

Adieu

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Summary: Cat has a final conversation before leaving Metropolis.

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Author's Note: For a friend, who I sincerely hope to meet again.

Cat Grant stood in the hallway, her fist an inch away from the door, and hesitated. It was strange that she was here, really; she could probably count on one hand the number of times she had ever been here before. And yet, though her bags were packed, her ticket purchased, and her cab headed to the airport, something had compelled Cat to make a quick stop first.

She wasn't good at this. This, which tested and stretched her ability to communicate. Oh, she could put on a show, hide her insecurities behind an outrageously flirtatious personality, regularly draw out the innermost thoughts and secrets of others. But this — revealing her own emotional truths — no, this was difficult.

Still, the cab was waiting and the plane would be leaving, and she was sure that if she didn't say her piece now, she'd never have the courage to say it again. So with a firm rap that effectively obfuscated her nerves, she knocked on the door.

It only took a few moments before she heard bolts being methodically unlocked. The door opened, and Lois Lane looked at her with curiosity. "Cat? What are you doing here?"

"I was in the neighborhood," Cat said lightly as she brushed past Lois and entered the apartment.

"Please, come in," Lois said caustically, acknowledging the sentiment was a second too late.

"Thanks." Cat ran her fingertips across the back of Lois' couch before dismissing the idea of sitting. "Love what you've done with the place," she said, merely to fill the silence.

Lois shifted her jaw with an annoyed tic. "Not enough to mock me at the *Planet*? Had to bring the party to my home?"

Cat held up a hand. "No. That's not what I meant." She took a cleansing breath. "Let me start again."

Lois raised an eyebrow, which Cat interpreted as a skeptical signal to proceed.

"I know we're not really friends..." Cat tried to formulate the right words in her head, swimming against an emotional current doing its best to drown out her voice. "I mean, we're coworkers, and that's pretty much it. I know that's my fault. I'm not the easiest person to get along with."

A look crossed Lois' face before she shrugged. "You could say the same about me."

Cat let out a light laugh. "Exactly. You and me, we've pretty much been rivals since I can remember." She turned more serious before adding, "I think I regret that."

Lois appeared surprised by the admission. She closed her front door before saying, "Cat, what's going on?"

Cat glanced out the window, ostensibly checking to see if her cab was still there without actually having the vantage point to do so. "I'm leaving."

"What do you mean?" Lois took a few steps closer, and Cat reflexively took a few steps back.

"I got a job with *Newstime Magazine*. I'll be reporting all the latest Hollywood gossip."

"In L.A.?" Lois shook her head. "You don't have to do that. Franklin Stern is committed to rebuilding the *Daily Planet*. We'll all get our old jobs back."

Cat sighed. "It's time to move on. There's nothing really holding me here, and, hey, sand and sun are better than snow."

"But the *Planet* won't be the same without you." Lois' voice had taken on a high-pitched tone, as if her statement held a hidden plea to stay. She cleared her throat. "I mean, without 'Cat's Corner.' Even if it isn't hard news, it is one of the most popular columns in the paper."

Cat smiled. "We both have our specialties. We just write about different things. People pick up the paper to read about your scandals, but they stay to read about mine."

Lois averted her gaze. "I'd hate to see what would be in 'Cat's Corner' about me right now," she mumbled. Lois ran her right hand through her hair and seemed to draw inward. "I sure stepped right into the middle of it."

"Lex?" Cat asked.

Lois blew out a breath as she crossed over to her couch and sank onto the cushions. "What a disaster."

Cat moved to sit beside her. "Wanna talk about it?"

Lois scoffed. "With you?"

Cat shrugged. "I've been told I'm a good listener."

Lois' eyes narrowed suspiciously. "Is that why you're here? Get me to dish my dirt? Kick me when I'm down?"

Cat closed her eyes and shook her head. "No." Then she added quietly, almost to herself, "Forget it." Cat got up from the couch and turned towards the front door.

"What?" Lois asked sharply.

Cat took a breath. She glanced back at Lois before lowering her eyes to the floor. "I just thought you could use a friend."

Lois parted her lips, on the cusp of replying, but no words were forthcoming.

Cat continued, "Look, it was never going to work out between you and Lex."

"What, I'm not good enough—"

Cat cut Lois off. "He wasn't good enough for you." After a moment of Lois' stunned silence, Cat added, "You deserve better."

Lois slowly, cautiously, stood from her couch. "I do?"

Cat caught Lois' gaze, holding it to silently communicate her honesty. "You do."

"Well, thanks," Lois said hesitantly.

Cat nodded. "You should know that. You should believe that."

Lois looked away.

"You're a good person. You deserve to be happy."

"I don't think that's in the cards right now."

"Sometimes I think it's easier not to be happy." Cat wandered towards the window, trying to detach from her own emotions. "Fake a smile, laugh a touch too loudly. Build an image that's good enough to hide behind, and steer clear of anyone who could shatter the illusion."

"Are we talking about you or me?" Lois asked.

Cat shrugged. "Us. Mad Dog Lane is as much of a lie as Cat Grant." Cat tugged at the hem of her skin-tight mini-dress, the one that drew attention to her figure and away from what she didn't want others to see. "They're both avatars, masks we wear."

Lois cocked her head slightly. "Why are you telling me all this?"

Cat paused, taking time to gather her thoughts. "Because I've seen behind your mask. You're not an arrogant award winner or an untouchable ice queen. You're not the petty person that jealous haters with a fraction of your talent have tried to make you out to be. You're funny and generous and kind. You're beautiful. And I shouldn't be the only one who knows."

Lois appeared taken aback. "That's... thanks."

Cat nodded once, then added, "It's not too late to have what you really want."

Lois blew out a derisive hiss. “I don’t even know what that is anymore.”

“Sure you do. You’ve always known. You’re just too stubborn to admit it.”

Lois shook her head in exasperation, and then asked, “Switching from the gossip column to the advice column?”

“Just stating the obvious. Or, at least, it’s obvious to anyone who’s known you longer than a year. You deserve to be happy, and he makes you happy.”

Lois swallowed, as if she was holding back a secret. “Who ‘he’?”

Cat put her hands to her hips. “Clark.”

Lois closed her eyes for a moment. “But I’m in love with Superman,” she quietly protested.

“You are not,” Cat said sharply.

Lois’ eyes widened. “You don’t know how I feel!”

Cat scoffed. “I’ve been with more men this week than you’ve probably been with in your entire life. I’ve been in love, out of love — you name a relationship status and I’ve been in it. So you can moon over Superman and try to convince yourself that your fantasy attachment to someone completely unattainable is what’s keeping you from embracing the person you really want, but I’m not buying it. I know you too well, even if I don’t know you well at all.”

Lois’ voice rose and took on a defensive quality. “So explain it to me, if you know so much. What do I really want?”

Cat looked at Lois sympathetically. “You want a man who loves you for who you are and for everything you’re not. You want a partner and best friend, your equal. You want Clark.”

Lois breathed in deeply, and then exhaled slowly. “Well, even if I did, it’s too late. I ripped out his heart and I don’t deserve to get it back.”

“You’ve been in a vulnerable place recently. That’s scary for you. It’s much easier to build up a dam than to open your heart. But in the end, it’s worth the risk.”

“It’s too hard,” Lois practically whispered. “We work together, or, we will again when the Planet reopens.” She squeezed her eyes tightly shut before adding, “If he comes back. If he can ever forgive me.”

“He will. He loves you as much as you love him. Give him a chance. Let yourself be happy.”

Lois rubbed the heels of her hands against her eyes. “I wouldn’t even know where to begin. We’ve barely spoken lately.”

“So start speaking. Talk to him — really talk. Don’t let days and weeks go by. Don’t let time cement you where you are now. Use this vulnerable place you’re in as a starting point, a chance to start again. Be honest about who you are and what you want, and hope that he’ll do the same.”

Lois sucked in a breath. “That’s such a gamble.”

“You’ve already lost. So what else do you have to lose?”

“Easy to say, coming from the girl who has everything.”

Cat scoffed. “I don’t have anything that matters. I don’t have a lot of friends.” She caught the look in Lois’ eye and frowned. “I’m sure it seems like I do. I’m at the center of the Metropolis social scene. I’ve gotten the phone numbers of half the men in the city, and I could get a date faster than you could hail a cab. But...” Cat hesitated, because the truth she tried to hide constricted her throat.

“Rub it in, why don’t ya?” Lois muttered.

“I’d trade it all for what you have with Clark.” Cat said it plainly, quietly, without a trace of her typical flirtatious innuendo. “A real connection. A deep and meaningful bond that goes beyond surface attraction or casual interaction. A true friendship that will stand the test of time.”

Lois reflected. “We do have that. Or, at least, I thought we did, before I threw it all away.”

“You can’t really ever lose something that pure. When it’s right, it just is. It can get challenged and tested, but in the end, that

love will last.”

“Who knew you were such a romantic?”

Cat shrugged. “Maybe just a realist. I’ve seen enough of the transient to recognize the true. If I’ve ever felt any jealousy towards you, it’s because you’ve found something I never have.” Cat gave a rueful smile. “Don’t let it go.”

Sympathy crossed Lois’ eyes; it was unsettling and tugged at the emotional truth that had compelled Cat to divert to Lois’ apartment in the first place. Cat stared out the window, looking over the city that had been her home for so many years. “I accepted the job in L.A.” She sighed. “I accepted it, hung up the phone, and realized I had no one else to call. I had this great news about an exciting opportunity in my life, but not a single other person to share it with. If anyone ever bothered to notice, they might realize how lonely I am.”

“Cat!” Lois came up behind her and hesitatingly placed the palm of her left hand on Cat’s shoulder blade. She didn’t seem to know what else to say, but at least she used her physical presence to provide a sense of reassuring comfort.

The horn of the cab blared, and Cat felt her emotional mask slipping, so she impulsively turned, wrapped her arms around Lois, and pulled her into a hug. She closed her eyes tightly, knowing she’d have to leave before she was unable to hold back her tears. “I wasted too many years. We could have been closer friends.”

Lois squeezed her hug securely, quietly holding on for a few more seconds before letting go. “We still could.”

Cat released her arms and offered a weak smile. Then she retreated to the apartment’s front door, feeling embarrassed by her admission. She opened the door and quietly said, “Goodbye.”

“Catherine.”

Cat looked back, startled at hearing her given name. Then she gave half a smile. “You know, I never really liked that name. But coming from you, it sounds okay.”

Lois smiled. “The plane goes both ways.”

Cat nodded. “That it does.” She gave one last smile before retreating from the apartment, exiting the building, and sliding into her awaiting cab. Then she headed for the airport, looking forward to a new season of her life.

THE END