

My Love

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Rated PG

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Summary: Clark loved Lois from the moment he met her, even if he didn't understand why.

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1993

I stared after her as she walked away, clearing my head before turning back to Mr. White. This interview wasn't going that well, and getting flummoxed over a beautiful woman wasn't going to help things.

Why would I get flummoxed anyway? It had been years since high school, when I was so wrapped up in all the ways I was different that I hadn't really known how to fit in. By the time I got to my senior year and started dating Lana, I'd learned how to cover up my insecurity enough so that no one noticed. And once I did that, I had found that while I was never so popular that I had a gaggle of girls following me around the way some of the guys in college seemed to, I was also never short of female attention.

So why would one pretty girl, who also seemed a bit brash and egotistical, cause my heart to flutter a bit too fast and make me want to forget my interview with Mr. White — an interview I'd been dreaming of for years now — just to follow her? It was crazy.

Although a few minutes later, when I made my way out of the Planet without a job, I thought maybe I should have followed her anyway. Just in case, you know. It couldn't have gone any more poorly than my interview had.

I shivered involuntarily. What was it about the big city? I'd only been here two days and already I felt like I had girl trouble. I didn't usually have too much of that. While I had my share of admirers, and I did have trouble letting them down, I also tried not to lead anyone on, and so typically, I was able to let things fade into friendship. The few times I'd been interested in someone myself, that had generally gone well, too.

While Lana hadn't noticed me at all before I got over my awkwardness in high school — which meant that back in those days I would have said girl troubles ruled my life — after that things had come easy. I hadn't really spent anytime agonizing over Bailey before we started dating in my sophomore year of college, and then that relationship had seemed to fall apart slowly before settling into a good friendship my senior year.

Similarly, Jude and I had just sort of ended up together one night when I was in Ireland, and both were okay with it being over when people started getting suspicious and I felt it was time to move on. Although, I guess, now that I thought about it, maybe it was the fact that people were getting suspicious of me that made Jude okay with my leaving.

But nothing seemed that easy now.

On the one hand, there was Cat. Cat was attractive — there

was no denying that. Not that you could deny it. She didn't exactly hide her... attributes. And I sometimes thought that she would probably be a nice girl, if she could turn off the sexy seductress thing. I mean, she did own a sweatshirt and I imagined she hadn't bought it simply to fool me. She probably didn't walk around her apartment alone wearing the dresses she wore to work.

But she couldn't seem to turn off the seductress thing, and that was a problem. A problem because she seemed interested in me, but I found it hard to be anything but a bit scared of her when she was like that. Besides, she wasn't really interested in me. She was interested in the way I looked — she didn't know me at all. I shook my head. I was attractive enough, I knew that. But I'd never attracted this sort of attention before, and I didn't like it. I generally preferred to be part of the background.

And then there was Lois. Unlike Cat, who couldn't seem to keep her hands off me when we were in the office together, I wasn't sure Lois even knew I existed as anything more than an annoyance. To be fair, she didn't seem to notice anyone else as a person either.

Perry and Jimmy were both fond of her (although it was hard to tell how much of Jimmy's interest was because of the crush he had on her) and she seemed warmer towards them than anyone else. And still, she was hardly a warm ray of sunshine when interacting with them.

I shook my head. I wasn't sure what it was I was interested in anyway. Did I really want to be involved with someone as self-absorbed as Lois was?

But was she really? I wasn't convinced. Sometimes she seemed so insecure.

I shook my head. Lois Lane was an enigma. And much as I may have wanted to, it was unlikely I'd ever solve this particular mystery.

1994

I knocked on her door timidly, not sure she wouldn't push me away. If she bothered to open the door at all. I tried to remind myself that she'd asked for me earlier, and she'd run right into my arms. But then she'd seemed to collect herself, and the girl who had walked away from us all had seemed too closed off for anyone, even her best friend.

Was I even that anymore? Or had I pushed too hard and lost that role in her life?

I shut my eyes in frustration. I wanted to be a part of Lois' life, any part at all. I couldn't bear the thought of not seeing her everyday. If she didn't love me, and she had done a pretty good job recently of convincing me that she didn't, then I wanted things to go back to the way they had been.

I sighed. I wasn't sure that was possible. My behavior recently couldn't exactly be seen as supportive. Lois had been infuriated with me before today, and I couldn't deny that she had good reason.

The fact that I had been right about her fiancé probably didn't justify my actions.

I knocked again, not sure if she hadn't heard my first knock or was choosing not to answer. I listened for sounds in her apartment and could easily pick up her heartbeat. There were no tears or sniffles, though, so she wasn't crying. Nor were there any sounds that indicated she was coming to the door to open it. I wasn't sure if this could be classified as disrespecting her privacy, but I decided to glance inside. Just to make sure she was okay.

What I saw made my heart break. She wasn't crying, even silently. She was just staring out the window. But the look on her face was worse than if she was crying. She was just so... blank. Her knees were curled up to her chest, with her arms around them. She wasn't a ball per se, but close. And she was rocking herself slightly back and forth.

She just looked... dead inside. Or something. Just broken, I guess.

I sighed, not sure what to do. Should I leave her there since she wasn't answering the door? Did she even realize I was here? Given the look on her face, it wouldn't surprise me to learn that she hadn't heard me at all.

It was that thought that made me decide. If she was having some sort of break down, and given the look on her face, I couldn't say for sure that wasn't a possibility — it certainly would be a reasonable response to the events of the day — I *needed* to go inside. To make sure she was safe, and to get her medical help if necessary.

I ran outside so I could fly home. I had a spare key to her place — she'd given it to me months ago so I could feed her fish while she went to California for a few days to visit Lucy. Somehow she'd forgotten about it, or I could only assume so, since I didn't think Lois would want to admit the level of comfort it would require to let someone else have a key to her apartment.

I was back inside and working my way through her many locks within two minutes. Still, despite the fact that working at normal speed, it took at least another minute before I was inside, Lois didn't stir when I opened the door. Nor did she respond to the noise of the closing of the door, except to turn her head and look at me blankly.

Still, the look was reassuring. She wasn't near catatonic or something.

I moved toward her slowly, not wanting to startle her, but when I got close, she moved over on the couch to make room for me, and I let out a breath I hadn't realized I'd been holding. She was okay.

"He was awful," Lois said quietly, once I'd settled in beside her and taken her into my arms.

I didn't say anything. What could I say? Now was hardly the time to say "I told you so", and anything else would irk her. It wasn't like I had made a secret of my suspicions.

"He had Superman locked up in a cage," she said quietly.

I gasped, and mistaking the reason for that gasp, Lois nodded her head. "It was in the wine cellar where I found Henderson to deliver my statement. It was covered in glowing green and awful. Even Henderson looked sickened by it. It looks like Superman got away, but still. He locked him in a cage."

I nodded, not knowing what to say. Obviously, I wasn't supposed to know about the cage, and now was hardly the time for the Superman confession.

"He was even more awful than you thought, huh?" she asked, and I nodded. It was true. Somehow, despite the fact that I would have said I'd put nothing past Luthor, I hadn't expected him to be so... purely evil. Of course, I wasn't talking about the cage. That hadn't surprised me at all.

It was his words about Lois. I had thought, as much as it had sickened me, that he really cared about her. I'd seen them together, and I had to admit, I thought he was sincere. But given his words just before their wedding, I had been wrong. No one could love Lois and think she was "too independent". No one could love her and want to change her in any way. She was perfect. Utterly perfect.

I rested my head against her, sick with myself for being relieved at Luthor's death. But if this was the only way for Lois to be safe...

She got quiet after that, and not knowing what to say, I stayed quiet, too. After a long time, maybe an hour, Lois sighed. "Thank you," she said quietly. "After everything I put you through, you shouldn't be here for me. But I'm glad you are. That you're still my friend."

"Always," I whispered back. And I meant it. I would always be her friend. Given the way I felt about her, anything else was just too painful to comprehend. And while I may hope to

someday be more than just her friend, for today, it was enough. It really was.

1995

I did lazy barrel rolls through the sky. Not that I felt much like doing barrel rolls. I was just hoping that pretending I was happy would make me happy. But I guess that trick didn't work when you had a good reason to be unhappy.

Yeah, you probably can't trick your brain into thinking you're happy when you've just lost everything you ever wanted, right after you started to feel sure you were going to have it.

I sighed as I switched courses and made my way towards my apartment. I briefly considered a trip to Smallville, but decided against it. My parents would be great, I was sure of it, but I wasn't really sure I was up for seeing them together — happy and in love.

While it clearly wasn't true — I had other dreams as well — it felt as though that's all I'd ever wanted. Someone to share my life with, the way Mom and Dad shared theirs. Someone who would know me for who I am, all of me, and love me anyway.

I had thought I'd found that in Lois. I had been sure of it. I mean, she'd never seemed even vaguely bothered by Superman's being an alien. And recently, well, she was the one who came to see me and tell me she thought it was time we stopped playing games and admitted we wanted to be together.

So, if she wanted Clark and she wanted Superman... how could she not want me? My eyes shut in pain as I thought the words, as I realized that this was the heart of the problem. She didn't want me. Even when Clark was no longer just an annoyance for her, and even when he came as a package deal with the superhero she'd been gaga eyes for since she met him, it just wasn't enough.

And I knew that, really. I knew I didn't deserve her. But I thought... I had really thought that it was going to work out.

She told me once that she loved me as a friend — the last time I handed her my heart on a platter. Maybe that was the problem. Had she gotten confused? Since that time, maybe she'd just learned to lean on me more as there was no one else around to lean on. And so she'd confused her friendly feelings for romance. And then when I presented her with a ring, she was struck with the startling realization that she had made a mistake. That she didn't want me — she never had and she never would.

The phone rang, but I didn't answer it. I wasn't really in a good place to talk to anyone. It eventually went to my machine, and I sat in the dark apartment listening to the sound of my voice telling the caller that I'd call them back.

"Clark?" her voice, in the dark, sounded intimate, despite coming out of the tinny speakers of the answering machine. "I want to talk to you... Please. I think you misunderstood."

Misunderstood? What was there to misunderstand? I asked her to marry me and she said no. It didn't seem to me that there could be that many interpretations of what had happened there.

"I just want to talk, Clark. Please... Well, maybe you're out. Just call me, okay?"

I moved over to the machine to turn the sound down, so I wouldn't be able to hear it if she called again. I didn't think I could bear to hear her voice right now. It just hurt too much.

I'd been in love with her for two years now. For two years, I'd done little more than pine for her while she adored my alter-ego, a criminal, an annoying DEA agent. Maybe it was time to move on.

But I wasn't sure I could. I'd never felt this way before — this sure of my feelings. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Lois. How could I just move on? I wouldn't ever meet someone else I felt this way about, I was sure of it. Maybe this was some sort of Kryptonian thing — maybe Kryptonians mate for life. And maybe if I had grown up on Krypton, I would have met a

nice female Kryptonian, fallen in love, and stayed with her forever.

It seemed hard to believe I'd feel for her what I felt for Lois, but maybe.

But now I lived on Earth and while the people here do mate for life, it's different than the way I feel. They claim ever-lasting love, but don't seem to really feel it.

Although, that isn't fair. My mom and dad seem to. So, it's not like I fell in love with a being that isn't capable of feeling that way. It's just that she doesn't feel that way about me.

I pulled the phone out of the wall so I wouldn't hear it if it rang again, and headed to bed.

1996

I stared down at her face, relaxed in sleep. I couldn't believe this was finally real. After all the time waiting and hoping, and then all the false starts, not to mention some pretty substantial mistakes on my part.

But that was all in the past. Today, everything was right with the world. I smiled down at her. I almost couldn't believe it — it didn't seem possible that something I had wanted for so long could actually be mine.

"Shouldn't you be asleep?" she asked, sleepily, smiling up at me.

"I'm busy," I whispered back.

"With what?" she asked me with a smirk. "You're just lying there."

"Looking at my beautiful wife," I told her, leaning in to give her a kiss. I saw her face light up just a bit as she comprehended my words.

"Suck-up," she muttered before our lips met.

We were quiet for a long time after that, enjoying getting to know each other in ways that were still new to us. When we were finished, I thought Lois would drift right back to sleep, but she seemed awake now. "It's a good thing we got rid of that curse, huh?" she asked me with a grin. "Whatever would we have done tonight otherwise?"

I chuckled. "You kidding? We'd probably be hot on the trail of some story by now."

Lois' mood seemed to darken slightly. "Am I that much of a work-a-holic?"

"It was a joke, Lois," I told her. "And I said 'we', not 'I'."

"Based on truth," she replied. "And you'd only be there 'cause I'd make you."

"You like to work hard. That doesn't make you a work-a-holic. We are here, aren't we?"

She smiled at me. "I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

"Me neither," I told her, pulling her closer.

We lay in silence for a moment, before, her voice soft, Lois said, "You know, I never really thought I'd get married. For awhile, I didn't really want to — you know, didn't want to end up like Mom and Daddy. Later... I guess, I got over that. Realized all marriages weren't like that. But then after the thing with Claude... Well, I doubted I'd even meet someone given that I swore off dating other reporters."

"I'm glad you were willing to bend the rules for me," I whispered, holding her closer.

She smiled up at me wanly. "And then after Lex... Well, I didn't see how I could trust my own judgment anymore."

"Everyone makes mistakes," I reminded her.

"Like almost marrying a crime boss?" Lois replied, her eyebrows raised.

"You are not the only one," I told her. "Lots of mob bosses' wives don't know what they are getting into when they get married."

"I don't think they are quite that clueless. They may not know they are marrying into the mob, but they don't think their

husband-to-be is a giving, wonderful philanthropist."

"Luthor was only so dangerous because so many people believed his façade. He was an incredible actor," I reminded her.

Lois sighed. "It doesn't matter, really. If I wasn't so easily fooled by disguises, I would have known you were Superman immediately."

"And that would be a bad thing?" I asked, surprised to hear this.

Lois shrugged. "Would you have believed I love you, Clark, if I had known you were Superman from the beginning?" She smiled slightly, and continued before I could answer, "Would I even have loved Clark? I don't know if I would have been able to see past Superman long enough to really get to know you."

I held her tighter, not wanting to admit that this made me a little glad she hadn't seen through the disguise. Even if she was saying she agreed with that, it was still a sensitive subject for us.

"I didn't really think I'd get married either," I told her instead.

She looked up at me in surprise. "You? With *your* parents?"

I shrugged. "I guess I don't mean I never thought I'd get married. When I was a kid, I did. As much as I thought about it. But not since I was... maybe thirteen or so. When I realized I was different. For the longest time, I didn't even know how to have friends with this big secret between me and everyone else. And then once I got past that, I learned how to act normal..."

"Well, I guess at some point I thought I *could* get married, but it wouldn't be the kind of marriage I wanted. The kind Mom and Dad have, where there are no secrets. I didn't want to marry someone who didn't know about all of me, and yet, I didn't see how I'd meet someone who fit everything I needed to let them know."

"What's on that list?" Lois asked me with interest.

I smiled at her, holding her closer to my side. "Someone who could accept me for who I am. Who loved me in spite of it. And then later, could deal with having to share me with the world, since I can't imagine a life where I don't use all that I can do."

"That's why I love you," Lois interrupted quietly. "Or at least part of it. Sharing you with the world is the price I have to pay to marry someone who wants to make the world a better place. I think it's a pretty good deal for me."

I shrugged. "I'm married to someone who wants to make the world a better place. But I bet it won't be too common for me to be sleeping in bed without you."

Lois shrugged. "Well, okay, I married someone who wants to make the world a better place *and* has some extra help to do it. On the other hand," she smiled at me devilishly, "I get to have sex on the ceiling. I think I'm still okay with the trade."

I chuckled at her words, carrying her back to the ceiling.

Lois nuzzled into me. "Not quite yet."

"We can just lie here," I told her quietly, hovering with her lying on top of me. It was very relaxing. Intimate, but not sexual really. "This is exactly what I wanted," I told her quietly. "Total acceptance, so I can do this and still be a normal husband."

"You'll never be normal," Lois interrupted me to say. "You're too weird."

I shook my head at her teasing. "You'd be bored with normal," I told her.

She grinned at me. "Is that why I love you? *Because* you're weird?"

I shrugged, then wrapped my arms around her so she didn't fall back on the bed.

"Can I ask you something?" Her face got serious for a moment and I nodded my head, wondering what she could want to know. "When you mention what you wanted, and thought of, it's all about how your wife would feel about you. What about how you would feel about her? Would you have married me even if you didn't love me just because I loved you?"

I thought about her words for a moment, trying to find the right words to express my thoughts. “No, I don’t think I would have. But you’re right. I wasn’t thinking it through that way. I guess I thought... if I met someone like that, they’d have to be someone special, and so I would probably love them.”

“And if you hadn’t?” she asked me.

“I hadn’t really thought about that, but I don’t think I would have married you otherwise.”

Lois nodded. “Probably not. If you were that sort of guy, you would have dated Mayson.”

I frowned slightly. Thoughts of Mayson still made me a little sad. Even if she hadn’t been right for me, she had still been a pretty great person. “Mayson didn’t like Superman,” I pointed out.

“You didn’t know that at first,” Lois replied.

I nodded. “I guess, since what I wanted was what Mom and Dad have, while I never explicitly thought it, being in love was important to me.”

“Well, lucky I’m so lovable then,” Lois giggled.

I pulled her face down to mine for a kiss. “That you are,” I told her.

“Sugar and spice, that’s me,” she smiled.

“I was thinking more passionate and sexy,” I told her as we floated back down to the bed.

“I’m okay with that,” Lois said after a moment of thought.

“Back when you did think you’d get married,” she said, leaning her head down on my chest, “was it like this?”

I chuckled. “Since I was a kid, no. I don’t think the naked woman part was really on my radar screen yet, but I’m pretty happy with it now.”

She reached out and tickled my side before placing a kiss on my chest. “That isn’t what I meant.”

“No,” I told her, my voice soft, as I wrapped my arms around her again. “It wasn’t like this. I was happy, but not like this. I was with someone I loved, but not like I loved you. I never imagined I’d love anyone as much as I love you.”

Lois lifted her head to look at me, tears in her eyes. “I feel the same way.”

“I know,” I told her, before kissing her again and effectively ending our conversation.

THE END