

Framed

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Rated G

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Summary: Clark finds himself in a bit of a pickle at the optometrist's office. Set mid-season two, just before the glasses change. One-shot.

Clark stood at the counter, waiting rather impatiently. He tapped his foot, ran his fingers through his hair, fidgeted around with the pen attached to the tiny metal chain. They really did no good, he thought to himself. Anyone could snap it off easily, no super-strength needed.

Finally, a lady came out the doors behind the counter, seemingly just realizing there was a customer waiting. She smiled at him as she walked forward. "Can I help you, sir?"

Clark gave a quick glance down at her nametag before responding. "Uh, yeah, Betsy. I was wondering if you had any other pairs of glasses in the back that matched this pair? I can't seem to find any on the stands out here."

Betsy's brow furrowed in the slightest, but her smile stayed in place. "I doubt it. We try to keep a pair of each style on display and have spares in the back. But I can double check for you really quick. May I see the frames?"

Clark froze, floundering for a moment. "Well, I, uh, need them—"

"It'll only take a second, dear," she replied quickly. Before Clark even knew what was happening, Betsy had reached over the counter and nabbed them off his face. He gaped openly at her as she turned and ran off, taking them straight into the back.

What just happened? he thought to himself. He slumped his shoulders in defeat as he waited for her return. He furtively glanced around the office, scanning the room for cameras. Fortunately for him, there only appeared to be one, and it was facing the entrance. He breathed a heavy sigh of relief. Now his only worry was that the older lady recognized him. Most likely she wouldn't. He wasn't anywhere near Metropolis, and most people who hadn't seen Superman before physically wouldn't place him. He was probably safe. He just had an overactive imagination.

"Okay, well, bad news is we don't have them," her voice floated back towards him as she walked back to the counter.

Clark felt his heart plummet even as his blood pressure slowly rose. Seriously? This was the fourth optometrist's office he'd been to today! He gaped at her as he spoke. "Not one?"

She shook her head and handed the frames back over. "Nope. Sorry. I looked it up, and apparently the line has been discontinued. Now, the good news is, it's just the frames that have been snapped in half, so if you want, we can trade out the lenses for a new pair right now! Do you have a prescription with you?"

Clark hesitated. "No, I uh, I'm actually on my way to visit my folks. I only brought the one pair."

Betsy nodded. "Say no more. Like I said, it should be easy enough to swap them out, then you can get your prescription fixed when you're back home in— wherever you live."

"Metropolis," he filled in, before kicking himself.

"Wow. That's quite a ways from here in Arkansas."

He gave her tight-lipped smile but made no comment, unwilling to continue that particular conversation. Betsy didn't seem to notice as she led the way around the edge of the counter

to look at some of their frames. "Here, do you see any that you like?"

Clark waffled a bit. "Um, well... I'm not sure—"

"Well, feel free to try on as many as you like. Call me over whenever you think you've found them." Betsy smiled and headed back to fill out some more paperwork behind the counter.

Clark finally breathed easy once he had some space between the receptionist and himself. She was nice but very unnerving. He turned back to the racks of glasses before him, the sheer number of options daunting.

He needed to find something inconspicuous. The trouble with glasses was that they drew attention to the face, even while they hid some of it. That was the advantage of having the glasses he did—the frames were heavy enough to mask his features well, and everyone was already used to him having them. To throw a change in the mix? It was risky. Dangerous, even. Everyone would be asking about them.

He took a deep breath. It had to be done. So he began the painstaking process of trying on pair after pair. After about fifteen minutes, he thought he'd finally found one. They looked good, they had a nice, heavy rim to them, a bit lighter in color, fitting quite nicely against his complexion and hair color. He liked them. They were similar to his old ones, though they did seem a bit bigger and thicker.

"Those are nice," the receptionist's voice nearly made him jump out of his skin. He glanced over at her across the room. She smiled at him. "They really bring out your eyes."

Aaaand, that was that. He frowned and made a show of looking at them in the mirror for a while before finally taking them off and returning them to their place. And so, he began again. After another ten minutes or so, Clark finally made his decision.

Not wanting to second guess himself any longer, he grabbed the pair and stood up, immediately crossing back to the counter with a smile.

"These the ones?" Betsy finally asked, mirth twinkling in her eyes.

He hesitated a minute, suddenly unsure again, before forcibly shaking himself out of it. He smiled at her. "Yeah. These are it. For better or worse."

She chuckled at him as she took both frames from him, gesturing with them. "Took you long enough. I'll have them done in a jiff. Feel free to have a seat."

Clark smiled politely back at her, even as the panic crept in on him. He felt naked without anything on his face. He awkwardly took a seat in the waiting area, picking up a newspaper to bury his nose in. It took him a few minutes to realize why the words he barely skimmed over sounded so familiar... It was the article he and Lois had written a week or so ago: Superman's efforts at containing the damage of tornadoes throughout the Midwest. Apparently it had been picked up by several other papers. With a flush of embarrassment, Clark hastily put down the paper and rummaged for a sports magazine of some kind. The only one they had was from 1991, but it was better than nothing. After all, what if someone walked in and saw Superman sitting there?

Luckily, he didn't have to wait that long. Betsy came back with his new glasses and a grin on her face. "Here you go!"

Relief washed over him. "Thank you!"

She smiled at him. "No problem. That'll be fifty-nine dollars."

Clark pulled out his wallet and rifled through his cash. He'd gotten a lot out, just in case, not wanting to have to use his card and leave his name. "There we go. Thank you very much." He sighed happily as soon as he had them back on his face. It was like he could breathe again.

"Look at that! You're unrecognizable!"

A jolt of fear ran through Clark at her words. His eyes darted to hers, and he self-consciously ran his hands over the new, thinner rims. “Wh-what?”

She laughed at him. “I’m kidding. Don’t worry about it. You’re a handsome young man. Whoever she is, I’m sure she’ll like how they look.”

Clark briefly felt his brows furrow, before realizing she thought he spent so long debating because of a woman. He hadn’t even thought about Lois when picking out the frames. He hoped she was right. He didn’t want her to not like them... she would though. Besides, it was no sense quibbling about it now. He grinned, completely relieved. “Thank you. I hope so.”

As he strode confidently out towards the exit, Betsy called out after him once more. “Come by any time, Superman!”

As he spun around in shock, he saw the receptionist holding up the cover of that Superman article he’d been reading earlier, complete with front page picture of Superman. He gaped at her for a few moments, struggling for words. “I- how— That’s not —”

She dropped the paper in the trash with a grin. “Don’t worry. Your secret’s safe with me.”

Clark spluttered, shocked that she’d caught him and so easily made the connection. “B-but—”

She simply shooed him off with a smile. “Go. Who am I gonna tell? I’m just a little old lady.”

Clark shifted on his feet, glancing back at the door longingly. “Well, um, then thanks again.”

With a grin and a burst of speed, Clark took off out of the glasses shop.

THE END