

Spin

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Rated: PG13 (for a few not-so-clean words, thoughts and deeds — cut Lois some slack, though, she's very drunk)

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Summary: Let's pretend that Lois was a lot drunker in the episode "I'm Looking Through You."

Because she's the one who's tipsy, I haven't "slurred" her words. This is for the ficathon challenge, as requested by Catherine Bruce. The specific details will be listed at the end.

These are not my characters. These are not my characters. These are not my characters. It doesn't matter how many times I say it, I still can't make myself stop writing about them. Just to be clear, though, in case anyone with a legal claim on them does see this: These are not my characters.

The opening banter is also not mine. It's quoted directly from the episode "I'm Looking Through You," screenplay by the awesome and amazing Deborah Joy Levine. It's entirely due to her (and her vision of the characters) that I'm here in the first place. In my perfect world, she would have written ALL the episodes.

I owe buckets of praise and gratitude to DJ and Lara for their long-suffering in doing beta. They, alone, know that this ended at least two other ways. Thanks for sticking it out with me!

He ignored me.

Superman walked right past me. He just walked past me without a flicker of recognition or even a glance in my direction. It was like I wasn't even there. How much more champagne am I going to have to drink before the aching hole in my heart becomes less paralyzing?

As if to make my pity party even worse, my annoying sometimes-partner, Clark Kent, sits down on the stool next to me and snarks, "A date with Superman, huh?"

"What are you doing here?" I shoot back. "Barn dance let out early?"

He ignores my sarcasm in favor of answering with his own subtle dig. "I filed the Morris story; you're very welcome."

This is it. This is what my life has come to — I'm being chastised by Clark, ignored by Superman, brushed off by Lex, and the rest of my evening is going to be spent watching Cat Grant practically fall out of her dress every time she laughs. God, that woman drives me insane.

All I wanted tonight was a chance — a chance to spend a little time with Superman when he's not saving me from certain death. A chance to get to know the man behind the 'S'. Which is more than I can say for any of the other women who were bidding on him. They all see his handsome face and his muscular body and don't spare a thought to wonder what makes him so compassionate. Am I the only person in the world who sees him for who he really is?

Sadness, so thick that I can barely breathe, seems to settle into the marrow of my bones. I blink away tears and realize that Clark's is the only relatively semi-friendly face I've seen all night.

"I was saving for Tahiti," I tell him with a sigh. "But a date with Superman — that would have been a real adventure." Clark doesn't answer, but I can sense his head tilting closer as he listens. Another wave of melancholy washes over me, and I can't

help but unburden myself. "Oh, Clark, he doesn't even know I'm alive! Maybe it was stupid of me to think that he cared."

Clark's elbow brushes against mine as he quietly says, "It's not so stupid, Lois. Did you ever think that maybe Superman was afraid to reveal himself? His true feelings?"

I shrug and stare at the bartender's back. Have I really had five glasses of champagne? I definitely shouldn't signal for a sixth, should I? God, I should have eaten something before coming tonight. All of a sudden the world feels a lot less sharp. Except for the ache inside me — that hasn't abated at all. Gentle hands touch my shoulders and I sit up straighter.

"Come on," Clark says softly. "I'll put you in a cab."

All I want to do is put my head down on the bar and cry. Would Superman even hear me, if I did? Would he come back and at least acknowledge that I was here? Probably not. Behind me, Clark squeezes my shoulders in encouragement.

When I stand up, the room goes off-kilter and I take a couple of steps to try and straighten it out.

"Whoa, hold on," Clark says and his hand magically appears at my waist, shoring me up against him while I try to get my bearings. "How much did you drink?"

"Honestly? I don't remember. I think, maybe, five..."

"Five?" There's an undercurrent of laughter in his voice that even my being drunk can't hide.

"Don't judge me, Clark. I've had a lousy night." If he's lucky, I won't remember this tomorrow.

He doesn't answer, just keeps his hand on my waist as he guides me towards the coat check. He's a solid guy, my partner. Sometimes he rolls up his sleeves at the morning bull session and it's all I can do not to stare. And that's just his forearms! I saw him in a towel once, a few months ago, and it's insane how good he looked. Maybe it's just the loosening effects of all that alcohol, or that I'm wishing it was someone else's rock-hard chest behind me, but I slow down just enough to make him bump into me.

Only he doesn't. Clark deftly steps to the side and signals at the coat check girl with a ticket. He's holding my purse — when did he even pick it up? I try to think about that, but find that I'm staring at the back of my eyelids. There's a negative image of the coat room there and it's far more psychedelic than I would have believed.

Words circle in the air around me. Clark says something to the clerk. She says something back and I can hear the breathy little note of attraction in her tone. She's flirting with him! Flirting with my partner even as he's standing here with one arm around me and his hand firmly planted on my waist. The nerve!

I open my eyes to give her a piece of my mind, but then Clark lets go of me. I'm about to protest — he should know better than to leave me on my own when even I can tell that I'm swaying dangerously. Then I realize that he's holding my coat out for me. Once I manage to get it on — no small feat, even with Clark's help — he takes my elbow and sort of steers me toward the elevators. I try very hard to walk in a straight line.

We get in the elevator with another couple. They're far more interested in each other than us as they whisper and giggle softly. The woman is clutching a toy zebra, and I wonder if the man is the one who gave it to her. Is it a joke that's shared only between them? How would it be to have someone to cozy up to like that? I try to imagine sharing a private joke with Superman, but it doesn't seem likely. I can picture kissing him — and him kissing me — but there's such a hazy quality to the daydream. It's never going to happen. How can it when he doesn't even notice that I'm in the same room with him?

What about Lex? He's kissed me. And it was an okay kiss, as kisses go. It was light and he didn't linger long enough to make it awkward. But it was still unsatisfying in a way I've never quite figured out.

What about Clark? I've kissed him, too. Well, sorta kissed

him. I was scared out of my mind and running on pure adrenaline at the time, but — for just a second or two — the world seemed to slow down when his lips touched mine. After which I was tossed out of the plane and didn't give kissing him a second thought.

No, that's a lie. I've thought about it. I thought about it just yesterday when I was sitting at my desk and looked over to see Clark watching me. He does that a lot, but I pretend I don't notice. It's flattering, for one thing. Actually, it's beyond flattering. It's almost enough to make me wish I had one more shot at kissing him.

It's hard to describe the look that he gives me, when he's watching me. I've had my share of admirers and none of them have ever looked at me like Clark does. Other men have leered or undressed me with their eyes or simply looked away, embarrassed to be caught staring. Clark does none of those things.

He looks at me like I'm fascinating. Not in some odd way, but like he's trying to figure me out. It makes me feel mysterious to know that Clark is trying to read my mind. And maybe it's the fact that, while he does break out an innuendo now and then, Clark is unfailingly polite. It's like there's more going on inside him than I really want to give him credit for.

Or maybe I'm just really, really drunk.

The cab is almost at my apartment when I realize that I've been not-so-surreptitiously staring at Clark. He looks different in the half-lit backseat of a cab. Neon light from passing signs and the headlights of other cars are the only illumination and it gives him a vaguely dangerous look. Every now and then he glances at me and gives me a wry grin. I'm sure he thinks I'm far too toasted to be dangerous.

God, I am so fickle. And — obviously — desperate. I've gone from wishing I had Superman to trying to figure out a way to kiss Clark one more time. It's just that it hurts less, thinking about Clark. Every time my brain trips over to Superman I get that tight sensation in my chest and my stomach lurches and I wonder if I'm getting an ulcer.

"Here we are," Clark says when the cab stops. "I'll see you up, okay?" He says it like a question, but I'm pretty sure he's afraid I'll end up in a heap at the bottom of the stairs if someone doesn't catch me. He's probably right about that. What if I fell down the stairs? Would Superman show up then?

Just the thought is enough to close off my throat and send another pang of longing through me. Why couldn't he have at least said, 'hi'? He talked to other people besides that rich bitch who bought him for fifty thousand dollars. Just not me.

Fifty thousand dollars! How can I possibly compete with that? It's not the money, really, it's knowing that she's going to have him all to herself for at least two hours. Hours! Hours alone with Superman. God, what I wouldn't give just to have five minutes of his undivided attention!

I have to stop on the fourth floor landing to catch my breath. Clark stands next to me, apparently waiting patiently for me to continue. Or is he? Deep down, is he irritated with me? Amused by my predicament? His expression is neutral and I just can't tell. Why are men so much better at hiding their feelings? Wait a minute — Clark said something about Superman's feelings for me earlier. Didn't he?

"What did you mean, when you said that Superman was afraid to reveal his true feelings?"

"What?" Clark tilts his head like he didn't understand the question.

"You said that maybe Superman was afraid to reveal his true feelings. Do you know how he feels about me?" I silently will him to just play along and tell me what I want to hear. Tell me that he's secretly confessed his love for me to you, Clark. Can't

you say that? Even if it isn't true?

"I know he cares about you, Lois." He gives me a sympathetic smile.

I turn away from him, blinking furiously to keep the tears at bay. I wish I wasn't so maudlin when I'm tipsy. I slump heavily against the wall as my knees start to shake. Superman doesn't love me. He never will. He 'cares' about me. Big deal. He cares about everyone. I'm nothing special to him and I was stupid to think that I was.

"Lois?" Clark touches my shoulder and I shrug his hand away, wishing he wouldn't pity me and yet, it's all I have. A few torrid fantasies and a partner who's too naive to lie in an attempt to make me feel better. It's kind of freeing, in a way, to be so totally pathetic.

"I'm nothing to him." My words rise until they're practically a wail. "He walked right past me, Clark, like I wasn't even there. I'm the invisible woman to him."

Clark's hand smooths over my back as he leans down to whisper near my ear. "No, shh, Lois, that's not true."

"How would you know?" I swipe at the tears beneath my eyes with the back of my hand and push away from the wall.

"Did he tell you that?"

"Actually... yes." He flinches as he answers and I wonder if he's breaking a confidence by telling me.

"When?"

Clark closes his eyes and sighs. "How about we talk about this when you're not drunk?"

"Was it recently?" I press.

He shakes his head, leaving me to wonder if he's denying that it was recent or that Superman ever said it in the first place.

"Lois, you were in a room full of people tonight. How would it look if Superman singled you out?"

"He could have at least said, 'hi', couldn't he? How was a simple little greeting asking for too much?"

Clark takes my elbow and nudges me into continuing up the stairs. "You're right. That isn't asking for too much."

"What's the secret, Clark? What are guys really looking for? I have an okay body, don't I?"

His hand tightens on my elbow and I wonder if he's about to burst out laughing. His voice is strained as he says, "Lois, trust me, the problem isn't your body."

There's a problem? My ankle wobbles a little on the next step and I have to grab on to the rail to avoid swaying backwards. "So what is it? What's wrong with me? Be honest."

"Nothing is wrong with you. Except maybe your current blood alcohol level."

I stop and frown down at him. I was right — he does look amused. Doesn't he understand at all how I'm feeling? Has he never suffered through unrequited love?

"Clark, haven't you ever wanted someone even though you knew it was impossible? Someone that you couldn't ever in a million years have?"

His expression turns wistful. "Yeah."

For half a second I wish that he meant me. I'm a stair higher than he is and that, coupled with my high heels, has finally made it so that Clark has to tip his head back to look at me. I put my hands on his shoulders to steady myself as I totter on my heels. He's so close and it sends a funny flutter through my stomach. I should kiss him. It seems like a bad idea, but I can't remember why right now.

His eyes darken a little and it sends a low tug through my abdomen. It feels like the whole world is in slow motion as I lean down to kiss him. His lips are soft and they part slightly when our mouths meet. That's nice. My hands move to his head, holding him there in case he tries to flee while I take a taste of his lower lip. That's even nicer. We're both gasping now, our mouths just millimeters apart. Clark makes a small groan when I nip him

lightly. His hands drift over my arms and shoulders as if he's not sure where to touch me. Suddenly I have a list of places I'm dying for him to touch.

"Lois," he says softly, and his hands tighten on my shoulders as he gives in and kisses me back.

The world starts wheeling around me, leaving me spinning in darkness and the taste of Clark and the sensation of his mouth coaxing mine open so he can kiss me deeply. His hand moves to the back of my head and suddenly I feel so heavy that I can only tip my head forward to rest it on his shoulder as I pant and try to come to grips with the fact that Clark Kent has just soared to the top of my "best kisser" list.

"What was that for?" he asks softly.

I lift my head, even though it takes considerable effort when it weighs so much. "For me. I was just curious. I didn't really pay attention when I kissed you before."

"And you think you'll remember doing it this time?"

God, how drunk does he think I am? I stagger backwards, climbing to the next step and wave my hand, as if I can clear the kisses we just shared out of existence and scrub them out of our memories with a dismissive motion.

"You don't have to walk me to the door, you know. I only have half a flight left. I can make it on my own."

"Sorry," Clark says with a cheerful grin. "When I walk a girl home, she gets door to door service."

I roll my eyes and turn away from him. "You are so old-fashioned, Kent. I bet you bring your dates flowers, too, don't you?"

"Only when I'm trying to score points."

"Only when you're trying to score," I correct for him, looking over my shoulder to see if he blushes.

He gives me a wink that makes me blush instead. "That, too," he says lightly.

I keep one hand on the wall as I come down the homestretch to my front door. Then I lean against the wall and pat my hips, wondering where in the heck my purse went. For some reason all I can think of is that the coat check girl has it. No. Scratch that. Clark does. He's freely rifling through my purse as if he has every right to do so. I'm about to snatch it away from him when he comes up with my keys.

"Found them," he says with a triumphant smile.

Clark opens my locks like he's done it before and I feel the slightest little thrill as my imagination kicks into overdrive and wonders if he's planning to come inside. I wish I wasn't so wobbly and I could try kissing him again. He hands me both the keys and my purse as the door swings open and asks, "You'll be okay now?"

"I was okay before," I say haughtily.

Clark grins and gives me the faintest of nods. "More than okay. Good night, Lois."

He almost has the door closed when I call out to stop him, "Clark!" He pauses and I keep talking. "Thank you for bringing me home. And for saying that Superman cares. I just, I don't know... I would give anything to be able to spend a few minutes alone with him, and I don't think that's ever going to happen."

"What would you say to him? If you could have him alone for a few minutes?" Clark leans against my door frame and crosses his arms as he waits for me to answer.

I shrug, not wanting to admit to Clark that *talking* to Superman isn't entirely what I had in mind. "I don't know. Something stupid, probably. No, not stupid. Maybe I'd tell him how amazing I think he is. How glad I am that he's come to Metropolis. Or how I know that there's got to be a real person beneath all that spandex and I wonder if he ever gets lonely. I know I come across as lusting after him, but the truth is..." I pause and suck in a deep breath. "The truth is that I want to be his friend. I want to know who he really is. I want to know the real

Superman."

Clark is watching me with that same fascinated expression that he gets sometimes. I blush and look away as the silence between us seems to stretch on and on. Go on, Clark. Tell me how stupid you think I am.

Finally, Clark softly asks, "What do you think the real Superman is like?"

"Mmm." I close my eyes and try to picture him. Gentle. Sweet. Passionate. Hopelessly in love with me and afraid to admit it. Suddenly I visualize Superman sitting at Clark's desk, watching me like Clark does. That would be so amazing! What if Superman was like Clark? Right now that thought makes perfect sense to me. I giggle and look up at Clark through my eyelashes. "You," I say, before I can think better of it. "I bet Superman is a lot like you, without the smart aleck tendencies."

Clark stands up straight and runs a hand through his hair. "I wish you were sober."

I laugh. "I don't! I hope I'm never sober again. It's going to hurt so much in the morning." Just like that, my good mood vanishes and I'm left with the same gut-wrenching grief as before. "I wish..." I swallow back a sob and choke out the last few words. "I wish he would notice me."

Clark sighs and scratches the back of his head. "I think you should call me when you wake up tomorrow."

"Why? Do you have a surefire hangover cure?"

"No." He shakes his head and smiles at me. "But I need you sober so we can talk."

"About what?"

"Superman."

"Why not now? What if you forget what you wanted to say?"

"I won't forget."

"You don't know that for sure!"

"Lois, in this instance, I promise, I won't forget. This is something I've wanted to tell you for a while now. I'm not going to forget. Even if you forget what happened tonight, I'm still going to tell you." He bends and kisses my cheek softly. "Get some sleep."

Once the door is safely shut between us, I drop my purse and keys to the floor and manage to kick off my shoes without breaking an ankle. I stumble towards the bedroom but my mind keeps replaying the kiss we shared. I'm never going to be able to walk past that spot on the stairs again without thinking about it.

There's a nagging voice at the back of my mind, screaming that I've missed something important. I lie down on the bed and close my eyes to stop the ceiling from spinning around. It doesn't help. With my eyes closed I can see my silly vision of Superman sitting at Clark's desk.

"Did you ever think that maybe Clark was afraid to reveal himself?" he asks me, leaning forward on his elbows like Clark does when he's eager to hear my answer.

My eyes fly open and I stare at ceiling as it spins slowly above me.

What if...?

No. I couldn't possibly be that lucky. I'm just drunk. I'm hallucinating, but it's such a pleasant fantasy that I give in and imagine that Clark is actually Superman. The room seems to spin faster and faster around me, and I have to close my eyes to make it stop. Oblivion is creeping in around me and I try to fight it, afraid that I'm not going to remember this at all in the morning.

And then I realize that I don't have to remember this. Clark is going to remember for me. He promised. If he is who I think he is, he's going to keep that promise.

Damn, I hope he brings me flowers...

THE END

The request was: first season, LnC not involved but with

plenty of wanting, a humorous situation that forces an embarrassing situation on them (with a possible revelation), and a stuffed zebra. No Lex (unless it's in passing) and no overly angsty revelation.