted would be a reflection of how our body chemistry interacted. So I guess it makes sense that we are tasting different things. Cat, what about you? Does Jimmy taste like salt?"

"No," Cat answered. "He sort of reminded me of bleach."

"Bleach," Lois bust out before she realized it. "I didn't taste any bleach."

Clark only smiled. "I guess there may be something to this

after all. But I wonder what these things mean. Which are compatible tastes and which aren't?"

"Only one kiss left," Cat interjected. "Come on, you two."

Lois turned to Clark. This one should be the easiest. She'd kissed Clark before. But now that they were so focused on tastes, what would they find? She stepped up to Clark, and they moved together. She really was much more comfortable kissing her partner.

But what did he taste like? Kissing Clark was... nice, but she needed to focus. After a second she realized she didn't taste anything. That couldn't be right. She parted her lips and brushed her tongue across Clark's lips. Still nothing. He tasted... clean. Suddenly her tongue encountered Clark's. It was a brief contact, almost shy. It should have bothered her, but it didn't. As their tongues touched ever so tenuously, she realized that while he may not be chocolate, he did have a nice, clean taste. There did seem to be something, but it was so subtle that she could barely make it out. Then it hit her, she was tasting Clark. Mostly it was a nice clean and fresh taste, but there was an ever so slight hint of Clark. Clark had a really nice flavor.

Suddenly she heard Cat clearing her throat. Loudly. With a start, she realized she'd lost track of time. The ending of their kiss was much more abrupt than those that came before.

"So, besides the fact that you two should get a room," Cat said sarcastically, "...what did you taste?"

Lois glanced at Clark and he looked just as confused as she felt. She was still trying to compose herself when Clark volunteered an answer. "Nothing," he said.

"Nothing?" Jimmy asked, incredulously.

"Lois tasted... well, clean... maybe fresh. There was no taste that I could identify. At first, the only thing I got was a sensation of pure water. Then I picked up something else, but I don't know how to describe it. Lois tastes like... Lois."

Lois's mind started spinning. He was describing exactly what she'd experienced.

"That's weird," Jimmy said. "Lois, what did Clark taste like?"

Part of her wanted to say anything other than echoing Clark's words. But the only thing that came to mind was soap, and she didn't want to lie and say Clark tasted just like Jimmy. She decided to bite the bullet and tell the truth. "It was like Clark said. I didn't taste anything from him. At least, nothing I can put a name on."

"Does that mean you two are compatible?" Jimmy asked.

"I'm sure it doesn't," Lois answered quickly. "The man I'm compatible with will taste like dark chocolate. Now that's someone I'd enjoy kissing." There was no way she was going to admit how nice Clark had tasted.

"Ooh, how about Cognac?" Cat suggested.

"Pizza," Jimmy offered.

Then they all looked at Clark for what he thought his perfect partner would taste like. Instead of answering, he started to blush. Lois was about to press him when the speaker called them from the front of the room.

"It's been fifteen minutes. May I have everyone's attention?" The speaker paused for a few seconds while the room quieted down. "The most common tastes that people report are cigarettes and soap," he said. "It's almost a statistical certainty that at least one of the eight tastes for your team was one of those. As for what the tastes mean, the particular tastes themselves are meaningless. It's your mind trying to interpret subtle chemical and biological differences.

What matters is the intensity of the taste. Every flavor represents some type of incompatibility, and the strength of that flavor indicates the level of the difference."

He paused to let that point sink in, and then continued. "You might have noticed that the tastes are always negative. Incompatibilities trigger the taste response. I can't tell you how many people have asked me why no one tastes like chocolate or strawberries. That just doesn't happen. In all the time I've been using this technique, I've never heard of a positive flavor. At least, not in an honest answer. If anyone tells you that their significant other tastes like pancakes or sugar, you can be certain that they are lying. And as we all know, recognizing that a person is lying to you is a helpful clue."

He paused for a second. "So I'm sure you are all wondering what flavor indicates compatibility and is therefore interesting in terms of an investigation. Well, the only interesting flavor is none at all. When two people kiss and the only thing that comes to mind is the word 'clean'..." Lois felt a chill run through her. "...it means they are kissing someone with perfect biological compatibility. Now, back to the point of this test: since I've been using this technique, no one that gave that answer has ever harmed their spouse. Furthermore, I've seen several instances where an individual associated a strong taste with their spouse, and I was able to later determine that they had, in fact, harmed them." He paused for a second to let that sink in. "Now we'll take a 30 minute break. You'll find a coffee service right outside the main door."

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It had been over a week since that stupid seminar ended, and Lois wished more than ever that she'd never gone. Learning that she was perfectly compatible with Clark had been bad enough, but the way she learned it... She thought about that kiss again. Not only did Clark taste good, she'd enjoyed kissing him. Really enjoyed it. There was something about kissing Clark that just felt... right. It scared the crap out of her.

She'd refused to talk about the kiss since that day. Clark had never asked, and Lois wasn't sure if it was chivalry or something else. Jimmy was too scared to say anything about kissing anyone. But Cat... She'd spent a few days pestering Lois about that long kiss between her and Clark. She hadn't stopped asking because Lois had answered; she seemed to have stopped because she saw that the question bothered Lois... a lot! And it really did.

Lois was sort of involved in a relationship. Sort of... She never was quite sure what Lex wanted. They were close enough that they had kissed twice since that stupid seminar. She wasn't intending to play scientific detective, but she couldn't help paying attention to his taste. He tasted... awful. The word that kept coming to mind was skunk. Was it something about Lex, or did this mean that every man she kissed for the rest of her life would taste like a skunk? What a wonderful thought that was.

But she was more disturbed by Lex's answer when she'd asked him the taste question. His unpleasant flavor had shaken her, and she was curious what he tasted when he kissed her. She didn't want to scare him, so she told him that he tasted like clean water. She knew Lex was very well read and wanted to make him feel positive, just in case he was familiar with this concept. He'd taken a second to think, then told her that she tasted like chocolate. The words from the

seminar came back to her, ‘No one tastes like chocolate.’ Lex was lying.

She looked across the room at Clark. She was sure he had thought about that kiss. Had it meant anything to him? She was sure that he’d always had a little bit of a crush on her. However, he never seemed to have the confidence to try to push it further. At least not since that one time right after they met. He’d asked her out to dinner just before Superman appeared, but it was the night of her first interview with Lex, and she’d had to say no. Then Superman came on the scene, and, well, she’d barely noticed Clark for a long time. He must have gotten the message since he’d never asked her out again. Now she had to wonder if that had been a good thing.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Perry bursting into the room. “Lois, Clark, get down to Lex Labs. There’s a fire, and there have been several explosions. Olsen,” he barked in Jimmy’s direction, “Grab a camera and go with them.”

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They’d been at Lex Labs for only a minute when Clark suggested that they split up to cover more ground. A few months ago that suggestion would have triggered the fear that Clark was trying to steal the better part of the story. For anyone else, she’d still react that way. But this was Clark. She knew that she could trust him, so they’d separated.

Superman had arrived a few minutes after she did and had been going in and out of the building getting people clear. He was bringing people to the front of the complex where an aid station had been set up.

Most of the activity was in the front of the complex, but Lois’s instincts were pulling her toward the rear of the structure, away from the crowds and the obvious action. Jimmy was trailing along, just behind her. Clark, probably in a fit of over protectiveness, had asked Jimmy to stay close to her. It was sweet, but she didn’t need any help. Things like that drove her crazy.

She was working her way toward the back parking area when suddenly a huge explosion sent debris flying everywhere. Lois hoped Superman had been able to get everyone out of the danger area. That explosion would have killed anyone still in the building.

As the smoke from the blast dissipated, Lois saw a body not 20 feet in front of her. It was a man dressed in red and blue. And he wasn’t moving.

Lois rushed to Superman’s side. There was a nasty-looking green bar sticking through his thigh. It was glowing. Something had hurt Superman! For an instant, she didn’t know what to do.

“Ms. Lane? Can I help?” It was Jimmy. She looked around, but no one else was approaching. She looked at the bar. It had penetrated Superman’s leg, but it didn’t appear to be near where any major arteries would be on a normal person. Something about the way it glowed worried her. “Give me your shirt!” she yelled back at Jimmy.

“What?” he asked.

She turned her head so he could see her expression. “Give me your shirt now!” she screamed with all the venom she had.

Jimmy’s eyes went wide, and his shirt was off in seconds. Fortunately, he was wearing a t-shirt underneath his dress shirt, so he didn’t end up half-naked.

Lois took the shirt and wrapped it around Superman’s leg next to where the bar was sticking out. Then she grabbed the bar and pulled it out of his leg. She tossed it in Jimmy’s direction. “Take that away from here. But don’t lose it.” Lois

put her effort into positioning the shirt to act as a crude bandage. In only a few seconds, she had the wound covered.

Then it hit her. Superman wasn’t breathing. She looked more closely and then put two fingers to his neck. He had no heartbeat either. No wonder there hadn’t been more blood. Suddenly her first aid training came back to her. Rule one, check for heartbeat. Rule two, check for breathing. Now that she thought about it, she was sure there was a rule in there about not pulling out anything — like that bar. Damn! She’d just gotten so freaked out by that bar that she’d forgotten all of her training. She was certified in CPR, and she was about to use it.

But she’d need some help. There were no police or emergency personnel in sight, but there were people not too far away. She turned and was about to yell for help when Jimmy came running back. “Jimmy, are you CPR certified?”

“Yeah. I got certified a few months back when the Chief...”

“Get down here!” she yelled, cutting him off. “You do the chest compressions, and I’ll do the mouth to mouth.”

Lois positioned Superman’s mouth and made sure his throat was unobstructed. His throat was clear, and he still wasn’t breathing. She glanced at Jimmy to make sure he was ready. Jimmy’s hands were in position, and he nodded that he was ready.

She looked back at Superman. Her mind kept racing with the thought, ‘He can’t die. He can’t die.’ She had to focus if she was going to help him. She gathered her will, pinched his nose, took a deep breath, put her mouth to his, and blew.

Lois was almost surprised when the air went in and came back out just like in the training dummy. She’d never actually given anyone CPR before. Then she waited a second and blew again. She paused and watched as Jimmy did chest compressions. While he was counting toward 30, she realized that she hadn’t tasted anything when her mouth was against Superman’s. After the 30th compression, she blew the air in again.

After the second cycle, she was sure she could taste Superman. Or to be more precise, she was sure she couldn’t taste him. She’d kissed him before — twice — but with her newfound knowledge of taste, she was more aware than she’d been those earlier times. After that fourth breath, she was sure. He didn’t have any taste. That meant she was biologically compatible with Superman. She had to fight to keep from smiling at the thought of their compatibility. One thing was for sure, he tasted much better than Lex.

After the third cycle and sixth breath, Lois was getting nervous. He needed to be waking up. More than that, the sun was beating down on them, and she was beginning to feel the strain. It had been less than a minute, but she swore she was feeling tired. Jimmy hit 30, and it was Lois’s turn again. The first breath went as before. She was blowing the second breath when Superman coughed.

She straightened up and put her fingers to his carotid artery. She found a pulse just as he coughed again. This time he kept coughing. He was going to make it. “Superman, we need to get you to the hospital.” She turned to Jimmy. “Jimmy, see if you can find some emergency personnel. I can’t believe we did this alone.”

Before Jimmy could leave Superman croaked out, “No. No hospitals.” Then he took a few breaths. “A hospital couldn’t do anything for me. I just need a few minutes.” He looked around for a second then noticed his leg. His face

paled at the sight of the bloody shirt bandaging his thigh and the torn section of his uniform. “What happened?”

She thought he was crazy for not wanting to go to a hospital, but he was the alien here. “There was an explosion,” Lois explained. “You were thrown from the building and landed right in front of me. There was a bar made out of green glowing material sticking out of your leg. You weren’t breathing, and you didn’t have a heartbeat. I pulled the bar out of your leg, then Jimmy and I gave you CPR. You came to in less than a minute.”

He took a second to digest what she’d said. “You saved my life.” For the first time she could remember, it was Superman looking at Lois Lane with adoration.

Lois felt herself blushing. Was this what he felt when she looked at him? “You’ve done the same for me,” she offered. “...several times that I can remember without even trying.”

He started to stand. He was clearly weak, so she helped him up. “Can you fly?” she asked.

He seemed to pause for a second. “No. My powers are gone. That green bar — it must have been Kryptonite.”

“That stuff is real?” she asked.

“Yes. I’m sorry about deceiving you. I, um, asked Clark to help...”

“...protect you,” Lois finished for him. “You could have trusted me,” she accused.

He looked... ashamed. “I know that, Lois. It’s just that Clark already knew, and I... asked him to do his best to make sure that no one else found out that it was real. I know you would never use that information to hurt me, but I feared that it would be dangerous for you if you knew.”

“I guess I understand,” she said. “Speaking of Clark, I’m surprised he’s not around. We were covering this together.”

Suddenly Superman looked anxious. “I’m sure he’s deep in an interview on the other side of the building. He’ll be fine.”

“You said you don’t want to go to the hospital. Do you have a place to go?”

He looked like he was thinking of some place. After a second, he seemed to come to a decision. “Could you take me to Clark’s apartment? I know where he keeps his spare key.”

Lois laughed at that. “So do I.” Then she turned to Jimmy. “Where did you put that green bar?”

“It’s in your car. We’re close to where you parked, and I didn’t know where else to put it.”

“I’m going to help Superman to my car. Would you run ahead and take that bar back to the office. We’ll need it for later.”

“Okay,” Jimmy replied. “Should I tell CK where you went?”

“Yes. If you can find him, tell him that I took Superman to his apartment. But don’t tell anyone else. And you know how Clark can disappear, so don’t spend too much time looking for him. It’s more important to get that bar under wraps.” She thought about the size of the bar. “Ask Perry if he’ll lock it in the office safe. I have a feeling that it might be important.”

Jimmy hurried away as Lois helped Superman stand. She wasn’t sure if he needed the help, but he didn’t seem to mind leaning on her as they started for her car. Fortunately, it wasn’t very far. As her car came into view, she stopped. Had Jimmy gotten that bar out? She looked around and spotted Jimmy half a block away. He waved and held up a bundle that obviously contained the bar. Then he turned and hurried away.

Lois led Superman to her car. There were plenty of people

gawking, but no one approached or offered to help. She really didn’t want any help, but still, she felt an editorial in the Planet’s future about helping in emergency situations.

It only took a minute or so to get Superman settled in the passenger seat and for them to be on their way to Clark’s. She’d always suspected that Superman and Clark were closer than either let on, but still, Superman asking to go to Clark’s apartment had been a surprise.

The drive to Clark’s was made in silence. It gave Lois the chance to think about what had just happened. Superman was vulnerable to that — Kryptonite. Between the bar of Kryptonite and the explosion, he’d nearly died. That thought sent a chill through her. Thank goodness they’d been able to revive him. She’d need to tell Perry that the mandatory CPR training had saved Superman today.

That brought her mind back to her other revelation during the CPR. Superman had no taste. How could he be an alien but be compatible with her? It was nice to know that Clark wasn’t the only person that she was compatible with. Of course, there wasn’t anything wrong with Clark. He also tasted very nice. And he was her best friend.

That train of thought was interrupted as they arrived at Clark’s apartment. Superman was clearly stronger, but he still let Lois help him to Clark’s door. Lois retrieved the key, and they went in.

As they entered the apartment, she turned to Superman. “You should rest. Do you think Clark will mind if you lay down on his bed?”

He smiled back at her. “I don’t think he’ll mind.”

“Fine, I’ll be out here.”

“You don’t need to stay,” Superman said. “I’ll be fine.”

She gave him the most incredulous look she could muster. “Less than half an hour ago your heart stopped. I’m not leaving you alone. So get in there and rest.”

Again, another smile. Then it hit her. This was a different smile than she’d ever seen on Superman before. This was friendlier — more relaxed. “Yes, ma’am,” he said as he started for Clark’s bedroom.

“Clark would probably appreciate it if you changed out of your uniform before you got on his bed,” she called out to his retreating form. “He keeps sweats in the lower drawer of his dresser.”

Superman paused, and it looked like he was going to say something. Instead he just shook his head slowly and continued into Clark’s room. Then it hit her, would Superman wonder how she knew where Clark kept his clothes? But he and Clark were clearly close. Superman probably knew that she’d slept here after stakeouts a few times.

She sat down on Clark’s sofa. She knew she should be writing up the story but was worried about some elements. There was a substance that could hurt Superman. In fact, it seemed that properly applied, it could kill him. And what was it doing in Lex Labs? Clark had always disliked Lex. Maybe it was time to find out if that dislike was more than personal.

That got her thinking about the way Lex tasted. How well did she really know the man? Did she want to? She looked around. Clark had a nice apartment. It had been such a dump that first day. But there was a lot of good hidden beneath the external appearance. In many ways, Clark was like his apartment. When she’d first seen him, he didn’t seem worth her time. Boy, had she been wrong. So what about Lex? He had always looked dazzling. Is that what he was like under the surface? For that matter, what about Superman? She’d seen

something today...

“Lois?” Superman called from the other room.

He didn't sound like he was in trouble. Just the same, she hurried into Clark's sleeping area and found Superman in Clark's bed, under the covers. Lois didn't see his uniform, but based on the grey sweatshirt he was wearing, he must have changed. He looked very un-Superman-like in such casual clothes. She sat on the edge of the bed next to him. “Did you need something?” she asked.

He reached over and took her hand. “I just wanted to thank you for today. I... Thank you.”

There is was again. This was a Superman she'd never seen. She was pretty sure no one had. Lois was about to mutter some kind of 'you're welcome' when, in a flash, she had another idea. She leaned over and kissed him.

A real kiss.

A long kiss.

A wonderful kiss.

And he kissed back.

And he meant it.

And he tasted good.

After a long moment, Lois pulled back. What had they just done? Lois wasn't sure, but she was glad it had happened. Right now, she needed to get out of this room. This close, he was too dangerous. “You get some sleep,” she said, hopefully sounding calm. “I'll be in the other room. I promise that I won't leave until you wake up.”

She didn't wait for him to reply. She stood, went back to the living room and sat on Clark's couch. She needed to compose her thoughts. That kiss was a game changer. She knew it. She was sure that Superman — Clark — knew it as well.

THE END

Classicalla's requests for this fic:

I want:

1. Lois and Clark to each kiss someone other than each other
2. Lois and Clark to kiss each other
3. Lois has to save Superman

I don't want:

1. Lex Luthor
2. Dan Scardino
3. Mayson whatshername