

# T.O.G.O.M. 2012 – Moving On

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Rated: PG

Submitted: October 2012

Summary: Five years after witnessing Clark's death in "That Old Gang of Mine," Lois believes she has come to terms with his death and has established a new life in Los Angeles... until she inadvertently sees him again.

Okay, I know some of the gentle readers thought they might get through a year without my annual TOGOM effort, but alas, there is no escape. Time to face the most rewritten episode once again.

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Lois stared at her reflection in her bathroom mirror. She usually didn't worry about how she looked when going out to meet Peter, but tonight was going to be special. At least, she thought it was going to be.

She'd overheard one of the office gossips telling her cubicle neighbor that she had a friend who worked at Peter's office. That friend, supposedly, had overheard him on the phone telling someone that he was going to pop the question this evening at dinner. A smile crept onto Lois's face as she checked her hair and makeup one last time. If it was going to happen, she was going to be ready.

Lois slowly left the bathroom and headed for the closet to grab a light wrap. Even though it was Los Angeles, the evenings could get chilly in the fall. As she reached for her jacket, she had to stop and marvel at the chaotic series of events that had so changed her life in just five short years.

There was a quick, sharp ache in her heart as memory forced its way into her conscious mind. It had been five years ago that her life had taken a drastic turn. Clark had been killed by the resurrected gangster Clyde Barrow while protecting her from the unwanted advances of another should-have-been-dead gangster named Dillinger. It had hit her hard. Much harder than even she thought it would have.

Clark Kent had been her partner at the *Daily Planet* in Metropolis, and her best friend. In that horrible split second, she had lost her partner and her best friend... and something more.

It is a sad truth that you never realize what you have until you lose it.

She had always known that Clark had feelings for her, perhaps even was in love with her, but she chose the safe route. It was easier to accept the warmth and comfort provided by having Clark as her friend. She liked that he was the guy who would always be there for her when needed, yet she would be able to put a little distance between them if she felt herself being smothered by his affection.

After his death, she realized what a fool she had been. She hadn't allowed herself to examine her true feelings until he was no longer there: she had been in love with him. She had lost the one man who she thought she'd never meet, and she came to that epiphany too late.

Clark was gone and she was alone. Again.

Her existence those months after Clark's death had been just that — existence. After bringing the resurrected gangsters to justice, Lois had sleepwalked her way through the next year. Her writing suffered. Her investigative instincts suffered. Perry

covered for her as best he could, but her production as the *Daily Planet's* top reporter had fallen off to the point of her job being in jeopardy. She didn't care.

She left before Perry would have been forced to fire her.

With no idea of what she should do, or where she should go, Lois opted to go visit her sister, Lucy, in Los Angeles. She had only intended to stay with Luce for a short time. Just long enough to get over her loss and find herself again.

She never left.

After several months of moping around Lucy's apartment, her 'loving' sister threw her out. It had been the wake-up call Lois needed.

In the months that followed, Lois had managed to land a job at the *Times*. Her reputation had helped, but her decline over the past couple of years had forced her into accepting a job that was barely more than what Jimmy had been when she was at the *Planet*.

Once again, the Lane luck had surfaced and she struck reporting gold. Being in the right place at the right time had served Lois very well. She'd been at City Hall getting her driver's license renewed when she recognized a fellow passing by in an adjacent hallway. He had been a high-up in Intergang back in Metropolis. *Once a crook, always a crook*, Lois thought, so she followed him.

It led her to exposing a huge conspiracy in the Mayor's office, leading to his ouster and blocking Intergang from getting a toehold in Los Angeles. It was all the impetus Lois needed to get her career kick-started again.

Over the next year she rose quickly through the ranks of the reporters at the *Los Angeles Times* and was soon top dog once again.

Then she met Peter.

Peter Lochton, as the heir to the Lochton Cosmetics empire, had been a story. Peter's father had died under mysterious circumstances and Lois decided to find out just what those circumstances were.

After a several weeks of long investigation, Lois finally cracked the case. It had turned out to be a murder but Lois found that instead of Peter (the one with the most to gain) being the guilty one, it had been a simple crime of vengeance with no ties to the commercial empire at all.

Instead of being bitter and angry with Lois for her dogged pursuit of him and the reasons surrounding his father's death, Peter Lochton had grown to admire Lois's ferocity and determination. He also found her quite attractive.

At first, Lois had tried to discourage Peter's advances even though she found him charming and quite handsome. She just wasn't ready to move on in that way. Her heart was still vulnerable and she wasn't sure she could handle another relationship. In a perverse way, she almost saw it as a betrayal of Clark's love for her even though she'd been too stupid to admit it to him — or herself — and that she returned his feelings.

If anything, Peter was persistent, and over time he was able to overcome Lois's fears and they started dating seriously. That had been a little over a year ago and now it was time for Lois to meet her 'boyfriend' for a romantic dinner and find out if a new chapter in the life of Lois Lane was about to begin.

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"Hey, Jerry, there you are. Where did you disappear to?"

Jerome Clark straightened his tie as he came around the corner and into the main room of D. Balton's Books. The store manager looked at him questioningly. Jerome gave him a slight, embarrassed smile and pointed toward the back of the store.

"You know... I had things to take care of."

The store manager grinned and nodded knowingly. "Okay, you're all set." He pointed to the table and chair set up over to one side of the open space. "The signing is set for eight o'clock,"

he said, pointing at the line of folks standing patiently behind a velvet rope. “I’m letting them through in two minutes.”

Jerome nodded as he sat down. He checked the little sign sitting on the corner of his table. ‘Jerome Clark signing his new book — Available for purchase at 20% off’. It had been a near thing. Jerome had ‘heard’ a security alarm go off a few blocks away and was forced to sneak out to take care of it as Superman.

It turned out to be nothing more than a false alarm, so he hadn’t been delayed long. He sighed as he leaned back in the chair waiting for the crowd to descend on him. Even though he’d been using the name Jerome Clark for over three years, it was still hard to think of himself as anyone other than Clark Kent, the name his parents had given him.

He glanced out the big window facing the outside sidewalk and watched the people walk by on a pleasant California evening. Suddenly he froze, staring at a young woman who was just passing in front of the store. It was Lois!

She was wearing a smart pair of slacks and a crisp, pastel blue blouse. Her hair was short, but it was definitely Lois, and she looked beautiful. Just seeing her again took his breath away.

Clark knew that Lois was working as a top reporter for the *Times* but he never figured that in a city of ten million people he’d actually see her. For his own sanity’s sake, and hers, he’d purposely stayed away, even as Superman.

He watched as Lois slowed and inexplicably she turned and glanced through the large window. Their eyes met, recognition was instantaneous. He could tell by the shocked look on Lois’s face.

“I just love your new book, Mr. Clark. Your photos of all those exotic places really make me feel like I’m right there with you. And your descriptive narrative is absolutely riveting.”

Clark’s attention was ripped back to the lady in front of him. When he looked back toward the front window, Lois was gone.

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Lois parked her Jeep in a public lot a couple of blocks from the restaurant where Peter had asked her to meet him. It was a little Italian joint in a modest part of town, away from the glitz and glitter of the downtown restaurants but not too far out so as to be in a less than reputable neighborhood. It was a warm evening, but a fresh breeze was blowing and it was quite pleasant. She would enjoy the short walk.

She was passing one of those big-box bookstores when a strange feeling came over her and she felt compelled to glance through their large front window. She could see a line of folks holding books in their hands. It was obviously some sort of author signing event. Her eye was drawn to the gentleman sitting at the table awaiting his fans.

He was staring out the window at her when their eyes met. Lois felt the blood in her veins chill. It was Clark! It couldn’t be Clark... Clark was dead. But it was Clark, she knew it. His hair was combed a bit different, and his glasses were only wire-rimmed, but she would swear that the handsome, dark-haired man sitting at the table in the bookstore was her dead ex-partner.

Suddenly her vision was blocked by an elderly lady rushing up to the table with her book outstretched in her hand.

Lois ran down the sidewalk, tears blinding her as she went. She had no destination; she just needed to get away. All thoughts of Peter and the dinner she was supposed to be going to fled. She needed to find someplace quiet; someplace she could be alone. Her mind was in turmoil and she needed time to think.

Tears continued streaming down her face as she finally came upon a weathered old bench sitting in the middle of a small grassy patch. She flung herself onto the bench and let her sobs have their way.

Her heart felt like it had been shredded.

How could she have seen Clark? He would never have pretended to be dead and not told her; he loved her. So that

person she saw in the bookstore window couldn’t have been Clark. Yet she knew down to the roots of her soul that it *was* Clark. He was there, he was alive, and he had never told her.

Several people passing by gave her looks of concern, or pity, but no one stopped. She didn’t seem to be in any danger, so it was none of their business. Lois’s sobs eventually eased as she fought a few hiccups and reached for her handkerchief to wipe her face.

She stared down the street, toward the storefront she’d just run from. Nothing was going to convince her that it hadn’t been Clark she had seen. She’d recognized him instantly and she could tell by the look on his face and in his eyes that he’d recognized her too.

Lois took a deep breath and chewed on her lower lip. She had to put aside the pain and the hurt, there would be time enough for that later. Now she had to bring her intellect and deductive skills to bear.

She’d been standing next to him when Clyde’s bullets struck down the best friend she’d ever had. The gangsters had dragged Clark’s lifeless body from the gambling club, yet he was alive. If the man she saw in the bookstore was Clark, and nothing would convince her that it wasn’t, then the question remained... how?

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Clark pasted a smile on his face and tried to appear interested in what his fans had to say, in a valiant attempt to fool them all into thinking he was having a good time. The truth was, his mind was stuck on one thought: Lois. He was sure that the woman he’d seen through the window was Lois, and he was just as certain that she had recognized him.

The look on her face was burned into his mind. She was shocked, then he detected a moment of denial, but finally she exhibited such a look of anguish that Clark almost found himself getting up and going after her. It was then that he’d been interrupted by the first fan in line. The signing had started. By the time he’d been able to sneak a peek back, she was gone.

He’d known that Lois lived in Los Angeles now. He couldn’t help himself. He’d followed her career path at the *Times*. It had taken Lois a while to get back on her feet, so to speak, but her talent couldn’t be buried forever. Her innate drive and intelligence had carried her to a successful journalistic career even here.

She had found a new life, and he was happy for her. He missed her terribly, but she had moved on, and she had the right to live her new life without the reminders of a past filled with unhappy memories.

As Superman, he’d made a conscious choice not to visit Los Angeles unless absolutely necessary. Lois deserved the chance to start fresh in a new town, with new friends and a new life.

In the five years since his ‘death’ he’d only seen her once. She was covering the story of a minor earthquake which had occurred when Superman had been in the area. The Man of Steel’s help had been needed to shore up a damaged highway bridge until all those on it could get to safety.

As he was leaving, Lois called out to him. His first impulse had been to pretend to not hear her, but that would have been disingenuous. Lois was well aware of his hearing capabilities.

He had turned, smiled at her, and waved as he sped off. He never looked back to see her reaction. He wasn’t strong enough.

When his publisher pushed him to do a book signing in Los Angeles, he’d resisted. Without being able to tell him the real reason why Clark didn’t want to visit L.A., he’d not been able to give his publisher any real good reason to skip one of the largest cities in the world, and snub a very large contingent of his fans.

Considering the size of the city, and the fact that there would be absolutely no logical reason for Lois to be anywhere near a book signing for an author of coffee table travel books, he acquiesced. He felt confident that he could slip in, do his signing, and leave without causing the least ripple in Lois’s life. He’d

been wrong. The Fates had conspired against him.

Now he was sitting in a bookstore, in Lois's town, trying and failing to pay attention to the gracious people who wanted to tell him how much they enjoyed his photos and writing.

He'd been signing 'Jerome Clark' on autopilot to the inside cover of every book stuck in front of his face. He'd smile and say something innocuous in response to whatever they had to say. Mostly it was in the form of some sort of 'thank you'.

After the most recent book was pulled away after his autograph, he looked up to greet the next person in line. He froze. It was her! Her hair was shorter than she'd worn it when he'd known her, and she'd lost a little weight, but it was...

"Lois?"

One brow rose slightly. "So you do remember." She flipped a business card down onto the table. "On the back is my current address. I'm going home." Her face was a mask but Clark could see the reddish splotches under her eyes that told him she'd been crying recently. "I think you owe me an explanation. If you think I deserve one, stop by after you finish up here." She quickly turned and left the store.

Clark just stared after her as she disappeared out the door and down the street. Picking the card up and putting it in his pocket, Clark turned his attention back to the next fan waiting in line.

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The ringing of her phone greeted Lois as she got back to her apartment. She tossed her wrap and bag onto the kitchen table and grabbed the persistent appliance.

"Peter? I'm so sorry. An unexpected problem came up and I couldn't make it to the restaurant." She listened for a moment. "No, it wasn't work-related, but I got sidetracked and completely lost track of time. I'm sorry I didn't call."

A frown of apprehension gripped Lois. She had no logical excuse for her behavior. At least not in Peter's eye, but she just couldn't explain herself; not yet, even if he deserved one.

"Look, sweetie, it's really complicated, and I'm wiped out. Can we talk about this tomorrow?" She held her breath as the voice on the other end of the phone answered. "Thanks so much, you're the best. I'll call you tomorrow."

Lois replaced the receiver and made her way over to the couch. She settled herself comfortably for the wait. She didn't turn on the television, or the radio. She just sat in silence, alone with her thoughts. The problem was, she didn't know what to think.

While sitting in the park she had come to some insights that, in hindsight, should have been obvious. But to be fair, the situation had shocked and dismayed her to such a point that she hadn't been able to think logically. She only knew that her life had been irrevocably altered.

She had been sitting, waiting, for less than half an hour when there was a knock on the door.

"It's open." She looked over as Clark pushed the door open and stepped into her apartment.

"It's open? Are you sure you're really Lois Lane?" His weak smile conveyed his discomfort as much as his lame attempt at a joke.

Lois motioned for Clark to come into the living room. "Thanks for coming, Clark. Please sit." She indicated the chair placed opposite from her current position. "Would you like something? A soda, or some coffee or... tea?"

Clark shook his head. He was definitely uncomfortable. He couldn't stop his hands from flexing and fidgeting. He looked up. "You cut your hair?"

Lois's hand strayed to her short locks. "I cut it two years ago. It fits the lifestyle here."

Clark nodded. "I can see that. It looks nice."

"Thanks."

Lois took a deep breath and placed her hands on her knees.

"Okay, here it is. When I saw you through the bookstore window, I was shocked. I've spent the last five years learning how to live with your death. I had to learn how to keep getting up every morning and carrying on while coping with a loss that was greater than I'd ever imagined it would be. I didn't handle it very well."

"I know, and I'm sorry, Lois."

She held up her hand. "We'll get to that in due time. I assume you know how poorly things went after your supposed death, and that I finally had to leave Metropolis. I had to escape the constant reminders that you were gone."

Lois stared at the floor for a few moments. "Things were bad for a time, but I was finally able to put my life back together and things are actually going quite well for me now."

"I'm glad, Lois." Clark looked like he was going to add more, but Lois cut him off.

"Not yet." She took another deep breath. "After the shock of seeing you, I ran off and eventually found myself at a small park. It took some minutes to come to grips with what I saw, but finally I was able to think rationally."

Lois gave a sad shake of her head. "Actually, how you survived three bullets fired at close range came fairly quickly. The one fact that never seemed important in all the replays of that terrible night which haunted my nightmares was that there was never any blood. The shots were fired, you clutched at your chest as you slowly slumped to the ground, and lay there until Capone's thugs dragged you away. It never dawned on me that your crisp, white shirt hadn't been stained by blood pouring through those three critical wounds."

A slight smile touched Lois's lips. "Thinking back on our time together — all three of us — it was painfully obvious. It made perfect sense. It explained so much. Mostly, it explained how I could have fallen in love with two different people at the same time: because I hadn't. There was always only one man."

A tear slid from the corner of one eye. "I guess the only thing I can't come to grips with is how could the most kind and caring man I've even known be so cruel. Can you tell me, Clark? Was your secret so precious that you could put someone you once professed to love through such pain and devastation? Can you?"

Clark stared at the floor for several moments before raising his eyes to meet hers. She was able to read sadness in his eyes, but not any guilt.

"I do apologize for the pain I put you through. If I thought there was a way to spare you that, I would have."

"Really? It seems sort of simple to me. If I'd known that you weren't dead, I doubt I would have spent so many sleepless nights crying into my pillow. Or probably I'd have had fewer nightmares about causing the death of my partner and best friend."

"Lois, you are intelligent enough to know that what happened at that club was not your fault. All blame lies squarely with those gangsters."

"I wasn't exactly thinking rationally back then."

Clark sighed. "Again, I'm sorry you had to go through that, but I won't apologize for what I did."

Lois was astounded by what she'd just heard. "What! Are you telling me that your secret was so important that my feelings didn't matter? Are you saying that my pain and suffering was an irrelevant little detail in the keeping of your precious secret?" Lois felt the sting of an unshed tear in the back of her eye. "I thought you cared about me."

Clark clenched his fists. "I did, and I do care about you, Lois. In a sense, what I did was for you."

Lois snorted. "You're going to have to explain that one, buster."

Clark nodded. "Fine. I loved you, Lois, I have always loved you and I will always love you. I would die for you... and I did."

For all that this body wasn't killed by Clyde Barrow's bullets, the outcome was still the same. To the world, Clark Kent was dead."

"But he's not! He's sitting right here in my living room."

Clark shook his head. "No, he's not. The only one who survived that night was Superman. My life as Clark Kent, a life I had dreamed of for so long, was over. I could no longer go to ball games with Jimmy, or argue with Perry over some story detail. But mostly, my ability to just be with you, working by your side, sharing your moods, just enjoying how your incredible mind worked, that was all gone."

Clark stood up and moved around to the back of the chair. He placed his hands on the chair back and recaptured Lois's gaze. "The only way for Clark Kent to survive was to admit that he was Superman. If that information became public, everyone I ever knew or loved would become targets for every criminal and nutcase who wanted revenge against me. I couldn't allow that. Better everyone thought that Clark Kent died in that illegal speakeasy that night."

Lois chewed on her bottom lip. "Your parents didn't have to deal with your death. I imagine you still see them."

Clark shook his head. "Obviously my parents, knowing of my gifts, didn't have the anxiety of thinking I'd been killed, but they did have to deal with my death. They had to go through the expense and the difficulties of arranging for my funeral, and deal with all the well-meaning concern from their friends and neighbors."

"I was there."

"I know, and it hurt me to see you and Perry and Jimmy distressed by it."

"So, do you stay away from your parents too?"

Clark shook his head. "Not entirely. Because they live out in the middle of farm country and their closest neighbor is miles away, I am able to visit them occasionally. But I still have to be very careful. I come after dark so no one will accidentally see me. I have to scan the house and surrounding buildings and fields to make sure no one is visiting before I can come home. And I don't see them as much as I used to just because I don't want to risk someone discovering me there."

Lois sighed and flopped back into the deep cushions of her comfy couch. Comfortable furniture was something she'd learned from Clark. "So, would it have been so bad to spare me the pain and reveal your secret? I'm sure we could have worked out some way to still see each other."

"Could we?" Clark shook his head. "I don't think so. Metropolis isn't exactly the middle of Kansas, and whatever our relationship was, it wouldn't have been fair to let you think that we would have been able to continue it." He came back around and sat down again. "People lose friends and family; it's a part of life. It only seemed right to let you and my other friends in Metropolis go through the normal grieving process, then get on with your lives. Especially you, Lois, you deserved to be happy. You deserved to find the right man, or the right situation, that would make you happy."

Lois stared at Clark for a long time. The earnestness in his face was unshakable. It was clear to Lois that he hadn't liked what he'd had to do, but he was convinced that he'd done the right thing, possibly the only logical thing, for the safety of his friends and family. Still, she couldn't quite make herself agree. Not remembering what she'd gone through five years ago. But she could, intellectually, see his point of view.

She still felt the slight tug from her heart as she looked at her former partner... and... what?

"So, Jerome Clark, were do we go from here?"

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Clark found himself staring at Lois for a long time before answering. A part of him wanted badly to say that they could be close friends again. That maybe there was a chance to start over,

but he knew that was impossible now. It had been five years and Lois had a new life. A new life that didn't include him.

Clark shrugged. "Tell me, Lois, are you happy? I know you have a good job at the *Times*, and that you've regained your reputation as the best. I can tell by the way you're dressed that when you chanced by the bookstore you were clearly on your way to meet someone. What's his name?"

Lois blushed. "Peter Lochton, and we've been dating for a while now."

Clark smiled. "Is it serious?"

"I was on my way to meet him for dinner tonight. I'm pretty sure he was going to ask me to marry him."

Clark's smile faltered for a micro-second. He held it in place. "And your answer?"

Lois avoided his eyes at first, but finally met his gaze. "My intention was to say yes. But that was before I saw you."

"Why would seeing Jerome Clark at a book signing change anything?"

Lois's arms flailed about a bit in frustration. "Because... because you're Clark, and you're alive."

Clark shook his head. "No, Clark is still dead. Jerome Clark is just an identity I use to earn some money for the basics. I'm mainly just Superman now." His heart ached as he formed his next words but he knew he meant them. "Lois, you have a wonderful job. and I'm betting you've met a wonderful guy. You put a painful past behind you and have a life you've always deserved. You moved on, and nothing has changed because of what you learned tonight."

Lois nodded slowly. "You're right. My life is on a good path right now and I'd have to be an idiot to throw all that away." She smiled at Clark. "I am very glad to find out that you aren't dead even if your Clark Kent identity is gone." She blushed again. "Would it be okay to write you once in a while? I'd like to keep in touch. Would you still be a... friend?"

Clark smiled back. "I'd like that very much, Lois." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a worn business card. "I have a small cabin in the mountains, but there are no amenities there. I can be reached through my publisher, and here is my e-mail." He scribbled it onto the back of his card. "That's how my folks contact me."

She took the card and smiled again. "Thanks."

Clark walked over and hugged her, then stepped back and placed his hand on her cheek. "Be happy, Lois. You deserve it."

Clark turned and quickly left her apartment. As he moved down the hallway he heard Lois whisper, "Be happy, Clark, you deserve it too."

EPILOGUE:

It had been three months since Lois had seen Clark. It had been three weeks since Lois had returned her engagement ring to Peter. It had been three days since she'd handed in her resignation at the *Los Angeles Times* and given up her apartment. Her furniture was in storage; she'd decide what to do with it later.

She stood outside of a rustic little cabin high in the Rockies outside of Pocatello, Idaho. It was quite off the beaten path. Lois had a few moments when she wasn't sure her Jeep would make the trip up here. She turned and took in a 360-degree vista of her surroundings. It really was beautiful here, and she could understand why Clark would love it so. It was so peaceful.

She stepped up onto the small covered porch and grasped the handle on the front door. Of course it wasn't locked. It was Clark, after all. She stepped inside. A smile came to her face. It was quaint but cozy, and it was definitely Clark. A large stone fireplace dominated the main room. An overstuffed chair and a cushy loveseat faced the hearth.

A quick survey of the rest of the cabin held no surprises. A small, serviceable kitchen off to one side contained a propane-powered stove, an old-fashioned icebox, and a small set of

cupboards. A small square table with two chairs sat under a window looking out over a pond. There was no electricity, nor was there a phone line.

Behind the fireplace was little more than a large alcove which served as the bedroom. The fireplace had a hearth on the bedroom side also, only it was a bit smaller in width. A full-sized bed and a freestanding wardrobe dominated the tiny space. She went over and sat on the bed. It was very comfortable and she was very tired. The bed called to her, but she would have to wait a bit for that.

She went back into the main room and sat on the loveseat letting her mind replay all the events of the last few months which had led her here... now.

Seeing Clark again had been both terrible and wonderful all at the same time. While a part of her was glad that Clark hadn't actually died from Clyde's bullets five years ago, another part of her cursed his cowardice for not confiding in her and subsequently planting a landmine into her new life.

When they'd said their goodbyes a few months ago, Lois had every intention of continuing as she had the last few years. After all, that's what she'd always wanted... wasn't it? She'd accepted Peter's marriage proposal and had acted the part of a blushing bride to-be. But something just wasn't right.

It was something Clark had said. He'd told her that all he wanted was for her to be happy.

Over the last few years she'd thought she'd been happy, but it took seeing Clark again to make her realize that she really wasn't. She tried to embrace the direction her life was taking but it kept coming back to what she was missing, not what she had. She began to feel like she was settling. Finally, she made her decision. She was getting older and she had missed out on her chance for true happiness once before; she wasn't going to blow it this time.

You could call it fate, or serendipity, or whatever you want, but she had been given a second chance at a life with the one man she truly ever loved and she couldn't pass it up. Once the decision was made, Lois Lane the investigator came back to the fore.

Calling Clark's publisher, and using the fact that she was a reporter, Lois was able to get an itinerary of when Clark would be back in the States and where he was expected to be. She remembered him mentioning a cabin in the mountains, but the best she could get from the publisher was Clark's mailing address, a post office box. So she cheated. She called Martha.

Now she was at Clark's little hideaway, and she would wait patiently until he showed up. Not knowing exactly when Clark might appear she came prepared with plenty of groceries, most of which didn't require much preparation. She filled up the small cupboard space and the small icebox.

She found a glass and grabbed a few ice cubes she'd brought and poured herself a cream soda, then went back into the main room. There was plenty of firewood already cut for use, so she started a fire and sat back in the large overstuffed chair.

Lois must have dozed off at some point, which wasn't surprising given how she'd run herself ragged over the last couple of days. The fire had died down significantly, only a reddish glow from the embers remained. Suddenly she was aware of some noise out on the front porch. She jumped up and faced the door. Anticipation burned through her like a wildfire.

The door opened, and in stepped...

"Clark!"

He had a stunned look on his face. "Lois?"

She ran over to her man and threw her arms around his neck. She quickly kissed him, then smiled up at him. "Welcome home."

THE END