

The Whole Truth

By Sue S. <sistersuze@gmail.com>

Rated: PG13 (for some mild swearing and impure thoughts/actions)

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Summary: Linda King is back in Metropolis for the premiere of her movie. First in a series.

This story references the events of 'The Rival' from season one, but it takes place somewhere near the middle of season two.

Many thanks to BJ and Kate who smoothed off the edges for me. <mwah!>

"Clark? What are you doing tomorrow night?"

Clark looked up to find his partner standing in front of his desk running her fingers over the top of his computer monitor as if she were checking it for dust. The tone of her voice was just a shade too breezily casual to be a simple question. "Why?" he asked cautiously. "Are you still thinking about painting your kitchen?"

In truth, he would have happily painted her entire apartment just to be able to spend that much time with her, but he didn't want her to know he was that big of a pushover.

Her nose wrinkled in distaste. "No, I still haven't decided on a color."

Clark sat back in his chair and tossed his pencil onto the desk. "So what is it you need done?"

"Done?" Lois looked like that question had stung her. "I don't need anything done. Can't I ask you to hang out with me without it being an imposition?"

It was his turn to feel bad. "I'm sorry. I'm not doing anything tomorrow night. What did you have in mind?"

"How would you like to go see a movie with me?"

In a heartbeat, Clark knew exactly which movie she had in mind. He couldn't stop himself from making a face as he repeated, "Movie?"

His lack of enthusiasm was not lost on Lois. "Yeah," she said brightly. "[b]That[/b] movie. In fact, it's the premiere. They sent me free tickets and arranged for a limo and everything. I wasn't going to go until I heard that Linda isn't playing me after all. Apparently she barely got a speaking role. I guess she's one of the people in the elevator that Superman rescued. The thought of her humiliation is just too tempting to pass up. God, I hope she squirms."

"Oh, that's right." Clark was already mentally squirming. "That movie about the Carpenter scandal comes out tomorrow, doesn't it?"

Truth be told, both Superman and Clark had been invited to the premiere. He had turned down both invitations. Murray Brown had tried a couple of times to change Superman's mind, but none of the rumors Clark had heard about the movie were the least bit promising. The story of Preston Carpenter's attempt to create and control the news was one of those occasions when the truth was stranger than fiction. If the advance reviews were accurate- bad acting, terrible special effects and the insertion of a terrorist subplot involving the ambassador from Omir overshadowed any intrigue the movie might have had.

"They're having the world premiere here in Metropolis," Lois told him. "The advance reviews have all been lousy. It's going to be a train wreck." Her lips curved into a delighted smile. "It's

going to be Linda's train wreck. Have you seen the trailers for it? They actually described that tramp as the 'plucky journalist who risked her life for the truth'.

"And you want me along... why?"

Her smile turned into an impatient frown. "Because you were there. You know as well as I do that Linda barely risked her life at all."

"That's not entirely true. She went up against a powerful man at considerable risk to herself."

"So did I!" Lois looked almost apoplectic. "I was almost suffocated in a freezer! Is it asking so much for my best friend to gloat with me when my frenemy's vanity project blows up in her face?"

"Lois, you're already gloating."

"It doesn't count unless I can gloat in front of Linda. So is that a 'yes'?"

Clark inwardly sighed. "What time should I pick you up?"

"You shouldn't, they're sending a car for me. Be at my place by seven. Can you rent a tux?"

"Do you really think that's necessary?"

"You're there to make me look good, Clark. Get a tux."

"I thought I was there so you could gloat."

"You can't multi-task?" Her smile returned and she gave his shoulder a playful punch. "Thanks, Clark. I appreciate it."

Promptly at seven, Clark knocked on Lois' door and then put a nervous hand to his bow tie to check that it was on straight.

"Just a second," Lois shouted from inside, her words punctuated by short little clip-clops as she ran closer to the door in high heels. He heard two of her locks slide free and then the door was wrenched open.

In an instant, all the air seemed to leave his lungs. Lois was wearing a pale lavender evening dress that clung to her body, accentuating each and every one of the curves that preoccupied most of his daydreams. The iridescent beading across the bodice seemed a valid excuse for his attention to linger a little longer there. He lifted his gaze to her face and his breath caught again. Tonight her hair was styled as a riot of curls that perfectly illustrated the sexy, uncontrolled vibe that Lois projected.

"What?" Lois put a worried hand to her hair. "Should I wear my hair up instead?"

Clark had to clear his throat to find his voice. "No. You look amazing."

"I wonder what Linda's wearing." Lois stepped into the hallway and turned to lock her door.

"It won't matter," Clark assured her. "Every man there is going to be looking at you."

For a fleeting moment her cheeks flushed, then Lois rolled her eyes at him. "Nice try, Kent. Let's go."

As it turned out, Linda was wearing a bright red dress with a neckline that plunged so deeply as to almost reveal her bellybutton.

"Would you look at that?" Lois muttered. "She never disappoints."

Clark glanced at Lois in time to see her paste a hugely phony smile on her face. Her hand clutched his arm, pulling him along in her wake as she made her way across the lobby to Linda.

"Linda!" Lois chirped brightly. "That dress suits you. I haven't seen anything like it since I did that story on drag queens."

Linda's answering smile was just as fake. "Oh hello, Lois. I didn't see you at first. That color always washes you out, don't you think?"

"It's your night to shine — or whatever. After all, you co-wrote the movie and, I believe, you even got a small part in it. I wouldn't want to steal your spotlight."

“You’ve never stolen a thing from me yet.”

Lois let out a sound that was almost a snort. “You’ve never had anything worth stealing.”

“We should probably get in there before all the good seats are taken,” Clark interrupted. “Good luck tonight, Linda.”

Linda leaned forward and kissed his cheek. “Thank you, Clark. Always the gentleman, aren’t you?”

Lois glared at him as Linda walked away. “You should wipe that lipstick off your face before it leaves a scorch mark.”

Clark checked his reflection in one of the mirrored columns. Linda’s kiss had left a bright red mark on his cheek. He swiped at the lipstick but somehow only managed to smudge it. “It’s not like I asked her to kiss me,” he said defensively.

Lois’ thumb rubbed roughly over the spot Linda had kissed. “That is never coming off, Clark. I hope you’re happy.”

Usually having Lois touch him did make him happy, but in this instance he couldn’t work up much delight.

The movie was terrible. So terrible that the audience could only muster a few random claps as the credits rolled. Lois was out of her seat and headed for the exit before the lights came up. She moved past Linda, who was sitting with a frozen smile on her face, without saying a word. Clark was utterly baffled by Lois’ behavior. Her moment of triumph had arrived and she seemed determined to miss it. Instead of gloating at the after-party, she was headed for home.

In the back of the limo Clark tried several times to get Lois talking. He had expected to hear a cataloging of everything that the movie had got wrong. He brought up the fact that they had only been mentioned in passing. Their roles in uncovering Carpenter’s machinations had been left out of the movie entirely. Lois only shrugged.

Okay, so that wasn’t what was bothering her. Surely it wasn’t because of the scene where Superman rescued Linda from the Omiri embassy? That was pure fiction, just like the kiss between the painfully wooden actors playing Linda and Superman. He was almost insulted, but the situation — the whole movie, really — was so far from any kind of reality that he very much doubted anyone could believe it had actually happened. Clark was about to ask if that scene was what was bothering her but something in her posture made him hesitate.

“You don’t have to walk me up,” Lois told him when he followed her out of the limo at her apartment. “I’m sure they’ll take you home.”

“I’ll get another ride.” Clark rapped on the roof of the limo to signal it could leave. “Are you okay?”

“Not really. I have a massive headache all of a sudden. Good night, Clark.”

Clark stood on the sidewalk and watched her and that fantasy-inducing dress climb the stairs to her building. He stayed in that spot, listening to the soft swish of the fabric as she climbed the stairs inside. He heard her open her door, step inside, and kick off her shoes. Her footfalls were softer as she walked in the direction of her kitchen. There was the faint sound of her refrigerator door opening.

“Don’t do this to yourself,” Lois whispered. She let out a sigh. “She made it up. She’s the biggest, fattest, trashiest liar in the world.” The refrigerator door slammed closed. “And he kissed her.”

Clark stared up at the window of her apartment as horrified dismay. Did Lois really believe that Superman had kissed Linda King? Surely she knew him better than that. In an instant, Clark had hurried into the alley and spun into the suit. It was only after he had rapped lightly on her window that common sense kicked in and told him that this might be a bad idea.

It was too late to change course now. Lois had opened the window and was stepping back to let him in.

“I didn’t see you at the premiere,” she told him, her voice just the slightest bit strained.

“I had a prior commitment.”

“You didn’t miss much.”

“I heard they took a lot of creative license.”

Lois didn’t answer. She just studied him as if she might suss out the truth about Linda King if she stared at him long enough. Her eyes narrowed and he wondered if he was being indicted for a crime he hadn’t committed.

“Is something wrong, Lois? You seem upset.” Clark hoped that would give her the opportunity to ask him about Linda and the kiss that had never happened.

She shrugged and looked away. The silence stretched out.

“I’m sorry,” he said, feeling awkward. “I didn’t mean to intrude. I’ll leave you alone now.”

Clark had one foot on the windowsill when she called out, “Did you kiss Linda King?”

He shook his head and turned around again to face her. “That movie was a work of fiction, Lois. I never saved Linda from the Omiri ambassador and I certainly never kissed her.”

Lois continued to watch him closely. For a split second Clark panicked as he realized he had just given specifics about a movie he supposedly hadn’t seen. It appeared that Lois hadn’t noticed that slip, though, because her next question was, “You don’t have feelings for her?”

“I’m sure she’s a very nice person, but—”

“No.” Lois shook her head emphatically. “No, she’s not. She’s a terrible person. She throws herself at men all the time. Did she throw herself at you?”

Clark raised a silent eyebrow. Lois had thrown herself at Superman on more than one occasion but apparently the irony was lost on her. Also as apparent was the fact that watching Linda King and Superman kiss - however unrealistic — was tormenting her.

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

Lois stood up straighter. “What is your type?” she asked quietly.

Clark hesitated. There was a very clear line here and he was just as clearly about to cross it. “I think you already know.”

Lois’ jaw flexed stubbornly as she shook her head. “You’ve never said.”

Clark took a step closer to her, close enough now that they were almost touching. “If Superman could have a girlfriend, it would be you.”

He had expected that his confession would flatter and reassure her. Instead she regarded him with that same steady, somewhat skeptical gaze. “You can’t have a girlfriend?”

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

“Maybe I could be your secret girlfriend?”

Her question was more cool than flirtatious and that, as much as anything, was probably what made Clark lean closer and whisper, “Maybe you already are.”

Their new proximity had him breathlessly aware of her and that form-fitting dress. Maybe it had the same effect on her because she blinked and her mouth went slack. Her hand rose to touch his face, her eyes leaving his to track the movement of her fingers across his cheek. The sensation of that faint caress sent a heavy, hot pulse through his entire body.

Her eyes met his again, dark and full of pain. “It doesn’t feel like I’m your girlfriend.”

Clark leaned down and kissed her. He had meant the kiss as a way to soothe away the hurt and to show her that he cared. For a second or two he actually managed to convince himself that it was only a slightly-more-than-friendly kiss. Then her mouth opened beneath the pressure of his and her fingers slid into his hair and all his good intentions dissolved in the heat of their kiss.

It was impossible to deny the attraction between them when Lois was meeting him kiss for kiss. This was wrong and it felt that much more exciting because of it. He'd never have this chance again and Clark didn't want to squander it. The press of her soft curves against him and the sensation of her moans against his lips were building to something that neither of them could control.

Clark pulled away first, his breaths coming in pants. "I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry."

"Are you?" she asked breathlessly.

Her hair was a little more tousled now and her eyes had turned liquid with desire. Clark realized that if he touched her again now he wouldn't stop. Not ever.

"Only because it's going to hurt that I can't kiss you like that again," he admitted.

Lois licked her already-wet lips. "You could, you know. It'll be our secret." She stepped close against him, her hands sliding possessively over the S on his chest. At that moment Clark was willing to tell her just about anything if it meant he could kiss her again.

"Our secret..." he echoed, dazed at the thought that it might just be that simple. Oh, who was he kidding? She'd push him backwards out the window if she knew the truth.

"Just tell me one thing," she whispered as her body swayed against him and her eyes looked deeply into his. "One thing and I swear I won't ask you for anything else and I'll never talk about it to anybody."

His knees felt weak. Clark clenched his hands at his sides so that he wouldn't touch her. "What?"

Her cheeks flushed, but Lois' gaze didn't waver. "Do you love me?"

He froze, calculating the risk of answering that question honestly.

"Tell me." Her intelligent eyes seemed to be looking right into his soul. "Please, I want to hear you say it, just once."

Clark still hesitated. She already knew the answer or she wouldn't be asking him. What could it hurt to be honest with her? Just this once he could tell her a truth he had been aching to share for years without having to take it back later.

She gave him a smile that was dazzling in its sincerity. "I'm not asking you to tell me the whole truth."

"The whole truth?"

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

Clark took a deep breath, steadying himself against the weight of the words he was about to say. He looked into her eyes, willing her to understand these were the truest words he'd ever tell her. "I love you."

Lois shivered, her body brushing lightly against his. "Thank you," she whispered and went on tiptoe to leave a light kiss on his jaw. Clark closed his eyes to memorize the sensation. "You know, if this were a movie, we'd make love tonight. One perfect, never-to-be-repeated night."

His eyes shot open at the throaty-voiced suggestion she had just made. His hands automatically rose to her waist, trembling a little at the thought of making love to her. "This isn't a movie."

"No." Her eyes glittered with mischief as she shook her head slightly.

"And there's that whole truth I'd have to tell you first." It suddenly felt very important that she know the truth — the whole truth.

"Is that what's holding you back?" she asked softly, her eyes full of wonder. "The whole truth?"

He nodded. "That's all that's been holding me back for almost two years now."

Her eyes widened and she swallowed hard. "What if I already know the whole truth?"

"Lois, I—" he murmured but got no further when her finger

touched his lips to silence him.

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

THE END