

And Nothing But the Truth

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Rated: PG13

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Summary: Linda King is back in Metropolis for the premiere of her movie. This story is a companion/continuation of the author's "The Whole Truth."

Thanks to Virginia for suggesting the movie's title! Many, many thanks to my betas: BJ, Kate, and Emily for the quick turnaround and, most especially, for being unfailingly awesome.

For the first half hour of the movie, Lois was in heaven. 'Deadline' was the biggest turkey ever made. The plot was so Linda-centric that it would be impossible for that bleached blonde viper to ever live it down. The much-too-beautiful actress playing Linda did manage to perfectly capture the original's vapidity. The actor playing Superman was all brawn and no brain. Half the time he appeared to be reading off cue cards just to the left of the camera.

As the movie droned on Lois was sure she could sense Linda squirming in the seat just behind her. For a few brief, shining moments all was right with the world.

And then the movie took an unexpected twist. Superman rescued Linda and flew her to a rooftop where they could be alone together. He set her down and touched her cheek, cupping it in his hand as he asked, "Are you all right?"

A shock wave of recognition went through Lois. For everything the movie had got wrong — and basically the entire movie was one big lie — there was truth in that moment. Even the terrible acting couldn't hide the fact that Linda had gotten it right. That gesture was exactly — *exactly* — the way Superman had checked on Lois after more than one rescue. Those had been private moments, an intimacy she thought she had shared only with Superman. All this time she had believed she was special to him, at least in those moments. That scene was evidence that Superman had done the same thing to Linda.

The thought made Lois sick. Not just a little queasy or slightly ill. No, this was actual gut-wrenching nausea. Lois would have exited right then and there but she didn't want to give Linda the satisfaction of knowing she had scored a direct hit. Lois spent the rest of the movie taking deep breaths and thinking of inventive ways for Linda to disappear. Once the credits started rolling, Lois couldn't make herself spend another second breathing the same air as her nemesis. It didn't matter anymore what Linda thought or did; getting away from her was all that counted.

The ride home felt endless. Lois replayed the scene over and over again in her mind. There was Superman touching Linda's cheek and then leaning in close to kiss her. Only once had Superman ever kissed her like that — and he had been under the influence of Miranda's pheromone perfume at the time. Had he actually kissed Linda? A kiss that was his own choice and not the result of an outside influence? It must have really happened. How else could Linda have gotten both the gesture and the words right?

As if from a great distance, Lois could hear Clark nattering on about the movie. His presence was another reminder that Linda could steal anything or anyone from her, just for spite.

Linda had taken great relish in stealing Clark away as her partner the last time she was in Metropolis. In truth, Clark had been on assignment, but that still didn't soften the memory for Lois. Clark had been much too friendly and full of sunshine tonight when he greeted Linda and that betrayal still rankled. He needed to choose, once and for all, whose side he was on. He should start by going home and washing his face. The faint red smudge of Linda's lipstick on his left cheek was a constant reminder of his perfidy.

The nerve of that woman! She had been giving air kisses to everyone else. It was like she had been saving that mark of ownership solely for Clark. And he had simply stood there like a dope and let Linda kiss him. He could have leaned away, but no...

They had finally reached her building, but Lois was in no mood to have Clark walk her to the door. She dismissed him abruptly, which was probably what he secretly wanted anyway. He was free to go back to the after-party and suck up to Linda all he wanted. She could cover him in lipstick and Lois wouldn't care.

All the way up the stairs Lois couldn't stop herself from picturing Clark and Linda together. Her misery deepened. Linda kissing Superman was one thing — Superman was a public figure. Deep down Lois had always known that she was sharing him with the rest of the world.

Clark was a different story. Clark was her best friend. Being with Clark was easy and comfortable. Even if she knew where Superman lived, Lois doubted very much that she could show up late at night with a pizza and hang out with him. Had she lost that? Had Clark gone back to the party? Was he sidling up to Linda at this very moment? Was he putting his hand on the small of her back in that faintly possessive gesture that always sent a little thrill through Lois when he did it to her?

Unable to stop herself, Lois remembered the triumphant smirk on Linda's face last year when Clark became her partner. Lois could still repeat verbatim each and every one of the innuendos that Linda had spoken about Clark. Linda had taken such obvious satisfaction in telling Lois that Clark had only ever felt belittled and marginalized as her partner; those words had hurt, mostly because Lois had taken a hard look at how she sometimes treated Clark and she couldn't blame him if he did feel that way. In the months since then, Lois had tried, with varying degrees of success, to be nicer to Clark.

And maybe it had made a difference. Clark did seem to be a little more attentive these days. At least he had until Linda showed up again tonight. Linda had strongly implied that she and Clark had done more together last year than simply investigate Carpenter. Maybe the only good thing about the movie was that Linda hadn't included the steamy affair she claimed to have had with Clark. It had been horrifying enough to see Superman kiss Linda. To see her kiss Clark would have been beyond the pale.

Lois stared blankly at the contents of her refrigerator. "Don't do this to yourself," she whispered. "She made it up. She's the biggest, fattest, trashiest liar in the world." She slammed the door shut. "And he kissed her."

For a second or two she pictured Clark kissing Linda. She shouldn't have sent him away tonight. She should have let him walk her to the door. She should have asked him in. She should have taken a washcloth from her bathroom and offered to scrub that lipstick off for him.

There was a knocking sound on her window. In the space of a heartbeat, several thoughts ran through Lois' head; the first was a spiteful kind of happiness that Superman wasn't at the after-party. Just as quickly, that joy faded. Why was he here? How many other windows did he visit? How many other gullible women had fallen for his charms?

He obviously knew she was home so ignoring him didn't

seem to be the most viable option. Lois glumly went to the window and opened it.

Once he was inside she still didn't know what to say to him so she settled for, "I didn't see you at the premiere."

"I had a prior commitment." Superman seemed rather subdued and Lois' heart sank a little more. What bad news was he about to deliver? God, please, don't let him say anything about Linda.

Lois shrugged, determined to play this cool. "You didn't miss much."

Superman's mouth quirked in a half-smile. "I heard they took a lot of creative license."

That smug bastard! Was he mocking her? And was that lipstick on his cheek? The same shade as Linda's? In the exact same spot where Linda had kissed Clark, no less. Did the woman have no shame? Of all the questions Lois has rhetorically asked herself that night, at least that one already had an answer. Linda had absolutely no shame, it was her only dependable quality.

Wait... At what point had Superman met up with Linda? He definitely hadn't been at the premiere. How could Linda have kissed Superman if he wasn't at the premiere? It did look like he had tried to wipe it off — just like Clark. And, just like Clark, it hadn't come off entirely.

Just like Clark...

Clark was the only person Linda had actually put her lips on tonight. Everyone else got one of those flamboyantly fake air kisses. Superman had not been at the premiere. Clark had. And Linda had kissed Clark...

Everything inside her went still as she realized who had just flown in through her window.

"Is something wrong, Lois? You seem upset."

Was he kidding? Where should she start?

Lois shrugged and looked away. Superman was Clark. Or Clark was Superman. Was this why Superman never talked about family or friends? Why he avoided personal questions? Why he didn't come to the premiere? And then she realized what else Clark had just unwittingly revealed to her. He hadn't gone back to the party or to Linda. His appearance right after she muttered about Linda was simply too well-timed to be coincidental. Clark must have still been outside. He hadn't gone anywhere. He'd known she was upset and he had stuck around because that's what a friend did.

Her memory flashed to the appreciative once-over he had given her when she opened the door to him earlier tonight. He had said she looked amazing and that every man there would be looking at her, not Linda. The expression on his face had been earnest — Clark had meant it. He had spent most of the night sneaking looks at her when he thought she didn't notice. But she had noticed. She had brought Superman to a Superman movie and he had watched her instead.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly and turned back towards her window. "I didn't mean to intrude. I'll leave you alone now."

Her heart sank at the thought that he might actually leave. She had to think fast, had to stall him while she tried to find a way to navigate the minefield she had just landed in. Clark had one foot on the windowsill when she blurted out the question that had been torturing her for the past year, "Did you kiss Linda King?"

He shook his head and turned around again to face her. Their eyes met and his were dark and solemn. "That movie was a work of fiction, Lois. I never saved Linda from the Omiri ambassador and I certainly never kissed her."

Of course he hadn't! Even though Lois had just caught Clark in a huge lie, she nonetheless believed he was telling her the absolute truth. She could understand the reasoning behind having Superman and Clark Kent appear to be two different people. Linda lied just to be vindictive or because it was a Tuesday.

Lois had been right — Linda had made the whole thing up. She was willing to bet that, just like the movie, Linda's affair with Clark had been a figment of that tramp's overwrought imagination. Neither Clark nor Superman had kissed her. And then the full truth sank in and Lois wasn't sure whether to laugh or to cry. Linda had no idea who Superman really was! No one did. It was entirely possible that she was the only person in the world who had figured it out.

Just to be sure — and maybe to rub it in to the one person in this drama who wasn't there — Lois decided to ask him another question she hadn't been able to before. "You don't have feelings for her?"

"I'm sure she's a very nice person, but—"

"No." Lois interrupted before he could say anything polite. "No, she's not. She's a terrible person. She throws herself at men all the time. Did she throw herself at you?"

If the lipstick hadn't already given him away, his response to that question might have. The calm expression that Superman usually wore disappeared in an instant. His eyebrow shot up and his mouth opened and closed a couple of times as he searched for an answer.

"No. But, even if she had, Linda is not my type."

Did he realize that this was the first time Superman had ever answered a question with unsolicited personal information? Suddenly there was a strange and exciting kind of electricity in the air between them.

"What is your type?" Lois asked quietly. It felt like her whole existence hinged on his answer.

His dark eyes looked into hers and his expression became almost flirtatious. "I think you already know."

Lois shook her head. For once she was going to make him tell her the whole truth about something. "You've never said."

Clark took a step closer to her, close enough now that they were almost touching. Her pulse ratcheted into overdrive. For half a second Lois wondered if she was dreaming this. But, no, her fantasies had always been abstract. The heat of his body was much too realistic a detail to be a daydream.

"If Superman could have a girlfriend, it would be you."

At the back of her mind, Lois comprehended that she would have dropped to the floor right then and there if it wasn't for the fact that she was already in shock. For once being frozen in place was working to her advantage. She was amazed at how calm her voice sounded as she asked, "You can't have a girlfriend?"

"And make you a target for anyone who wanted to use you to control me? I'd never do that to you, Lois."

She'd already thought through this logic at least a thousand times. Superman couldn't have an acknowledged girlfriend. But surely Clark could? And if Superman was Clark's secret then... "Maybe I could be your secret girlfriend?"

Clark moved closer and whispered, "Maybe you already are."

Never before had Superman looked at her with undisguised desire. How was it possible to be this dizzy and still be standing? Before Lois could think about the gesture, her hand rose to touch his face. Her eyes were drawn to that little smear of vermilion on his cheek. Did he remember that it was there? Had he left it there on purpose? Was he in earnest tonight or had he just discovered a new way for Superman to break her heart? She was sorry she had started this game. All she wanted now was the truth — could he care about her as more than a friend or not?

"It doesn't feel like I'm your girlfriend."

Suddenly his hands were cupping her face and his mouth was on hers. After a moment of stunned surprise Lois regained enough presence of mind to kiss him back. Their kiss was breathtaking in its intensity and a little bit confusing as she tried to remember which man she was kissing. Did it matter? No one had ever kissed her like this before. Not even Clark or Superman. Somehow it made sense that the first time she knew who he

really was, he was kissing her without holding back. The feel of his arms around her, the solid strength of his body against hers, and the steadily building urgency of his kisses left her reeling. Most of her Superman fantasies had started with the vague idea of a kiss like this. The reality was a thousand times more thrilling. And then, just as swiftly as the kiss had started, he was pulling away.

"I shouldn't have done that," he panted. "I'm sorry."

Dazed, she could only murmur, "Are you?"

He gave her a slow once-over that made her knees wobble. "Only because it's going to hurt that I can't kiss you like that again."

He didn't know! He had no idea that she knew. Clark had just crossed a major line and he had no clue that she was on to him. *You're mine, Clark Kent*, she thought. *You just don't know it yet.*

Lois fulfilled another fantasy by boldly sliding her hands possessively over the S on his chest. "You could, you know. It'll be our secret."

"Our secret..." he echoed.

Beneath her fingertips she could feel the frantic beat of his heart. All at once it struck her: Superman wasn't just the most powerful man in the world, he was her best friend. Beneath the tights and the cape was a real person — one she already knew pretty well. Was he nervous? Excited? Scared? Would he be willing to share a *real* secret with her?

"Just tell me one thing," she whispered as her eyes searched his, trying to gauge how far she dared to push him. "One thing and I swear I won't ask you for anything else and I'll never talk about it to anybody."

"What?"

For half a second she thought about asking him what his real name was. Then she realized that might be too much, too soon. She'd already got the truth about Linda out of him. This might be the perfect time to get the truth about herself. "Do you love me?"

He didn't move and she could almost hear the gears turning in his head.

"Tell me." The enormity of the gamble she was taking hit her hard. Just because he had flirted with her and then kissed her as Superman didn't necessarily mean that he loved her, after all. But he had stayed outside on the sidewalk, hadn't he?

"Please, I want to hear you say it, just once." *Please, Clark, trust me.*

He still hadn't moved. Lois smiled at him as she realized she already knew the answer. He wouldn't be here tonight if he didn't. He could have gone back to the party, or home, or anywhere he wanted. Instead, he had stayed somewhere nearby.

"I'm not asking you to tell me the whole truth," she added to encourage him.

His eyes widened a little. "The whole truth?"

Lois nodded. "I'm sure there are a lot of truths you could tell me. Tonight I only want to hear that one."

Clark took a deep breath and let it out slowly. His eyes looked steadily into hers as he softly said the words she had waited so long to hear. "I love you."

"Thank you," she whispered and went on tiptoe to leave a light kiss on his jaw. If they made a movie about her life, she would never, ever include this night. But in the secret movie in her mind, she knew how she would write it. "You know, if this were a movie, we'd make love tonight. One perfect, never-to-be-repeated night."

For a breathless second or two Lois worried that she had gone too far. Then Clark's hands took hold of her waist as he said in a husky tone, "This isn't a movie."

"No." Lois shook her head slightly, exhilarated by the thought of what might be next.

His expression grew serious. "And there's that whole truth I'd have to tell you first."

Her breath caught at both the velvet rasp of his voice and the realization that he loved her enough to want to be fully honest with her

"Is that what's holding you back?" she asked softly. "The whole truth?"

He nodded, his fingers tightened slightly on her waist. "That's all that's been holding me back for almost two years now."

Lois felt almost faint. She had to give him credit. Clark had never used Superman to seduce her — and there had been many occasions when he absolutely could have. It was time to come clean. "What if I already know the whole truth?"

"Lois, I—" he started to say, but she put a finger on his lips to silence him.

"Shh." Her fingers moved, caressing softly over his cheek. "I told you that lipstick was never going to come off."

"Lipstick?" His eyes closed, his shoulders slumped, and his hands dropped from her waist. "I'm sorry," he whispered.

"Are you?" she asked softly.

Clark's eyes opened and sought hers. For several long seconds he studied her. Lois gazed back at him, willing him to understand that she was his friend first, no matter what.

"Maybe not," he whispered. His hand cupped her cheek, the light caress was made even more sweet by the knowledge that she was the only one he touched like this. "Will you let me tell you the whole truth?"

Lois nodded. "I'd like that."

"My parents taught me to be honest about everything except my abilities; the things I could do. That lie never bothered me until we became friends. You're the first and only person I've ever wanted to tell, Lois." He let out a relieved laugh. "I'm Clark and I'm Superman and I'm in love with you."

Lois swayed against him and his arms went around her. She went on tiptoe and kissed him. This time their kiss was slow and tender, a sweet acknowledgement that a lifetime of kisses laid before them.

When they parted, Clark tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "Do you have any idea of how beautiful you look tonight?"

He had said as much hours earlier, but Lois had been too focused on what's-her-name to pay attention. "You really ought to try and tell me nothing but the truth from now on," she teased.

"You want the truth?" he asked with a grin. When she nodded, he bent down and left a kiss just in front of her ear. "If this were a movie, I'd already be making love to you," he whispered, his lips lingering to leave a few more tiny kisses along her jawline.

"One of those perfect, never-to-be-repeated nights?" she murmured.

"That's why it's a good thing this isn't a movie. Because I like to think there will definitely be more than one perfect night." Lois could feel his smile on her skin. "Clark?"

"Hmm?" His answer vibrated against her skin, sending a shiver through her.

Lois wrapped her arms around his neck for balance and tipped her head back so he could keep kissing her throat. "I should tell you the truth about something."

"What's that?" It was becoming difficult to concentrate when the heat of his breath on her skin was intoxicating.

"I love you."

Clark's head lifted.

"I mean you," she told him earnestly. "Not Superman. I love you, Clark."

Clark smiled at her before kissing her forehead softly. "I know we're turning over a new leaf regarding honesty, but if tonight doesn't turn out to be perfect, it's okay if you lie and say it was."

"I've never thought perfection was much fun." Lois giggled

and shook her head. “And besides, it’s only perfect in the movies.”
THE END