

Just a Touch

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Rated: PG

Submitted: June 2019

Summary: What would have happened if Clark had told Lois about Superman before he froze her in the episode "And the Answer Is...?"

Story Size: 1,526 words (8Kb as text)

<<"...I want you to kill Lois Lane.">>

The memory of the heart-wrenching phone call played through Clark Kent's mind as he flew through the air. He couldn't get those words out of his mind. It happened so fast he felt for sure he must still be in shock.

Kill.

Mayzik wanted him to *kill* Lois.

Just the thought of those orders made Clark's blood boil.

<<"Kill Lois Lane.">>

He knew he was running out of time. He had less than twenty minutes left to figure out a way to find his parents and get them out of Mayzik's clutches. Yet here he was following Lois' direction and coming to her apartment to listen to what he knew would probably be some half-baked idea that was sure to get her killed.

<<"He wants you dead...in thirty minutes or he's going to kill my parents.">>

One life for another. Was that really a game he was prepared to play?

It felt selfish to turn to Lois when by all rights she should be running as far away from him as she could get.

<<"Lois, I want you to get out of town.">>

He couldn't keep her safe.

Not with the likes of Mayzik and Nigel St. John holding his parents over his head.

The only way he could protect everyone he loved was to get Lois out of their reach. Keep her safe from Nigel's clutches and find some way to track down Mayzik and free his parents.

He'd been given a clue.

<<"Bring it to the old airbase outside of town.">>

'It.'

He let out a shudder recalling how cruelly Mayzik had taken all humanizing traits from Lois in that one statement.

<<"Get on a plane, get as far away..."

"No, I have an idea."

"Lois..."

"Find Superman and have him meet me at my apartment."

"Lois..."

"Everything's going to be all right.">>

A look of determination crossed over Clark's face.

Everything *was* going to be all right.

He wasn't sure how but having Lois in his corner, supporting him no matter what gave him the strength to continue to fight back against injustice.

Mayzik would get what was coming to him.

Cryogenics.

She was seriously thinking of having him *kill* her to meet Mayzik's demands. Clark felt the weight of everything hit him at once at that moment as Lois continued to plead her case, dismissing his warnings.

He shook his head in disbelief. "Lois, do you have any idea how dangerous that is? There could be arterial ruptures, permanent

brain damage." Despite still being in the Superman suit, he allowed his guard to fall as he pleaded with her. His voice trembled as he spoke; holding back the rush of emotion that threatened to hit him like a wave. "Lois... you could die."

The statement wasn't news. She had to know what was at risk.

It wasn't a huge secret, just how unstable the research with cryogenics was. The practice was only performed in rare instances. He still couldn't justify doing it despite having his own parents' lives on the line.

She knew he was hesitant.

The news seemed to reach at least a part of her consciousness. He saw a glimmer of doubt cross her face. Her voice trembled as she spoke. "Yes. I could die."

Just as quickly as the doubt appeared, it disappeared as tears trickled down her cheeks. A look of determination that he'd come to recognize as the unwavering force of Lois Lane crossed her face. She wasn't backing down.

"But Clark's parents *will* die unless we help."

'I know.' He thought to himself, stealing a glance at the clock. Eighteen minutes. He had eighteen minutes to come up with a plan and, on top of that, try to prevent Lois from doing something reckless like killing herself to save his parents.

"Please, Superman, you haven't seen him. You don't know what he's going through." She reached her hand over to touch his, and he felt his heart lurch in his chest. Her voice trembled as she spoke, continuing to plead her case with him. "He *needs* me, and I've never needed you more than I do right now."

He closed his eyes, fighting against every voice within him that was screaming at him to stop her. He couldn't do it. Didn't she know what she was asking of him?

No, she didn't.

Not really.

He felt a lump in his throat as he looked back at her, hearing her final plea in a low whisper, "You just can't turn me down. You can't."

He let out a deep sigh, stealing one last glance at the clock.

Seventeen minutes.

"Lois, I'm not going to kill you," Clark said resolutely.

"It's not..."

"Yes, it is," he cut her off, shaking his head. "I'm not doing it."

"You don't understand!" Lois shouted vehemently. "They will kill his parents."

"Then I'll find another way to stop them," Clark answered firmly. "This isn't the way."

'Tell her.'

Lois fell to the couch in defeat, burying her face in her hands. He felt his heart hammer in his chest as he watched with dismay as she began to accept he would not follow through with this plan.

"He's going to kill them," Lois cried.

"Lois, Mayzik gave a location when he ordered Clark to kill you." Clark reminded her gently. "I can use that to..."

"How do you know that?" Lois asked, looking up at him in surprise.

'Tell her.'

He let out a sigh of defeat. He couldn't continue to lie to her. Not after she'd tried to make the ultimate sacrifice for him. He summed up the last of his mental strength, meeting her gaze as he reached over to cup her cheek. "Lois, I've been trying to tell you this for two days. Longer if I'm really honest with myself."

"Tell me what?" Lois scrunched up her brow, looking back at him expectantly.

He took a step back, releasing her face from his palm and opted to just show her for the sake of time. He quickly spun into a blur of red and blue that changed to pigments of brown and power blue.

He'd imagined this moment countless times over the last few

months. Ever since he and Lois had shared their first date, he found himself playing the ‘*what-if*’ game. What if he didn’t have to hide everything from Lois? What if he could be himself and not have to lie every day?

Now here he was, standing before Lois, completely exposed and racing against the clock. He felt a hard lump burn in his throat as he stared back at her shocked expression. She opened her mouth to say something, and he shook his head. “I know you have a lot of questions...and I promise after we figure this out, you can be mad and yell at me all you want. You have every right to, but we’ve got ten minutes till Mayzik kills my parents.”

Her expression was torn as she stared back at him, seeming to be contemplating just how to respond. “You said he gave you a clue?”

“The old airbase outside of town,” Clark explained, stealing a glance at the clock once more.

Nine minutes.

“He claims to have a diary from some guy named Tempus that tells him everything.” Clark continued, taking the final leap of faith.

“Diary?” Lois scrunched up her nose in confusion. “What does that have to do with anything?”

“He claims the diary told him that I was Superman,” Clark admitted shaking his head in dismay.

“That’s why he kidnapped your parents,” Lois reasoned aloud, calculating the missing pieces all at once. “He wanted to make sure you’d do his bidding...” She shook her head. “If he gave you a place to go, he’s not planning on letting you leave. He’ll have Kryptonite...or Nigel will.”

“I know,” Clark said with a frown.

“So, I guess you’ll need backup,” Lois reasoned, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Backup?” he cocked an eyebrow at her in disbelief.

“I don’t have any plans for retraining a partner, but I do reserve the right to remain angry, hurt, and just plain furious for the immediate future.”

“Of course.” He nodded his head in agreement. “So what’s the plan?”

She pursed her lips, pacing in front of him nervously. “I play dead, and when Mayzik and Nigel get close, we catch them by surprise. At least make it a fair fight.” Lois shrugged her shoulders.

“That is not going to work.”

“You got a better one?” Lois challenged.

“No, but I suppose it’s better than freezing you to death.” He rolled his eyes.

“Clark?” Lois called his name, meeting his gaze.

“Yeah?”

“Thanks for not caving.” She said softly. “Telling me...it couldn’t have been easy, so thank you.”

“You can thank me when this plan of yours works.” Clark smiled back at her.

“What are we waiting for, partner?”

THE END