

Unlike Any Other (Lois' POV)

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Summary: Have you ever met someone so unlike any other person that they grab your attention and force you to notice them?

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This story has a companion: "[Unlike Any Other \(Clark's POV\)](#)"

He's unlike any other man I've ever met.

It's not hard to see why. I mean, have you *seen* what he looks like? Have you *seen* the way his uniform defines the delicious hardness of his muscles as it stretches oh-so-right over his body? Have you noticed the regal way that heavy cape cascades from his shoulders down his back — a royal, crimson waterfall suspended in time? And don't get me started on his looks.

Soft chocolate eyes to happily drown in. A smile that should come with a warning label. Luxurious black locks that all but beg for me to reach out and run my fingers through them. The little mole above his lip — so close, so kissable, so enticing. Chiseled features that Adonis himself would be jealous of. A voice so soft and warm it feels like Heaven itself.

The strength he possesses — intimidating, awe-inspiring. I watched him swallow a bomb, saw the evidence of it exploding within his body, yet he remained mind-bogglingly unharmed. I witnessed him — first hand, unlike the rest of the world — lift the space shuttle into orbit as though it weighed no more than my feather pillow at home on my bed. I was half afraid he would fly off and disappear before I got the chance to see him again, before I could hear that velvety voice one more time. But he came back. Not to mug for the cameras like most people would. Not to make his presence known to the world.

He came back for *me*.

When he picked me up, not just my body was lifted. My entire spirit, my entire heart, was lifted as well. His arms held me protectively to his solid, broad chest and peace flooded me. In retrospect, I probably should have exercised more caution. He could have crushed me to death with little more than a tremor of his muscles. And, more importantly, he was a complete and utter stranger. A stranger who somehow felt familiar to me, though Superman had never before been seen by the world. Despite my natural defenses, my innate sense of self-preservation, I trusted him implicitly, never even second guessing my decision to willingly step into his embrace until days after the incident occurred. Even then, I never once regretted my actions. Giving myself over to the handsome stranger clad in garish Spandex had felt — and still does feel — completely natural, like it should have been a part of my life for always, not just as a recent, thrilling development.

Lucky me — this god in a cape has forged a relationship with

me that is unique to the two of us. No other reporter gets the attention that he gives me. No other woman has him rushing to her side at any and every wish for help, day or night, deadly situation or mundane task like opening a jar of pickles — or, at least, I assume, since I haven't actually called for help for something that insignificant.

Why me? I've been thinking about that a lot in these past weeks since Superman first flew onto the scene, darting in with a flash of primary colors to save the space shuttle, only a terrifying few seconds to spare. The best I've come up with is — I don't know. And I don't care. All that matters is that he's chosen to befriend me. And that's half the battle, if I ever stand any chance of finding out if we can be anything more to each other.

What would it be like, to date Superman? Thrilling, I imagine. Flying off at a moment's notice to have dinner in Italy, seeing a show in New York, then stargazing out in the Australian outback. Seeing the world together, experiencing everything life has to offer, laughing in the face of gravity's restrictions as we fly together, the sun's warm rays caressing us or the star-filled night wrapping its cool blanket around us.

And I wonder, am I good enough for him? Am I attractive enough? Am I interesting enough? Do I somehow stand out in the crowd or do I blend seamlessly into the masses? Is there anything that paints me as a woman unlike any other, who has the potential to make him happy?

He's a man unlike any other, and it infuriates me.

I don't want him. And I sure as hell don't need him. In fact, I could kill Perry for saddling me with the greenhorn from Nowheresville. It's not so much that Clark Kent is a dead weight as a reporter. The opposite is true. I don't think I've ever been partnered with someone so hardworking or whose skills as a reporter were so honed. It's just that I prefer to be alone. I've always done so much better on my own. Partners just unnecessarily complicate things, as I've learned on more than one occasion.

And, I'll admit, that while I'm no stranger to competition, I just really, *really* don't want to deal with vying against a partner. A partner who, while capable at his craft, has basically puff pieces to show for the years he's spent in the job. Puff pieces! For crying out loud! Perry couldn't even give me someone who has experience writing *actual* news, could he? That first day, I felt like less of a partner than I did a glorified baby sitter.

That first day, competition didn't enter my mind. I was too occupied with thoughts of how I was going to tolerate a wet-behind-the-ears greenhorn, how I could expend the least effort into shaping him into a useable partner. After all, Perry expected me to show Kent the ropes, and that included turning him into a *real* reporter.

And then I found that he had good instincts. Puff writer or not, he had an instinctual — or maybe just painstakingly crafted — ability to get to the heart of the matter, find the small details that would give us a lead and ask the right questions to make people open up, even if they hadn't wanted or intended to. That's when I stopped seeing him as some helpless, mewling newbie and as legitimate competition. I had spent *years* honing my skills, forging a name for myself, clawing my way to the very top of the Daily Planet reporting team, ensuring that the world over read front page article after front page article written by Lois Lane.

And then Kent came along.

He's almost as good as I am. Almost. I like to think that I'm still better, if only because he seems to be incredibly naive about the world at large. He may be a decent reporter and a world traveler, but he comes across as so...so...innocent to the ways of the world, and not necessarily in a good way. He strikes me as the type who leaves a key under his doormat and expects that no thief will ever find it and break into his apartment.

Infuriating.

Because he's not so innocent as he makes himself out to be. There is a devious side to him. A calculating side. And, dare I say it, a bold side.

Not since I was a child has anyone dared to mess with me. But Kent! Goddamn Kent! He dared. He dared and he won. Won and humiliated me. I will never, ever forget that. The endless trudging through the sewer reclamation facility. The billions of mosquitoes who apparently saw an All You Can Eat Buffet sign on me. Finally finding that spot on the map only to find a stupid Godzilla toy with an S painted on his chest. The way I instantly knew who'd set me up and the burning ire I had. The way I stormed into the Planet and confronted him.

The way he again proved that he is not like other men. Other men would have snickered. Other men would have gloated in a victory well-won against a formidable opponent. Other men would have rubbed my face in it, teased me mercilessly about it for weeks, if not for months or years to come.

But not Clark.

I looked into his eyes and saw only the barest glimmer of amusement there, but it was overshadowed with contrition. He didn't gloat. He didn't even deny that he was the one who'd managed to pull a prank on me. When I congratulated him — grudgingly, I admit — on winning, he said he hadn't won at all.

And the thing is, as much as I am loathe to admit it, he probably deserved to laugh at my expense. He probably should continue to rub my face in it. I committed a cardinal sin against him. I took advantage of his naivety and stole his story. But he hasn't mentioned the incident since, and he certainly doesn't laud any kind of newfound superiority over me as we work together. Why is that? Everyone else at the Planet would, if they could.

Could it be that he's just that humble, even nice, of a man?

He's unlike any other man and it sometimes drives me crazy.

Sometimes with desire, sometimes with frustration. He's so... untouchable. So unattainable. So...tempting and perfect. So aloof when he wants to be, at least, to the rest of the world. To me, however, he's friendly. Open. Honest. Playful. Flirty, in his own way, or at least, I'd always thought so.

But tonight.

He had his chance.

I offered myself to him. Not in a sexual way. In a complete, all encompassing way. All he had to do was say the word and I would have been his. His to date. His to sleep with. His to come home to at night after he saves the world for the thousandth time. His to build a life — a real life — with, if he wanted to.

He turned me down.

I'm not used to that. Not as a datable woman, at any rate. As a reporter, I'm so used to having doors slammed in my face that it actually surprises me when someone actually *agrees* to talk to me. It comes with the territory, unfortunately. And I've noticed that as I've become more and more known as a journalist, the more I get rejected by people who don't want to answer the questions I want to ask. But rejected for a date? Never. *I'm* the one who does the rejecting.

But Superman...he turned me down. Said no. Acted like he wasn't even interested, though I knew he's been almost flirty with me in the past. He didn't even hesitate. Didn't stop to think it over. Just flat out refused me. At least he didn't seem happy about it. In fact, he seemed incredibly sad when I spoke to him. I don't know if it was something I said, or if maybe he'd just come from an emotionally draining rescue.

All I know is that his rejection hurt me more than I wanted to admit, even to myself. All I know is that I wanted him to say yes, so badly. Not only because I wanted to live the fantasy I'd created in my head about what it would be like to date Superman, but because deep down inside, I think I was acutely aware of the fact

that I didn't love Lex. I think I wanted, on some subconscious level, to have a legitimate excuse to turn down Lex's proposal.

But, he didn't give me a reason. And that makes him unique, and even more mysterious to me.

He's a man unlike any other, and for that, I am eternally thankful.

He's my partner. My friend. My *best* friend.

He's my rock, especially now.

I'm not even sure when or how it happened. One moment, I hated Clark Kent with the heat of a thousand suns. The next moment, I'd found that he'd slipped past every carefully constructed defense I'd built up over the years and that he'd touched my very soul.

From my competition to my best friend, all in the blink of an eye.

Somehow, he's softened me. Not in a bad way, mind you. But in a wonderful, albeit, frightening, way. He's made me learn to trust again. Even after all of the bad things in my life, even after every broken promise, every time I've been let down by others. My father, the absentee. Claude, the leech who used me — both my body and my mind. Paul, another user. Lex, the worst of all, a man who tried to mentally and emotionally abuse me, and who almost succeeded. Now armed with the power of hindsight, I can see exactly what Clark was trying to tell me. I was just too blinded by the glitz and glamour of dating the charismatic billionaire to see what was directly in front of me.

But Clark saw. He knew. He tried to warn me. And I was too stubborn to listen. I pushed him away. I refused to admit that he could be right. But for all of that, when my world came crushing down — my wedding ruined, my fiancée dead by his own actions — Clark was there for me. He stood by me. He never once said "I told you so." He never even let his disgust toward Lex show — even though I *know* that he hates the man with everything that he has.

He was simply there for me.

No one has ever been there for me the way Clark was. Not my cheating father. Not my alcoholic mother. Not even my sister — she's always needed *me* too much to be there for me in the way that I've needed her. Even as kids, when all we had was each other to lean on during our parents' divorce, I was always the one *giving* comfort, rather than taking it.

Clark is so different in that regard.

During my time with Lex, my relationship with Clark became strained at best, and all but non-existent during the worst moments. Even a short phone call became awkward and our once-easy banter vanished, leaving us barely able to speak to one another. But when I needed Clark, he was there. The terrible things we'd said to each other, the unkind accusations we'd made against one another — all of it disappeared, burned away like pre-dawn mist in the full heat of the sun. It was as if Clark had forgotten it all, rather than merely decided that it no longer mattered.

His sheltering arms were there to embrace me when I needed them. His shoulder was always available to cry on. His ear was ever ready to listen and his tongue mute unless he knew I needed his comforting words. His words. They were always the right thing, exactly what I needed to hear, exactly what I hoped he would say. His home was always open to me, any time of the day or night, for as long or as little as I needed it. And I'll freely admit that I took full advantage of his offer, sometimes appearing on his doorstep in the middle of the night, still dressed in my pajamas, a blanket around my shoulders and haggard bags under my eyes. There were nights when I could not sleep, no matter how hard I tried, unless I was curled up under his comforter, in his bed, in his apartment, while he dozed on the couch in the other room to afford me what little privacy his open-floor

apartment could offer.

Unlike every other man in my life, Clark healed my broken spirit, instead of doing the breaking. For that, I can never repay him.

He was a man unlike any other, and my life is richer for having shared a small portion of it with him.

Was.

Such a hateful, tiny word.

Was.

My life is so much poorer for that word. It should be *is*. I would do anything, and I mean *anything* to make it *is* once more.

My best friend. Taken from me in the span of a heartbeat. His life stolen by a reanimated thug with a gun.

Every time I close my eyes, I see it anew. Clark's body, snapping stock still as the bullets hit him, looking down in confusion as though his mind hadn't yet registered what had happened to it. His body, slumping to the floor as his spirit fled, leaving behind a hollow shell of the man he once was. Each time I try to still myself and quiet my thoughts, I hear those awful shots. *Bang! Bang! Bang!* I hear myself scream, horror and panic in equal parts, changing my voice into something I can't even recognize.

I'm surprised I have any tears left. I could have sworn I'd cried them all out already.

Clark.

The one man who could comfort me. The one man who is now forever beyond my reach.

There's such a finality to it. Facing death with Clark has been one thing. Actually losing him to the afterlife is another. Death is nothing new to me. I've lost loved ones before. But this...losing Clark is different somehow. I didn't just lose *him*, I lost the future. I lost *hope*. I lost any possible chance at love.

Love.

Clark died without ever knowing of my emerging feelings for him. While I can't say that I'm head-over-heels, ready to walk down the aisle love with him, I *do* love him. I would have dated him, I think, if he had asked, as scary as it would have been, to put our friendship and professional relationship on the line like that. I could have — was beginning to — see a future with him, one where we were more than friends.

I'll never forgive myself for not telling him, especially because I know how he felt about me. I knew the longing in his heart — I could see it even in the beginning when he was the partner I was saddled with against my wishes. I told him not to get attached, not to fall for me, but even as hardened as I was, I think I still recognized that it was already too late.

And now, now he'll never know. It kills me inside. I'll never be able to tell him how I feel. I'll never again see that sparkle in his eyes, hear that precious laugh again, engage in friendly banter with him again. I'll never look across the aisle at work and see him sitting at his computer pretending not to be looking in my direction. I'll never again have the satisfaction of seeing our two names together in the byline of the paper.

There's a hole in my chest where my heart used to be. And I know that it will never heal, not if I live to be one hundred years old. I'll always look back on the time spent getting to know Clark Kent with fondness, regret, and paralyzing pain.

It hurts. Everything hurts. My chest feels like it's being crushed in a vice. My lungs burn with each breath I take. My throat is raw from alternating between the biggest, ugliest cry of my life and screaming out my pain. My head is throbbing as the same images of my best friend's brutal murder replay within my brain. My eyes are stinging with the effort of releasing the torrent of tears that have not ceased since Clark hit the floor of the casino and my brain registered what had happened to him. My nose is raw and red from the sniffing and repeated wiping with

even the softest tissues I can find.

He was a man like no other. There will never be another like him ever again. And in one miserable second, his life and my heart were snuffed out.

He's unlike any other man, and it makes me wonder.

It's strange, really. Part of me still desires him, still wants to see if we could make a relationship work. And part of me knows that it can never be. He's too unavailable — he wouldn't have time for *me* when the entire world is clamoring for his attention and help. Maybe he doesn't even feel desire. I mean, who is to say how Kryptonians think or feel? Maybe they are fundamentally different from us in that way.

I hope not.

Even if I can never have Superman, it would be tragic if he didn't share the same emotions, the same yearnings, as human beings. How empty would life be without those feelings of gladness, of passion, of love? Even sadness has its place, helps fill the void of trudging though each day.

We've moved past the awkwardness that had sprung up between us when I offered myself to him before saying yes to Lex's ring. It's almost like old times again. He laughs with me. He gives me that private smile I've never seen him give any other member of the press — female or otherwise. He teases me.

But it's not the same either. And that has more to do with me than anything.

Superman lied to me.

I asked him about how a scrawny little twerp of a man could have Superman's powers and he flat out lied to me. Not only lied to me but did it so easily, so convincingly. I believed him when he said that he didn't know. Believed it without question. He's *Superman*, for crying out loud! He stands for *truth*. So why would I have had any reason to doubt the sincerity of his words? And then, I found out that he *did* know the answer, that he'd deliberately spoken an untruth to me.

With the power of hindsight, I understand why he did it, even almost agree with his decision, in a way. He knew I'm a reporter, and that I would feel obligated to print the whole truth of the story. And after seeing Lex's strange and obsessed doctor be so willing to kill for the transfer of those same powers, I can't say that I blame Superman for wanting to keep the knowledge only to himself.

But his lie did have one consequence. I haven't been able to look at him quite the same since. His decision and desire to keep the knowledge out of the public's eye I can commend. But knowing that he didn't trust me — enough to lie to my face — has shattered the once pristine and godly image of him that I once carried. He is not a god in a cape. He's a fallible, mortal man, his invulnerability notwithstanding.

And right now, I'm not sure that I like him even more for his humanness, or if I'm disgusted by the fact that he couldn't trust me to do the right thing.

He's unlike all others, and because of that, I have to protect him.

I have to help him. Even if it means putting my own life in harm's way. Even if it all but guarantees my death. I can't let Clark walk through this alone. I can't let him lose his parents.

I have to do *something*.

So, I've made my choice. Tonight, I will ask Superman to freeze my body so that I can appear to be dead. Once Clark's parents are freed, Superman can then try to thaw me out again. Hopefully, I'll survive it.

I have to *try*.

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that I love Clark. I would do anything to protect him. I would do anything to prevent him from feeling an ounce of pain. I'm the only one that can help him

now — it's my dead body that the kidnapper is demanding to see. There is no one else on this Earth who can help the man I love, and I wouldn't *want* anyone else to do what I am about to offer.

I'm afraid.

What if things don't go well? What if the kidnapper decides that my death isn't enough? What if everything goes according to plan? What if I die during the thawing process? What if I thaw out but suffer brain damage from being clinically dead for so long?

I don't care.

If I were the one in a jam, I know Clark wouldn't hesitate to put his life on the line for me. I've seen him do it before. He's constantly drawing the attention of those who would seek to harm or kill us — doing what he can to make them forget about me so that I have a chance to escape unharmed.

Why should I care if I die for real tonight? Clark has already died for me. And even though he came back, miraculously no worse for his ordeal, I still have nightmares about that night, waking up some nights with shots ringing in my ears, a scream on my tongue, my body drenched in sticky sweat. I see it all in those nightmares, just as clearly as I did when I watched them unfold in the real, waking world. The way he stepped up for me. The way he put himself between the reanimated criminals and me, with no regard for his own safety. The way he took those bullets into his own body, when they almost certainly bore my name on them.

Clark is a rare man. I don't think anyone could argue that fact. But to me, he means even more. He is the epitome of the phrase "one of a kind." Everything about him stands out as exceptional, even how genuinely humble he is.

So, tonight, I will do what I must. I will try to match Clark's giving spirit. I will try to emulate the kindness he once showed to a bitter, hardened, loveless newswoman. I will try to make myself worthy of his love.

He's a man unlike the rest. Or, rather, should I say that he's *two men* unlike the rest?

He's a liar. Plain and simple. He's a rotten, lousy liar. All this time, I thought I knew him. All this time, I made myself look like an *idiot* in front of him.

Clark.

Superman.

Two men. One man.

Two individual beings blurred into one body, one mind, one spirit. It's like the world's worst case of split personality disorder. Okay, maybe not the *worst*, but it's still hard for me to accept. I mean, it makes sense, in some weird, unexplainable way. I was shocked when I figured it out, and I was shocked when he didn't deny it. But beneath it all was an odd sense of almost expecting it to be true. After all, it explains so much. The frequent disappearances. The uncanny ability to snag a Superman exclusive. The vague sense I had that I might have seen Superman's face before, even though the world had not yet met the alien hero.

Idiot.

Why couldn't I see what was staring me in the face literally every day, all day long? Why was I so blind? How could I not connect the two? Neither Clark nor Superman were very good about hiding the way they looked at me. Neither one was shy about praising the other. And how come I never questioned how Superman knew my name, where I worked, and what desk I sat at during that first, critical rescue? Why did I never realize how similar they looked, down to the same mole above their upper lip, which enticed me on Superman and annoyed me — at first — on Clark?

Thinking back, I'm embarrassed. I've said and done some really horrible things. Comparing Clark to Superman — calling

the former less than average and the latter a god. Ignoring what Clark said only to have him repeat it as Superman, and then listening to it simply because it came from the handsome hero. Propositioning Superman just hours after Clark opened up his heart to me, telling me that he loved me, begging me to consider him instead of Lex. I understand now why Superman looked absolutely gutted that night, and why, for the first time ever, he spoke in snapped words to me.

Of course, gentleman that Clark is, I know he'll never mention those embarrassing moments. And if they ever do happen to come up in conversation, I know he'll lightheartedly brush them off, as though they meant nothing, as though they didn't wound his heart in any way. And I know they must have hurt him, all those moments when I had cast aside the man in favor of the shadow he throws.

I know, with undeniably certainty, Clark is the man and Superman is the puppet. I know Clark — I've seen his baby pictures, spoken with his parents, been treated to amusing stories of things he did while he was a child. I've seen him work, I've seen him use the ATM, I've even seen him doing his taxes. Clark is definitely the real deal. Superman is the imposter.

If anyone else had lied to me about leading a dual life, I would have been mad, sure. But because it was Clark — the one decent, honest man I knew — it hurts so much more. My trust is shaken and he, more than anyone, knows how fragile my trust in anyone is. I'm not sure how or if I'll ever be able to trust him again.

If Clark was any other man, I would be done with him. He'd be a thing of the past, just another federal disaster of a relationship to add to the pathetically long list I have. But as it stands, he's different. I love him too much. And that's what makes this so hard. I *want* to be with him, but I'm too hurt, too angry to want to deal with him right now.

It's strange. I know he's done nothing wrong, in terms of being Superman. Part of me admires him for having the courage to go out there everyday, putting his own life and happiness on the line in order to save others and bring peace to society. It takes a special person — man or woman — to put the world before their own needs and desires. But the other part of me feels every single, stinging lie he told me to keep that information secret. I get why he doesn't want the world to know. He wants a normal life. He needs to protect the people he loves. And, in the beginning, I would have used the information to secure my Pulitzer. But he knows me better than that now, and yet he still perpetuated the lie.

Time. I need time. Time to mull over what happened. Time to see past the blame and anger I've directed at myself. I can't allow this to ruin the one decent relationship I've had, not if I can help it. But the thing is, I'm afraid. Afraid that some part of me will never let go of the wound my pride took when I discovered his secret on my own, far too long after it should have been apparent.

Please, God, for once, let *me* be the one who is unlike the rest. Please, let *me* be the exceptional one, the woman who can work through her issues to keep the most important person in her life actually *in* her life.

He's a man unlike any other, and I can only hope they realize how lucky they are.

No, scratch that. They had *better* understand just how rare of a man Clark is. He's a man so driven by compassion and such an intense desire to heal any kind of injustice that he's given everything up to help strangers. I know it wasn't easy for him. The deciding very nearly tore him apart. Stay and be happy, marry the woman of his dreams and start the family he'd always desired, help the citizens of a planet that is his home, despite whatever his origins and genetics might say. Or give it all up to marry a woman he doesn't love, to fight in a war which could

very easily kill him, to rule over a people and planet that is completely alien to him.

He chose to help, though he knows nothing of New Krypton. He chose to honor the sacrifice his parents made by sending their precious infant son out into the cold universe in a desperate attempt to save his life. He chose to try to repay the grateful debt he feels to the planet which birthed him.

I don't think anyone else could have made that choice. I don't think anyone else could be selfless enough to give up their happily ever after in favor of an unknown, joyless future. But Clark did. I have to applaud him for that, even while my heart breaks and bleeds, even while my tears drown me and my sobbing suffocates me. I have to respect him for his decision. Honestly, I doubted that his choice would be anything but what it was. It's just not him, not *Clark*, to turn his back on anyone's suffering. It's not in his nature to withhold help if it within his power to give it.

A rare man.

And now the Earth is poorer for his absence. A beacon of hope and light suddenly shut off, leaving us all in the darkness of mourning.

He was a symbol of hope for us all. His actions, day in and day out, gave the people of Earth a measure of optimism. He stood for everything that most people want in life. Safety. Peace. Order. Justice. Freedom. Now he has to be that symbol of hope for a people he doesn't know, with ways that I'm sure are strange to him, who I get the sense may not even fully trust the Earth-raised man. And I can only pray that Clark's natural, wonderful, unassuming, honest personality wins them over. He'll need all the support he can get as he adjusts to a world that is completely alien to him.

And Zara.

Oh, how I want to hate her! But... I can't. None of this is her fault. She's not responsible for the marriage that bound her as Clark's wife from birth. She's not to blame for the madman who is hell-bent on destroying the only home the precious few survivors of Krypton have left. I looked into Zara's eyes and I saw longing there. Not for Clark. For her bodyguard, Ching, a man I once loathed for the inhumane tests he forced Clark to undergo. But I looked into his eyes as well, and saw pain there when he realized that Clark was a worthy match for the woman he loved and as a savior for their people. All the fire of my hate has sputtered out and died, the coals going dead to leave a cold loneliness and devastating heartbreak behind.

Clark promised to come home to me, if and when he could. And I believe him, even if I have little hope of that occurring. Someone will always need him.

Then again, he's a rare man, and if anyone can make the impossible happen, it's him. And when he does, I will be here, waiting for him with open arms and an aching heart.

He's unlike the rest.

He is mine.

And I am his.

Bound together with promises spoken, vows pronounced before God and man alike. Two made one as we pledged our lives to each other. Husband and wife, now and forever, never to be parted again.

It's been an uphill battle, as though some evil force out in the universe has attempted to thwart our every move forward to this moment. But we persevered and now we can finally breathe easily. We've made it. To the altar. Through the ceremony. Into our married life together.

I look at Clark and I see my future. I see *our* future. A life together. Security. A sense of knowing that no matter what happens, no matter where we go, with him, I'll always be home. Family. In many ways, I haven't had a family since I was a child.

Parents who warred constantly, were dismissive of daughters, who were too drunk to care. A sister who was too emotionally dependant on me when I was trying too hard not to crumble myself.

Marriage used to scare me. What if mine ended as badly as my parents' marriage did? What if I wound up destroying my own children, they way I always felt that I was?

But with Clark, I know these things will never happen. He's the one man in all the world — in the entire universe — who can dissolve all my fears, shedding light on them to chase away the shadows of doubt. He's unique in that way, as well as every other way.

His love is so pure, so deep, so unrestrained that it was once terrifying. I wasn't used to such affection. I didn't trust that he wasn't so different from all the rest of the male species. There was no way that he could love me — I was stone cold, downright mean at times, and completely unlovable. Not only unlovable, but without a doubt unworthy of even his friendship. He had to want something from me. He had to have some ulterior motive. Or perhaps he was just too blind to see that his affection for me was no more than a misguided puppy love.

I was wrong.

Once I allowed myself to get to know him, I understood all too clearly that his love for me was real in everyway. He was not like all the other men I had met in my life. He was a singular anomaly — someone who saw past the stony walls and prickly thorns I had constructed to keep people out of my heart and who instead carefully picked his way through my defenses to breach my vulnerable spirit. He made me see him, not as a partner, not even as a friend, but as someone to trust my bruised and battered heart to in every way.

He awoke within me a love like no other.

And with that love blossoming within me, Clark reshaped the person I was into the person I am now. I'm still the hardnosed reporter, and I still pride myself on doing whatever is necessary to get the story or break the case. But in private, I'm a new woman. I'm not afraid to show him my sensitive side. I never feel shame when my tears flow before him and he wipes them away with a tender finger and a light kiss, whereas before I would have rather died than have anyone see me in a moment of weakness. With Clark, I can be as silly, as weird, as relaxed as I want to be. He doesn't judge me, but instead usually joins right on in with my antics. I don't have to pretend with him, because he makes me want to be my real self when I'm with him.

It's spilled over into my public life too, I think. Friendships never used to come easy, but now I find myself much more willing to allow others into my life, even if only in limited ways. I'm not as closed off as I once was. And my preexisting relationships are even deeper and richer than they ever could have hoped to be, before Clark came and altered my heart.

Because of Clark, I've begun the slow and difficult task of repairing my once barely existent relationship with my father. I've learned forgiveness, to a certain extent, though I'm not sure I'll ever fully be able to forget all the years of heartache he once caused, and the feelings of inadequacy that I used to harbor. And as for my relationship with my mom, while I wouldn't call it the perfect mother-daughter bond, it *is* much healthier than it used to be. Even my relationship with Lucy has changed for the better. And although I've always had a solid friendship with Jimmy and Perry, it's different now. Deeper. Easier. More casual and less formally professional.

It's made me a happier person. I have no one but Clark to thank for that.

He's unlike any other man, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

THE END

This story has a companion: "[Unlike Any Other \(Clark's POV\)](#)"