

# The Green-Eyed Mad Dog

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Rated PG-13

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Summary: When Lois catches Clark kissing Mayson Drake, she takes immediate action to stop him. Will our favorite duo finally admit their feelings for one another, or will misunderstandings keep them apart?

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Lois rushed to the apartment of her partner and best friend, thrilled that she had learned the truth about that slimy DA Mayson Drake before it was too late. That blonde bimbo had been all over Clark since the two had met and Lois wanted to make sure that Mayson didn't succeed in getting her hooks into him.

Clark was intelligent and kind, but his country boy naiveté seemed to make him vulnerable to women with unscrupulous motives such as Toni Taylor and Mayson "my home phone number is on the back" Drake. Once she showed Clark the new evidence, however, he would surely see that Mayson was not the right person for him. Clark needed someone...well, he needed someone better than that Drake woman, and Lois was determined to make him see reason.

She reached his apartment and bounded up the steps, only to be faced with the shock of her life. Clark was...oh, god, he was kissing that corrupt, no-good tramp. She had to stop him!

Before she even realized what she was doing, she reached for the doorknob and barged into the room. "Clark?" she called out somewhat belatedly, hoping to give the impression that she had no idea that he was in the living room, much less that he had company.

Clark pulled away from Mayson in record time, croaking out, "Lois, what are you doing here?"

"Oh," Lois responded, trying her best to sound innocent. "I didn't realize you had a *visitor*."

"Mayson was just here to...to go over my testimony," Clark managed, sounding terribly guilty.

"Well, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I really do need to speak with Clark in private. Would you mind, Mayson?" Lois asked sweetly. It took every ounce of her restraint to keep a smile on her face.

"Actually, Lois..." Mayson began haughtily, only to be cut off by Clark.

"Mayson, I really do need to work on this story with Lois. You don't mind, do you?" he asked, using his best conciliatory look.

"I guess not," she replied begrudgingly. "Call me when you need a break from the *story*," she added, looking pointedly at Lois. With that, she grabbed her purse and made a slow exit, being sure to show off her assets as she departed.

That display was not lost on Lois, who fumed silently. As soon as the door was closed and Mayson was out of earshot, she rounded on Clark.

"What the hell were you doing?"

"Excuse me?" he asked, both surprised and annoyed by her question and her tone.

"You have no business kissing that woman, Clark. She's bad news," she yelled.

"Were you spying on me?" Clark asked incredulously.

"I didn't have to," she countered angrily. "I walked up to the door and it was on display for all to see."

"And so naturally you decided to barge into my apartment," he said, clearly upset with her.

"I came over to talk to you about Intergang. I didn't realize I'd be disturbing your little tryst. What is wrong with you, Clark? Do you have to have a fling with every blonde criminal that you meet?" She was shouting, and she knew it, but she had to get through to him. She couldn't let her partner get hurt by that woman.

Matching her anger, he replied, "First of all, Mayson is not a criminal, and second...what gives you the right to accuse her of anything?"

"What gives me the right? I'll tell you what gives me the right. I'm trying to protect you, you lunkhead, not that you'd appreciate it. You don't make good choices when it comes to women."

"I don't make good choices?" he began indignantly, but she cut him off before he could mention the mistakes she had made in her love life.

Pacing and gesticulating wildly, she spoke emphatically. "You don't, Clark. You sleep with Cat, you kiss Toni Taylor, and now you're locking lips with a DA who is clearly on the take."

"Lois..."

"You keep making mistakes, Clark, and I can't let you do that anymore."

"Let me?" he asked, astonished at her gall.

She turned suddenly and looked him straight in the eye. "The only woman you should be kissing, Clark Kent, is me!"

She gave Clark no time to register her words before she wrapped her arms around his neck and began plundering his lips with her own. She felt his arms move to cradle her as he staggered backwards, and she experienced the strangest sensation of floating before they landed safely on his couch.

She couldn't get enough of him. His lips tasted of exotic sweetness, and his tongue stroked hers with ever increasing intent. She had read stories of people being swept away by passion, but she had never believed it could really happen until this moment. As he caressed her body with his hands, she felt each nerve ending crackle to life. And the heat...she reveled in the slow slide of warmth and longing that began to settle in the most sensitive parts of her body. She wanted to touch him everywhere, but given their position, she settled for sliding her hands into his soft, thick hair and deepening the contact between them. The whole room seemed to be buzzing as she began trailing kisses along his jaw line.

"Lois," he murmured, his deep voice resonating in every part of her being.

"Clark," she answered, taking his earlobe between her lips and sucking gently.

He shivered in response. "Oh god, Lois. Your beeper...is going off."

"What?" she managed, as his words slowly began to penetrate the haze that had enveloped her.

"Your beeper," he said again softly, clearly pained by the interruption.

Taking in their surroundings clearly for the first time, she heard the buzzing coming from her purse on the table. She jumped up quickly and rushed to check the device. "I told Uncle Mike to page me if something was wrong. Clark, he's in trouble," she added worriedly.

Clark jumped up, grabbed a box, and began heading for the door.

"Where are you going?" she asked, the hurt clearly evident in her voice.

He turned to face her. "I, uh...I'm going to find Superman. You call the police."

“But...,” she began.

“I’ll find him and I’ll meet you there,” he reassured her, then added gently, “He’ll be OK, Lois.” Within a moment, he was gone.

Stunned by Clark’s abrupt exit, it took Lois a moment to reach the phone. Dialing the direct line for Inspector Henderson, she was soon satisfied that help was on the way, and she rushed to her Jeep. Her mind was in overdrive as it wrestled with two important questions: “Is Uncle Mike okay?” and “What the hell just happened?” Uncle Mike took precedence, of course, but Mad Dog would have her day.

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Clark was having a hard time concentrating on his mission. Lois had kissed him before, but never like this. He could still feel the delicious press of her body against his and taste the sweetness of her lips and tongue. In typical Mad Dog fashion, Lois had leapt into action in the face of a perceived threat. Was she just trying to show up Mayson, or was her behavior a reflection of her true feelings for him? God, he hoped it was the latter. He had loved her for so long, yet he had almost given up on the idea that his dreams would one day turn into reality. There was a special bond between them, he knew, but he was afraid that she would never allow them to venture beyond the boundaries of friendship.

Thinking of their friendship, he remembered his purpose and shook his head in disgust at his lack of focus. Lois’ uncle was in trouble, and he was wasting valuable time. Right now, he had to concentrate on saving one of the few people who had shown Lois unconditional love. Whether Mike knew it or not, Superman was indebted to him. That repayment would begin tonight.

Arriving on the scene, Clark quickly changed into the policeman’s uniform and charged onto the scene. Keeping his anger on a tight leash, he used martial arts techniques to dispatch the goons one by one. In a few short moments, all of the attackers were lying on the ground and had been “informed” of their rights.

Mike stood off to the side, looking grateful and not too worse for wear.

Nodding to Mike, Clark said, “I have to go call for...uh...”

“Backup?” Mike supplied.

“Yeah.”

Sirens wailing in the distance, Mike observed, “Looks like it’s already on the way.”

Taking advantage of Mike’s temporary distraction, Clark dashed away to change. He had promised to meet Lois here, and he didn’t want her to see him in yet another disguise.

A few moments later, he returned to the scene to find Lois hugging her uncle tightly.

“Is everything okay?” he asked.

Lois pulled away from her uncle to look at him, and her posture changed to a defensive stance. *No, Lois. Please don’t shut me out.*

“Everything’s fine, Clark,” Mike stated, filling the silence. “A lone policeman came out of nowhere to save me. I wish I could find him to thank him.”

“I’m sure he knows that you’re grateful, Mike,” Clark told him, but his eyes never left Lois’.

“Would you two kids like to stay for dinner?” asked Mike. “I’m in the mood to celebrate. I’ll have to talk to the police first, but I’ll be happy to whip up something for you.”

Lois looked panicked. Kissing her uncle on the cheek, she told him, “I’m sorry, Uncle Mike. I’m so thankful that you’re safe, but I’ve really got to get some work done.”

Mike hugged her briefly, and then pulled back to reassure her. “That’s alright, sweetie. We’ll all be safer when you help catch those bad guys.”

“I’ll go with you,” Clark added hastily, hoping she’d allow him to talk to her.

“No, Clark. You stay here and have a nice meal. I’ll see you

tomorrow.” With that, she turned and practically sprinted to her Jeep.

“Lois,” Clark mumbled miserably. He’d worked so hard to get her to drop her defenses, and now they were back up in force.

“You’re in love with her, aren’t you son?” a voice interjected.

Clark looked up in surprise. “Is it that obvious?”

Putting his arm around Clark, Mike told him, “I’m afraid so. Come on in and I’ll fix you some dinner.”

“I really appreciate that, sir, but I think I’ll just go home now. Will you be alright?”

“I’ll be fine. The police are here, and no one would dare to try anything else tonight.”

“Then I’ll see you later,” he said, turning to go home.

“Clark,”

Turning around, Clark replied respectfully, “Yes, sir?”

“You know, I’ve never known that little girl to run away from anything.”

Clark smiled. “She has amazing courage.”

“Any idea why she’s running now?”

Clark looked down dejectedly. “It’s complicated.”

“Then make it simple. My niece trusts you more than she’s trusted anyone in a long time.”

“As a friend,” Clark replied wearily.

Mike put his hand on Clark’s arm. “Don’t discount that, Clark. Too many people have let her down, and each time it happens, she hides more of herself from the world. The fact that she calls you a friend should tell you something.”

“I know that, Mike. It’s just hard when she shuts me out.”

“Don’t give up on her. She needs someone like you,” Mike said reassuringly.

“I could never give up on her,” he said, smiling softly at the absurdity of the thought.

“That’s what I like to hear. Now, go get some rest,” Mike replied, patting Clark firmly on the back.

“Not likely, but I’ll try. Goodnight, Mike.”

“Goodnight.”

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An exhausted Lois Lane boarded the *Planet* elevator with trepidation. She had spent the entire night thinking about Clark and the events of the previous evening. She had been so jealous when she saw him kissing that woman that she hadn’t been able to think straight. Instead, she jumped right into the fire and tried to bully Mayson out of the apartment and, if she were to be honest, out of Clark’s life. It encouraged her a little that Clark asked Mayson to leave, but she worried that he was simply playing the role of peacemaker rather than choosing her over Mayson.

God, how she wanted him to choose her! She had really managed to fool herself up to that moment, convincing herself that being friends and partners with Clark was more than enough for her. Sure she’d been a little possessive when other women had tried to win Clark, but she had rationalized her actions as an instinct to protect the heart of her best friend. In truth, she’d never faced a serious adversary until Mayson. Women often tried to land Clark, but he had never shown the slightest inclination to return such affections until last night. She had underestimated that blonde DA, mistakenly believing that Clark would always be hers if she decided she wanted him. When she saw Clark kissing Mayson she felt as though her whole world was falling apart. The pain was instantaneous and shocking in its power, and she could no longer ignore the fact that she was in love with Clark.

Headless of the consequences, she had staked her claim on Clark with a series of spectacular kisses. Clark, for his part, had been thrillingly responsive, his mouth and hands worshipping her with a passionate reverence. She wondered just how far their encounter would have progressed if not for the frantic page from her Uncle Mike.

Instead of staying with her and supporting her in a time of crisis, however, Clark had run off alone, supposedly in search of Superman. Why had he left her? Was he unable to find a way to let her down gently? Clark had always hated conflict, and he had a history of running away from uncomfortable situations. Did he feel like he had betrayed Mayson?

He had shown up at Mike's place, just as he had promised, but she had been the one to run away. It was clear that he wanted to talk to her, but she couldn't bear to hear him say that the kiss had been a mistake. As long as they didn't talk she could still entertain the possibility that Clark might love her too. She wouldn't have to face disappointment and heartbreak all over again and she would still have a best friend. The chime of the elevator heralded the moment of truth and the doors opened to reveal the newsroom.

Panic settled in, and every fiber of her being wanted to flee to the safety of her apartment. Mercifully, though, Clark didn't seem to be at work yet and she forced her feet to move in the direction of her desk. She hated this feeling of nervousness and embarrassment and she chided herself for her weakness. She was Lois Lane, for heaven's sake! Lois Lane doesn't sit around and do nothing—she investigates. She would find out the truth about her rival, acquiring enough evidence to insure that her Boy Scout partner would have to stay away from Mayson.

Excited about the possibility, Lois immersed herself in the process of research. She became so engrossed, in fact, that she failed to hear Clark approach her desk.

"Good morning, Lois," he said softly, seemingly testing the waters.

Startled by his presence, Lois' head jerked up, and she felt her nervousness return with a vengeance. Trying to calm the churning of her stomach, she steeled her expression and acknowledged her partner with a curt, "Clark."

"Can we talk in the conference room?" he asked hopefully.

She looked at him sternly for a moment. "Let me get my notes together, and I'll meet you there."

"Your notes?" he asked, a disappointed tone in his voice.

"I assume you want to talk about the story," she snapped impatiently.

"Yeah, sure...the story," he said sadly. "I'll pull up what I've got as well. See you in a couple of minutes."

Nodding in response, Lois went to the conference room and immediately began arranging her notes. She had to keep the focus on Mayson and her questionable activities. She couldn't handle anything more personal.

The door to the conference room opened and closed, and she could hear Clark behind her. "Lois, I know you want to talk about the case, but can we talk about what happened last night instead?"

*Please don't let him bring up the kiss, not now.* Grabbing a photograph from the table, she whirled around to face him. "I brought this to you last night, but you were otherwise engaged," she said, handing him the photo of Mayson, Church and Snell.

"About that, Lois...it's not what you're..." he began.

"Clark, she's dirty," Lois replied, cutting him off abruptly.

Registering the photo for the first time, he said, "Just because they're in a photo together, doesn't mean she's involved."

"She worked under Snell in Church's acquisitions division."

"That's circumstantial, Lois, and you know it."

Becoming more animated, Lois said, "I'm telling you, Clark, she's in on it."

"Show me the proof," he replied more forcefully.

"We don't have any proof on Snell, but you're willing to go after him," Lois yelled.

"That's different. I told you, I have a...a source."

"I'll tell you what's different, when Snell bats his eyes, you don't get quite so giddy," she replied, jealousy clear in her voice.

Exasperated, Clark replied, "Lois, I told you that there's nothing going on with Mayson."

"Don't lie to me, Clark. You were kissing her."

"She kissed me, Lois, and if you'd just let me explain..."

"I don't need your explanations. You can do what you want. I don't care—except when it affects our job."

"How is it affecting my job to say I disagree? To say, you have no proof that Church is the head of Intergang and no proof that, just because Mayson worked for Church, she's part of Intergang? We've got to stay on track."

"You're not saying stay on track. You're saying stay away from your girlfriend!"

Slamming his hands on the table, he reiterated, "She's not my girlfriend, Lois. I keep trying to tell you."

"Whatever she is, she's got you finger-wrapped and blindfolded," Lois retorted sourly.

"If there's anybody blind here, it's you," he said angrily, storming out of the room.

Confused and frustrated, she called out after him, "What's that supposed to mean?"

She received no reply.

Shaken by the fight, Lois found herself on the verge of tears. She was losing him...she was sure of it. He had defended Mayson despite the evidence, trusting a woman he barely knew over his own partner. Not that Mayson wouldn't jump at the chance to know him better. Oh, God, maybe they already had... maybe she was too late.

"Lois," Perry said kindly after knocking on the conference room door. "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine," she answered without conviction.

"What's going on with Clark, honey?"

"Perry, he's letting his feelings for a woman get in the way of our story."

"And...?"

"And... it's unprofessional," she added.

"And...?" he probed knowingly.

Knowing she couldn't fool him, she confessed, "And... I don't like it, okay? I don't even know why, but I don't like it."

"Are you sure about that, darlin'?" he asked knowingly.

"She's dirty, Perry. I don't know why he doesn't see it."

"Maybe she is, maybe she isn't...but, somehow I don't think that's the issue here," he prodded gently.

Her face crumbled. "He's the best friend I've ever had. I don't want to lose him."

"Lois, let me tell you what I know about Clark Kent: If you asked for the moon, he'd start building a rocket. Now, Clark's a nice man and a patient one too, but even he won't wait forever."

"What do you mean?"

"I think you know what I mean, honey. You've got some decisions to make."

"And what if I'm too late?" she asked, the tears threatening once more.

Perry took her in his arms. "It will all work out, darlin'. There may be some bumps in the road, but it will work out just fine. You'll see."

Needing the support, she took comfort from her editor's embrace. "I hope you're right."

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In the aftermath of the fight, Clark sought solace from his parents. He knew that he should be working on the story, but he couldn't stop thinking about his argument with Lois. Since Superman wasn't needed at the moment, he flew directly to the place where he felt free to be himself.

"Hi, Mom," he called out as he entered the kitchen.

"What are you doing here, Clark? It's the middle of the day," she said in surprise.

"I know, Mom, but I just needed to talk."

“What’s wrong, son?” his father asked as he entered the room.

“I had another fight with Lois, Dad. A bad one. Last night, she kissed me, and now she’s pushing me away with both hands. I don’t know what to do.”

“Wait a minute... she kissed you?” Martha asked excitedly.

He nodded. “She saw me kissing Mayson and she...”

“Hold on... who is Mayson, and why were you kissing her?” his father asked.

“Mayson is the assistant DA. She came over to my apartment to talk about my testimony, and she kissed me. Lois must have seen us together because she came bursting into the room and hustled Mayson out the door.”

“Were you trying to make Lois jealous, Clark? That’s a dangerous and dishonest game to play,” Martha said disapprovingly.

“I didn’t even know that Lois was there, Mom.”

“OK, so why did you kiss Mayson?”

“I didn’t kiss her... she kissed me. She likes me, I guess, and she took me by surprise.”

“So you’re not interested in her,” she probed.

“I admit to being flattered by her interest in me, but Lois holds my heart.”

“And Lois kissed you...?” Martha asked, a note of pleasure in her voice.

“Yes, and it was amazing,” he said dreamily. “She said that she was the only one I should be kissing.”

“If she finally decided to stake her claim on you, why are you fighting?”

“Because she got a page saying that her Uncle Mike was in danger. She wanted me to come with her, but I had to make another lame excuse about going to find Superman.”

“And now she’s trying to put as much distance as possible between the two of you,” she added knowingly.

“Yes, and she’s convinced herself that Mayson is my girlfriend.”

“Maybe it’s time you let her in on your secret,” Martha ventured.

“Martha!” Jonathan exclaimed.

“Hush, Jonathan,” Martha scolded. “You trust her, don’t you Clark?”

“With my life,” he replied earnestly.

“Then perhaps it’s time for some honesty. She knows that you are holding something back from her... maybe that’s why she’s running from you now.”

“I didn’t think about that, Mom. Maybe you’re right.”

Seeing an opening, Jonathan added, “Son, I admire Lois, and I know she has feelings for you. Once you tell her, though, there’s no going back. Are you sure you want to put such a burden on her?”

“I don’t know... I just know that my life doesn’t make sense without her.”

“Then you need to talk to her, son,” Jonathan said kindly, patting Clark on the back. “It will work out. You’ll see.”

Thanking his parents, Clark zipped back to Metropolis. He rushed home, changed clothes, and made to court just in time for his scheduled briefing with Mayson. He really wanted to see Lois instead, but his testimony was a crucial part of the case against Baby Rage. For the moment, he’d just have to settle for taking care of Lois by helping her Uncle Mike.

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Lois watched in awe as her partner calmly delivered his testimony against the unrepentant gang banger. The man she had once dismissed as a hack had turned out to be the bravest man she had ever met. Clark had risked his life for her more times than she could count; throwing himself out of a plane, serving as her personal bodyguard, and offering her shelter anytime she felt

unsafe or alone. He was the best friend she had ever had, and now he was putting his life on the line once again to protect her beloved uncle.

How could she not have realized how important Clark had become to her well-being? Somewhere along the way, she had fallen in love with him. If only she hadn’t waited so long to acknowledge what was in her heart. Perhaps, then, she wouldn’t be facing the very real possibility that she would lose Clark to another woman.

She was startled out of that train of thought when she felt her uncle take her hand and squeeze it gently. Uncle Mike had always understood her, and she welcomed the support. He was like Clark in that way, always acting in her best interest. She turned towards her uncle and rewarded him with a soft smile and reciprocal press of her hand. He nodded knowingly, and raised his head to acknowledge Clark’s approach.

Lois turned just in time to see her partner take the seat beside her. He was a little hesitant, unsure of how she might react to his presence after their earlier fight. She leaned into him with her shoulder, needing the contact between them as she offered him silent reassurance.

She could see the remorse on his face as he began, “Lois, I owe you an apology.”

“No,” she corrected him. “I’m the one who should apologize.”

“You did nothing wrong,” he told her emphatically. “I shouldn’t have lost my temper.”

She smiled at his kind gesture, knowing all too well that she was never one to apologize for her frequent displays of pique. “Well, Clark, you are entitled once in a while. I mean, I must lose mine once every...”

“... three to four minutes,” he mumbled.

*Touche, Clark,* she thought, resisting the urge to hit him. “Anyway...,” she began.

“Hey, what’s going on?” Clark asked, cutting her off as he gestured toward the meeting between the judge and lawyers?

Within a few moments, it became clear that the case had taken a turn for the worse. Apparent irregularities with the arrest and warrant threatened to scuttle the case. Only a last minute plea from Mayson granted a temporary reprieve from dismissal.

“This was all her. She set it up,” Lois said angrily. “She’s dirty, Clark. How much more evidence do you need?”

To her chagrin, however, Clark said nothing. Instead, he seemed to be struggling to find a good argument to support Mayson. It was so like Clark, always trying to see the best in people. This time, however, it might cost him dearly.

“May I have a word with you, Clark?” Mayson asked, her sudden appearance breaking Lois’ train of thought.

“Of course,” Clark replied politely. “I’ll see you later?” he asked, turning to Lois for approval.

She nodded and watched the man she loved being led away by the other woman. She had to find a way to save him from being destroyed by his kind nature. That meant research.

“I’ll see you later, Uncle Mike,” she said, giving him a big hug. “I’ve got some work to do.”

“Hey,” he said, touching her shoulder as she turned to leave. “It will all work out, sweetie. You’ll see.”

“I’ll make sure it does,” she said resolutely. “Those bad guys don’t stand a chance.”

“That’s my girl,” he said, his expression a mix of admiration and something else Lois couldn’t quite identify. Perhaps he hadn’t been talking about the case after all.

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One meeting and three Superman rescues later, Clark found himself in the *Planet’s* elevator thinking about Lois. Her behavior in court seemed to suggest that she was ready to talk, yet he could feel her withdrawing from him the moment the judge ruled

against the tainted evidence. He sought her out with his extended senses and he could hear her slightly elevated heartbeat, punctuated by the occasional furious tapping of her fingers on the keyboard. He didn't need to see her to know that she was fully immersed in research that she felt passionate about. Their talk would have to wait.

The elevator door opened to reveal an after-hours newsroom still alive with activity. Lois, for her part, did not even notice the new arrival, so focused was she on the work at hand.

Clark moved toward her quickly, feeling guilty that his Superman duties had taken away such valuable research time. He had grown fond of her Uncle Mike, and he felt responsible for his continued safety.

"I'm sorry it took me so long, Lois," he began, hating the need to continue his deception. Her uncle was the first priority at this moment, but he would tell her the truth about his other guise as soon as possible.

"What?" she asked, startled from her research. "Oh, it's you, Clark. That must have been some meeting," she said sarcastically.

"The meeting didn't take long, actually," he told her truthfully, hoping she wouldn't be too upset.

"What did Mayson want?" she asked, her dislike for the assistant DA evident.

"Oh, she wanted to tell me that she would do her best to make sure that my testimony was not given in vain."

"How sweet of her," Lois said acidly. "Did she give you anything useful?"

"Not really, but I asked her to consider working with us on the case since we all have a stake in it."

"And she nixed that idea, right? Clark, what does that tell you?"

"She said she'd think about it, Lois. I'm sorry I wasn't able to do more."

"You'd think you'd have more influence with your girlfriend," she grumbled under her breath.

"Please don't start that, Lois," he replied in frustration. He wanted so desperately to sweep her in his arms and dispel all of her fears, but they simply didn't have the time. "We have a lot of work to do."

"Speaking of which, where have you been?" she asked, eyes narrowed. "I could have used your help."

"I was heading back here to help you when I stumbled upon a Superman story. There was more activity in Mike's neighborhood, and I thought it might open up some new evidence for the case against Baby Rage."

"Did it?" she asked hopefully.

"No. I'm sorry, Lois."

"Well, you're here now. Write up that Superman piece quickly so that you can help me go through these files."

With that, they settled into a familiar routine of research. With each failed lead they encountered, the search became more frantic.

In a last ditch attempt, Lois tried to strong arm one of her contacts at the police department. "Look, you're the best police source I have. I need names or the whole case is going to get tossed and my uncle — No, don't hang up, just listen to..."

"Face it, Lois. We're at a dead end," Clark said somberly.

"Maybe not," a new voice chimed in. "If that case gets thrown out and my office is implicated, my career is over. I want to get to the bottom of this as much as you do. But I don't know who to trust anymore."

"Seems to be going around these days," Lois responded warily.

"I guess if you want trust, you have to start by giving it," Mayson replied, pulling out a stack of files from her briefcase and handing them to Lois. "That's everything my office has on Intergang... and my personal files on Martin Snell."

When Lois hesitated, Mayson added, "I've known Martin a long time, and he's always danced close to the line. Maybe together we can find out where he stepped over."

"I think we should do it," Clark told his partner. "If we combine what we know... well, it can't possibly get any worse, can it?"

Lois took a look at the files and admitted, "You've got a point."

As Clark reached for one of the files, a high pitched buzzing sound filled the air.

"Careful," Lois warned. "That sounds like the bug that bit me. The thing still hurts."

With a deft hand reminiscent of Mr. Miyagi in *The Karate Kid*, Clark snatched the insect out of the air.

"Nice get," Lois exclaimed in admiration.

Suspicious, Clark wanted to examine the bug a little more closely. "I'm going to let it out the window."

"What are you all of a sudden, a Buddhist?" she asked in surprise.

Safe from the scrutiny of the two women, Clark's examination of the insect revealed a robotic probe armed with a recently mangled needle. *Intergang*, he thought with disgust.

"I have to go," he told Lois and Mayson abruptly.

"Where?" Lois asked.

"You guys stay here. It won't take long."

"What won't take long?" she asked, annoyed.

At a loss for a good excuse, Clark mumbled, "That thing that I have to do in the place that I'll be back from in just one second."

As he ran off to find the source of the probe, he heard Mayson ask, "Does he do that often?"

"Constantly," was the resigned reply from Lois.

*You'll know everything soon, Lois. I promise.*

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Lois reveled in the feel of Clark's arms around her as the music enveloped them. She had enjoyed such a wonderful day. Her plan to discredit Martin Snell had worked to perfection, thus ensuring the safety of her uncle. Plus, she and Clark had come to the gala together, his gentle attentiveness offering her hope for the future. It felt so wonderful to be snuggled up against her devastatingly handsome partner. Perhaps, she had misjudged him. Maybe those kisses they shared had meant something to him after all.

"May I cut in?"

*Mayson*, she thought as her heart sank. Lois looked to Clark, hoping that he would send the blonde DA away.

With no such refusal forthcoming, Lois mustered her most gracious façade. "Of course not," she replied, stepping out of the way. She would do what was best for Clark because she loved him.

Watching him take Mayson in his arms, however, was more than she could bear. Suddenly, she found herself being whisked away by her editor.

"I warn you," he said playfully. "I dip suddenly and deeply."

She wanted to be strong enough to play along, but she just couldn't stay in the room for even a moment longer. "I'm sorry, Perry. I just... I just can't be here right now."

She fled as quickly as her feet would carry her, struggling to hold back her tears until she was safe from the rest of the world. Clark had chosen Mayson, a woman who didn't even have the courtesy to have been a criminal Lois could investigate. She would have to work with Clark on a daily basis, knowing that he had given his heart to another woman. She didn't know how she would stand it, but she would find a way to support him, just as he had taken care of her all these months.

Somehow, she found herself inside her apartment. As her tears began falling in earnest, she realized that she couldn't even

remember the drive home. She turned on her stereo, hoping that the music would allow her some respite from the pain she was feeling.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door.

“Just a minute,” she managed, scrubbing at her eyes to remove the evidence of her tears. “Clark,” she said in surprise. “What are you doing here? I thought... I mean...”

“I’ve been looking for you everywhere. Why did you leave, Lois?”

“I couldn’t... “ she began, turning away as the tears threatened once more.

“You couldn’t what?” he urged gently, cupping her shoulders.

“I want to be a good friend to you, Clark, but I just couldn’t watch you dance with her.”

“Oh, Lois,” he said, his voice compassionate. “Dance with me, please.”

“Clark...,” she entreated him, shaking her head.

“Please,” he said gently, taking her into his arms and letting the soft tones of the music wash over them.

“Lois, look at me.”

She raised her head to look at him, the tears flowing freely down her cheeks. This would be the last time that they would be alone together, the last time he would hold her in his arms.

“I only danced with Mayson so that I could tell her goodbye. She needed to know that there’s only one woman who holds my heart,” he told her earnestly, his eyes beseeching her to believe him.

“What?” Lois asked, shock evident in her expression.

“Lois, don’t you know?” he asked, cradling her face in his hands. “I’m in love with you.”

Not quite able to process what she was hearing, she protested, “But you defended Mayson, and you ran away after we kissed.”

“I defended Mayson because the evidence was circumstantial, and I only left you because...”

Her head was aching and his words no longer made sense to her, but his touch had somehow conveyed the truth. She was in love with this man and she no longer wanted to waste her time on explanations. Without a conscious thought, she silenced his chatter by pulling him close and pressing her lips to his. He responded immediately, parting his lips and encouraging her to deepen the kiss. Their tongues touched tentatively at first, then stroked and parried in time to the music that still filled the room.

When the kiss finally ended, they were both breathless and shaking. “Wow,” he exclaimed inelegantly, nestling her close to his chest and resuming the dance they had begun earlier.

She looked up at him and smiled brilliantly. “You are a wonderful dancer, Clark.”

She saw just a trace of some unidentified emotion cross his visage before he returned her smile in earnest. “This isn’t dancing,” he ventured.

“It’s not?” she asked, wondering where he was going with this conversation.

“No, this is dancing,” he told her, gravity disappearing at his command.

As they drifted above the furniture, she experienced a profound moment of clarity. Of course it was him... How could it have been anyone else? She removed her hand from his, and reached up to remove his glasses. He closed his eyes in response, and she caressed his face lightly.

“So, all those times you ran out on me...” she began, encouraging him to explain.

He opened his eyes, “I was leaving in order to help people.”

“And when you left after our kiss...?”

He nodded. “I was going to protect your Uncle Mike.”

She nodded, but said nothing.

“Are you angry, Lois?” he asked fearfully.

Sidestepping the question, she asked, “Clark, how long have

you been in love with me?”

He smiled. “I fell in love with you the first moment you barged into my interview, and that love has only deepened with time.”

“So, you were in love with me when I treated you badly and stole your story?”

He raised his eyebrow, and laughed softly. “It wasn’t one of your finer moments, but yes.”

She kissed him on the cheek. “And you were in love with me on Trask’s plane?”

“Yes.”

She nibbled his jaw. “And in the honeymoon suite?”

“Yes.”

She pressed her lips to his ear and whispered, “And when I was high on the pheromone?”

He closed his eyes, “God, yes.”

She brushed her thumb sensually over his lips. “And when I went out with another man?”

“Lois,” he croaked.

“Did you love me then?”

“Yes.”

She kissed him reassuringly, her lips caressing his. “And that terrible day in the park, when I foolishly turned you down and asked you to find Superman?”

“Yes, Lois. Always,” he responded, kissing her fervently.

“Then how could I be angry with you?” she asked, breathless from his kiss.

At his skeptical look, she continued, “Okay, so we’ll have to have a serious talk about a few things, especially that crack about my robe.”

He blushed furiously. “I’m so...” he ventured, but she held her finger up to his lips.

“Clark, I’ve been so miserable these past few days. I’ve spent every moment living with the fear I had lost you, and I don’t want to waste another second on negative emotions. Can we do that?”

“I think that can be arranged,” he murmured, floating them down to the couch and settling her in his lap.

“Besides,” she said impishly, “You know how passionate I get when I find out a good secret.”

“Why, yes, Ms. Lane. I do believe I’ve seen you in action a few times. Should I get your laptop?”

Her pulse began to race. “That won’t be necessary. I’m assuming that you’re offering me the exclusive.”

He ran his finger down her cheek. “You are the only person I would ever trust with this information.”

She shivered. “And your parents?”

“It’s a *family* secret, Lois,” he said simply, caressing her face once more.

“I see,” she managed, the implication making her a bit dizzy. “Is that your only secret?”

“No.”

“No?” she asked wide-eyed.

Seeming to sense her fear, he replied soothingly. “I have only lied to you intentionally about one thing, Lois, but there are some facets of my life that you don’t know about yet.”

“Like what?” she asked, her curiosity piqued.

“Oh, no,” he said, smiling as he warned her off. “You’re going to have to do a lot more research if you want to find out those details.”

She loved a good challenge. “What if I offer to tell you a secret in return?”

“That sounds intriguing. Is it an exclusive?” he countered, lavishing tiny kisses along her cheek.

“Absolutely,” she offered, tilting her head to allow him access to her neck.

“Well, why don’t you tell me all about it?” he asked, his lips

exploring the sensitive skin behind her ear. “I’m sure we can come to some sort of agreement.”

She pulled back to look at him, calming herself with a deep breath. She could trust him, she was sure of it. “I’m in love with you, Clark. I have been for a long time, but I was too afraid to tell you.”

“Oh, Lois,” he sighed, kissing her hungrily. “I’ve waited so long to hear you say that.”

“And you wanted me to say it too, Clark,” she said knowingly, brushing a stray lock of hair from his face.

His eyes flicked away from her. “I just wanted you to love the real me.”

She took his face in her hands and turned him towards her. “I know it took me awhile to recognize my feelings, but there were reasons for that.”

“Superman?”

She smiled gently. “That was part of it, yes. I mean, here’s this gorgeous, perfect guy, and, for some reason, he treated me like I was special.”

“You are special,” he interjected.

“Clark, let me finish,” she admonished him. “I fell for Superman because of his innate goodness. There was no way that a man like that would ever hurt me.”

“He was safe,” he stated, caressing her cheek lightly.

“Yes. You, on the other hand, were anything but safe. You were competition, and devastatingly handsome competition at that.”

Clark blushed as she continued. “All of my previous experience told me that men like you were dangerous, and yet I somehow trusted you right from the beginning. I shared my secrets with you, relied on you as a partner, and sought you out when I was happy or scared. How could I take a chance on losing that?”

He kissed her softly. “You won’t lose me, you know.”

“I realize that now, but I certainly didn’t have that confidence when I saw you kissing Mayson in your apartment.”

“She kissed me, Lois,” he replied with a hint of annoyance. “I keep trying to tell you that.”

“I don’t know...” she began, eyes twinkling. “It looked like you were enjoying it.”

“And that bothered you, didn’t it?” he countered, changing tactics.

“Are you kidding? Mayson is lucky that I didn’t tear her limb from limb,” she said emphatically.

He laughed. “I couldn’t believe it when you stormed into my apartment and practically ordered her to leave.”

“I couldn’t either. I remember feeling like my whole world was falling apart, and then Mad Dog Lane just took control.”

“I just love watching Mad Dog in action,” he said, wrapping his arms more tightly around her.

“Really?” she asked, arching her eyebrow. “It seems to me that you weren’t too happy about it at the time.”

“Lois, if I had known you were going to stake your claim on me, I’d have kissed you the moment you barged into my apartment.”

“Mmm... Mayson would have loved that,” she replied.

“Mayson has no say in the matter,” he assured her. “As a wise person once told me, *you* are the only woman that I should be kissing.”

“You bet your life, buster,” she exclaimed, pressing her lips to his joyfully.

“I love you, Lois,” he told her earnestly.

“I love you, too, Clark. Always.”

THE END