

Dying to Fit In

By Deadly Chakram <dwellf82@yahoo.com>

Rated: PG-13

Submitted: May 2017

Summary: When the aging process hits, you do what you must to keep it at bay.

Story Size: 2,731 words (15Kb as text)

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. All characters, plot points, and recognizable dialogue belong to DC Comics, Warner Bros., December 3rd Productions and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise.

Special Thanks: I have to give credit where credit is due. This fic is inspired by “Mirror Mirror” by SciFiJoan and “Agoraphobia” by MouseRocks. Their stories got me thinking about Clark’s aging process. Thank you, ladies!

And now, without further ado, the story.

“Are you *sure* this is going to work, Lois?” Clark asked skeptically.

“Trust me,” she replied, without even sparing so much as a glance at him. “I’m a woman. I know these things.”

“I don’t know,” he continued, arching an eyebrow. “It’s an *awful lot* of gray hair.”

“And?” Lois asked, her tone daring him to argue with her expertise.

“And...I’m not sure I’m comfortable with this,” he sighed. “I mean, going gray isn’t exactly a bad thing.”

“No, it’s not, under normal circumstances,” Lois agreed. “But this isn’t a normal situation. If I don’t do this, people *will* notice the age difference between us. You said so yourself, remember?”

“I do. But, I’m a little weirded out by this, I guess,” Clark said helplessly, leaning against the bathroom’s doorframe. He gestured futilely and crossed his arms.

“Nonsense. It’s perfectly natural to dye the gray away,” Lois retorted, gently clucking her tongue. “Here,” she said, handing him the bottle of dye. “Open this while I get the rest of it ready.”

“Sure.”

“Besides,” Lois said, pulling on the plastic gloves that had come with the box of dye, “we don’t really have a choice. We need to protect the Superman secret at all costs. If I can dye the gray away to help keep suspicion off us, I have no problem doing it.”

Clark dutifully twisted the cap off the plastic bottle and handed it back to Lois. She took it from him and expertly squeezed the other components into the bottle, recapped it, and shook it well to mix the chemicals.

“I agree. But we don’t even know if this is going to work,” he countered.

“Trust me,” she said again as she twisted the end off the squeeze tip. “This is one of the best brands out on the market. My cousin’s been using it for years.”

“That’s not exactly what I meant,” Clark said with a half smirk.

“Oh, stop, you big baby,” she gently teased him with a smile. “There’s nothing wrong with using a little hair dye. And yes, before you ask, it *will* look natural when I’m through.”

Clark sighed, knowing his wife was right. But, still, it didn’t feel right to him. He was always telling the children he often met with — some of them terribly bullied by their peers — to love

who they were, that they didn’t have to try to change the way they looked for anyone. And here he was, standing halfway into the bathroom, watching his wife prepare a bottle of hair dye, all for the sake of trying to reverse the effects of the aging process. Didn’t this make him a hypocrite?

On the other hand, he was well aware of how important a person’s image could be. He’d spent his whole life carefully crafting his own image to keep both Superman and Clark Kent as far apart from one another as was physically possible. To do so, he’d employed many “props” over the years — glasses, garish ties, even bandages when it was necessary to falsify an injury that he would have sustained as a normal man. As a reporter, sometimes he’d needed to don a disguise in order to get into places he needed to check out for his investigations.

So why did hair dye bother him so much?

After all, most of the women he knew used the product to make themselves look younger. Even his own mother used it to maintain her blonde hair. He disagreed with the way some women felt compelled to use the product, but if it made them feel more confident in themselves, who was he to argue?

Lois was right. He was being immature about her decision to use the dye.

“Okay,” he relented after a minute. “You’re right. I *am* being kind of a big baby about it. Do what you need to do.”

“Of course I’m right,” she said, shooting him a victorious smile. She reached over and patted him on the cheek with one glove-encased hand. “Trust me. When I’m done, ten years will have fallen away. Now, take off your shirt and sit down on the toilet lid,” she instructed.

He did as he was told, stripping out of his soft black flannel shirt and tossing it into the hamper. He sat on the toilet lid, straddling it so that his back was to her.

“I think we need a bit more than ten years to fall off,” he frowned.

“Trust me,” she told him again. “When I’m done with you, no one will ever know the difference. You’ll look like your old self again in about forty-five minutes.”

“I hope so,” Clark said, shrugging. “Because I *cannot* afford to be seen going gray.”

“I don’t know,” Lois teased, dragging the words out. “I think it’s pretty sexy. What do they call it? Silver fox?” She ran a gloved hand through his silver hair.

Clark craned his head back. “Lo-is!” He gave her a playful eye-roll for good measure.

She merely grinned at him. “It’s true. Okay, now sit still,” she said, tilting his head back to its normal position. “Good.”

Clark felt a wet *splash!* on his head as Lois squeezed the first generous dollop of the acrid smelling dye onto his scalp. He made sure to stop breathing through his nose, in an effort to tamp down the assault to his senses.

At least there was that, he mused. His super abilities were still intact and as potent as ever. He’d been afraid, when he’d awoken two days before — just a day after the incident with Veda Doodson and her youth-transference machine — and found himself gone completely gray overnight, that his powers might have also been affected. In a panic, he’d flown out to the middle of the woods in upstate New Troy, and carefully tested each one. It had been a huge relief to find that only his appearance seemed to have been affected when he’d given up an undetermined portion of his life-force to save the life of his best friend, Jimmy Olsen.

Still, it was a problem. There was simply no way to explain away how Clark Kent had seemingly aged thirty years overnight. He’d wound up using some of his personal time to take off from work, while he attempted to figure out a solution to his newfound look. It was Lois who’d suggested hair dye, but he’d been dubious at best. He had to admit, it had a good chance of taking care of the gray hair — at least he *hoped* it would. Who knew if his natural

aura of invulnerability would make his hair resistant to the dye? So he'd been a little hesitant to try, being less than completely convinced it would really be that simple.

Plus, his hair wasn't the only thing that was indicative of advanced aging. He was starting to show wrinkles. Not huge, glaring ones, but enough to be noticeable to those who knew him. Which, he had to acknowledge, was more than just his friends and family. The reporting team of Lane and Kent was known throughout the country, thanks, in great part, to Daily Planet ad campaigns that had used their photos.

With any luck, the dye would help to hide the wrinkles that had appeared overnight — *like the gray hairs*, he thought unhappily — simply by making his overall appearance appear as youthful as it was expected to be. And even if anyone said anything, the wrinkles could be easily explained away by the stress of his job, couldn't they? After all, investigative journalism was *far* from an easy profession. Still, with how swiftly they had appeared... it worried him.

"You're obsessing," Lois admonished, noticing how withdrawn into his thoughts he'd become.

"Sorry," he reflexively apologized.

"Don't worry so much," she said softly, squeezing more of the dye onto his head. "We've been in worse situations than this and we always manage to keep the secret intact. We'll be fine. No one will be the wiser."

"You're right," he conceded, hoping to convince himself.

"Hey...you're not...second guessing your decision..." Lois began after a moment.

"No," Clark said without hesitation, shaking his head, and belatedly realizing that he might mess up Lois' work by doing so. "No," he repeated. "Jimmy needed me. I would give up twice what I did to save his life. He's my best friend. You know that."

"I know," Lois said, a smile in her voice. "And I don't doubt he would have done the same for you, if he'd needed to."

"He's a good guy," Clark agreed, nodding, and with a smile of his own.

"He is. But I'm going to need you to sit still," Lois reminded him.

Clark felt his face heat in a slightly embarrassed blush. "Oh. Sorry. I'm new to this," he teased.

"Yeah, no kidding," she lightly tossed back. "Now just relax, okay? And no more obsessing."

"I'll try," was the best he could promise.

He sat still, letting Lois work her magic. After a few moments, he found himself enjoying the sensation as she ran her fingers through his hair. It felt like a scalp massage and a slow grin spread over his face as he grew more relaxed. He moaned softly as his eyes slid shut.

"Having a good time?" Lois asked with a light laugh.

"This feels great," Clark said, half dreamily, his voice going husky with his growing desire to be with his wife.

"Slow down there, Fly Boy," she replied. "Save it for later."

Clark chuckled. "You know, I could get used to having you do this," he ribbed her.

"You can't afford me," Lois said, bringing her mouth close to his ear, whispering the words and sending a jolt of electricity shooting through his body.

"Wanna bet?" he growled back playfully.

"Well, at least *part* of you is still firmly stuck in hormonal teenager land," Lois teased as she finished making sure that no dye had dripped down his neck or gotten onto his ears. "Okay, now don't touch that for a good half hour. Maybe forty-five minutes," she instructed, tugging her gloves off and tossing them into the waste bin. "Then go rinse it out in the shower or sink."

Clark frowned as he stood up and peered into the mirror. His hair was completely flattened down under the thick layer of dye. Every last hair was completely covered. Lois had been more than

thorough with her work.

"That long, huh?" he tossed back, facing her and wiggling his eyebrows suggestively. "I still need to give you your 'tip.'"

Lois gave him a seductive grin. "We've got all night for that, Farm Boy."

"Farm Boy, huh? A minute ago I was Fly Boy," he pointed out in fake wounded tones.

"The Farm Boy is the one I fell in love with," Lois replied, bopping the tip of his nose with one finger.

"Mmm," Clark agreed. "So...forty-five minutes, huh?" he mused after a moment. "I guess I can take a look at that huge stack of research Jimmy gave us on the Peaceful Meadows Nursing Home."

Lois nodded. "Thanks. That'd be great. I'd like to start following whatever leads we can find. Besides, Quinn's great-uncle just got put in there," she said, referring to one of the other photographers at the paper. "I think that's why Jimmy dropped everything to get us all that research."

Clark nodded. "So I heard. Believe me, I'm just as eager to get started on it."

Lois grinned. "Let's do it," she said determinedly.

"After you," Clark said, sweeping his hand in the direction of the bathroom door.

Lois grinned and led the way out of the bathroom, down the stairs, and into the living room. Clark settled on the floor so he wouldn't be tempted to lean his head back against the back of the couch and accidentally stain the furniture. Then he started on the thick folders full of research, blitzing through it with his enhanced speed. A highlighter flashed in his hands as he found things that might be useful in their investigation of the nurses purposefully overdosing the patients with painkillers, causing an alarmingly high rate of deaths. All the while, Lois conducted her own search on her laptop.

"Clark?" Lois called, what felt like mere minutes later.

"Huh?" Clark asked with a jolt. He'd been lost to his work and had all but forgotten the world around him.

"Time's up. You can rinse out the dye now."

"Oh...thanks. I guess I was a little wrapped up in what I was doing. I lost track of the time." He stood and rubbed his eyes as they adjusted to looking at something other than the papers before him. "I'll be back in a bit."

"Rinse it out first, then use the little conditioner bottle," Lois reminded him.

Clark gave her a wry grin. "I think I'm capable of washing my hair."

Lois chuckled then shoed him away with her hand. "Go. I'm anxious to see how my handiwork came out."

Clark nodded and did as he was told. At a normal, human pace, he ascended the steps to their bedroom, stripped out of his clothing, and headed into the shower. He turned on the hot water and stepped under the spray, feeling the goopy substance sliding away from his hair, down his scalp, and falling away to be sucked down the drain. Scrubbing with his hands, he stayed until the water ran clear again. Then he lathered up with the small bottle of conditioner that had come with the dye kit, and let the water whisk that away as well, leaving his hair silky and smooth.

Feeling rejuvenated by the hot water and his clean hair, he took a couple of minutes to wash the rest of his body. Then he toweled off, headed into the bedroom, and dressed again, this time in soft black sleep pants and a white t-shirt. He studiously avoided the mirror, afraid that the dye hadn't been effective. He was just screwing up his courage to finally look when he heard Lois coming up the stairs. She must have heard the water shut off — their pipes could be a little noisy when the shower was turned on and off.

"So?" she called from the hallway, before he could even see her. "How does it look?"

“I haven’t checked yet,” he admitted, turning toward the doorway. “I was just about to when I heard you coming.”

Lois reached the door and stopped cold. “Oh my,” was all she said.

“What?” Clark asked, panicking slightly. “Did it turn my hair green or something?”

“No,” Lois said breathlessly. “It looks amazing!”

“Really?” He turned to face the mirror he’d so painstakingly avoided looking into until now.

Lois had spoken the truth. The dye had covered the gray completely. It looked natural, even to his keen eyesight. If he didn’t know any better, he’d never guess that the deep black color had come from a bottle, and not nature.

“As long as we keep a sharp eye on your roots, and dye them again at the first sign of gray, no one will ever be the wiser,” Lois said, crossing the room and running her hands through his unkempt wet locks.

“I look like my old self,” Clark said in wonderment. “A little wrinkly around the eyes but...you were right, Lois. Thank you for this.”

“You’re welcome.” She paused, then giggled slightly.

“What?” Clark asked, smiling easily for the first time in two days.

“Well, I was just thinking,” she said, her laughter rising.

“You’ve always wanted to fit in, right? Well, now, with the hair color, you’re *dying* to fit in!”

THE END