

Over My Head

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Rated: PG-13

Submitted: May 2020

Summary: What would have happened in the episode “Pheromone My Lovely” had Clark not barged into the bedroom offering himself up to Lois, but rather waited her out to determine how to handle the events that had transpired over the last two days?

Story Size: 3,463 words (19Kb as text)

A/N: This is a Birthday fic for Feli, (NostalgiaKick). Thanks to Endelda for being GE on this one.

<<“Lois. Listen to me. You are not in control.”
 “I know that, Clark. For the first time in my life...”
 “No, no... There is something very strange going on around here.”
 “Yes. Strange and... wonderful.”
 “Lois! You’re not yourself! You’ve changed. Everybody around here has changed.”
 “But, for the better.”
 “Well, snap out of it!”>>

Clark jumped up from his fitful sleep, rolling off the couch and catching himself just before hitting the hardwood floor. He let out a grunt as he stared down at the floor below him, floating half an inch off the ground as he reached his arms up to stretch them over his head. Flashes from the last two days came back to him, and he let out a low groan, hearing Lois’ heartbeat from the bedroom.

‘At least if she’s asleep, I don’t have to worry,’ he thought to himself, finding his bearings as he stood up and made his way into the kitchen to brew himself a cup of coffee.

<<“You look a lot like... Superman.”>>
 <<“Forget about work, forget about time, forget about the rest of the world.”>>
 <<“Minute’s up, Clark. Come to mama.”>>
 <<“I love you, Clark Kent. I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”>>

He stared at the dark liquid pouring out of the coffee maker, blinking back the fatigue from the past few days. Try as he might, he couldn’t pretend the last few days of fending Lois off hadn’t stirred up feelings he had yet to confront within himself. For months, he’d dismissed it as just admiration or possibly even a mild crush. Now, here he was juggling with his own conflicted feelings. Suddenly confronted with the very uncharacteristic Lois Lane who not only seemed focused on the persona he considered to be the real him – Clark Kent – but now was intent on declaring her never-ending love to him. How real those feelings were, he couldn’t be sure. The entire office had become something out of a bad romance movie. Everywhere he turned, co-workers were throwing themselves at one another. He didn’t even want to think about what he’d witnessed in the copy room with Cat and the copy repairman.

<<“You look a lot like... Superman.”>>

Last night’s declaration had haunted his dreams. Superman had stayed as far away from Lois as possible over the previous few days – for fear that he would find himself unable to escape. Clark ran a hand across his face, realizing how deep he had dug himself. If Lois did put two and two together, he could kiss his life at the Daily Planet as Clark Kent good-bye and possibly even Superman. He knew all too well how cold her wrath could be

when she felt betrayed. Though he definitely hadn’t intended to allow himself to get as close to her as he had, any excuse he gave would be dismissed.

<<“Let’s get out of here.”
 “Out of here?”
 “Yes.”
 “So, now you want to play hooky?”
 “Desperately.”
 “But... we have work to do.”
 “Forget about work, forget about time, forget about the rest of the world.”>>

Before this – whatever crazy love potion had taken over the city of Metropolis – Lois couldn’t have cared where he was coming or going from. Or so it had seemed. Maybe he hadn’t been as discreet as he thought he had been, or possibly she had just been unwilling to voice her observations. Either way, knowing his exits to leave on Superman rescues hadn’t gone unnoticed made him look at everything differently.

<<“Where’re you going?”
 “Just downstairs, to the newsstand.”
 “I’ll come with you.”
 “I’ll be right back.”
 “Cross your heart and hope to die?”
 “Scout’s honor.”>>

Would she remember any of this whenever this love potion wore off? Or whatever it was that had taken over the newsroom. The idea that she would be that close to discovering his identity when her focus on his alter-ego had been pushed aside was unnerving. Was it really that easy to see through? How many other friends and colleagues could possibly look past the glasses and hair gel to connect the two personas?

<<“Lois, please. Get a grip.”
 “Believe me, I’d love to.”>>
 The vivid memory from the newsroom flashed in his mind, and he shook his head, willing it to go back to where he had buried it. He was not going to think about that.

He reached over to pour the coffee into his awaiting mug, groggily wiping his hand across his face. Though caffeine had no real effect on him, the aroma and the taste was intoxicating and enjoyable. He had found as he got older, the amount of sleep he really needed wasn’t near as much as the average adult, but like anyone else, the more sleep he got, the better he felt.

Though today he couldn’t seem to feel anything but numb after spending the last forty- eight hours fending off Lois’ advances. It was unnerving. He had spent the last few months trying to earn his stripes as an investigative reporter at the Planet and earn the respect of Lois Lane. He had heard of her well before their meeting in Perry’s office. He’d read her work during his travels and been intrigued by the hard-hitting pieces she covered. It was one of the things that had drawn him to the Planet.

He hadn’t planned on being captivated by her like this. He had dismissed the nagging voice in the back of his mind that kept taunting him. He would, of course, try to keep his walls up, searching for a way to protect himself against what he knew would end in a painful rendition of a story he knew all too well. Get too close and then disappear. He never could allow anyone to get too close for fear of being found out.

This time had been different. Or so he had told himself. He had an alter-ego to hide behind. A way to help people and still be himself – Clark Kent.

<<“You look a lot like... Superman.”>>
 <<“Forget about work, forget about time, forget about the rest of the world.”>>
 <<“Minute’s up, Clark. Come to mama.”>>
 <<“I love you, Clark Kent. I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”>>

At least, he thought so anyway.

If Lois did put two and two together what would she do? A few months ago he would have sworn it would have ended up on the front page of the Planet. Now, he wasn't so sure. There had been a definite change in their relationship. They weren't just colleagues. He would like to think they were friends.

'To listen to Lois the last few days it's definitely more than friendship.'

He had spent the last few months fighting with himself over the unusual conundrum he had found himself in. He would be remiss if he didn't admit the sudden attention from Lois had been at least partially welcome, though her attention toward his alter-ego had stirred up the green-eyed monster and sent him spinning as he tried to come to terms with how he felt being at odds with himself over a situation he had created. He had encouraged the encounters with Lois as Superman, and he continued to step further into the situation by encouraging the relationship with Lois and his other half with what he had rationalized as necessary steps to help her. When in reality, he knew he was only amplifying the problem.

He'd dismissed it as a crush.

Admiration.

A small infatuation.

<< "I love you, Clark Kent. I want to spend the rest of my life with you." >>

Nothing could be further from the truth.

He had inadvertently created a triangle of two, and now he was stuck. Lois would either recall everything, or recall nothing and they would go back to the status quo of him falling into the background while she fawned over his alter-ego, and he did nothing to stop it. Or he could make a change and try to find a way to steer her attention away from the superhero before it was too late.

Superman was just hair gel and a flashy costume to him. He knew all too well from his encounters in costume with Lois and even some of his friends and colleagues though that, to them, Superman was much more. Being the hero behind the cape and trying to see him through their eyes was a challenge he continued to battle through on a day to day basis.

He had spent so much time dwelling on his own self-loathing and kicking himself for allowing the situation to unfold the way it had, but he knew if he wanted to salvage his relationship with Lois he had to do something. He couldn't just continue to draw this out and let her get hurt by either finding out his alter-ego and her partner were the same people, nor could he bring himself to break her heart by pulling away. He had gotten lucky so far. With the handful of criminals he'd come up against, he hadn't found himself in a situation where Lois was being used as bait to draw his super persona out, but given enough time he knew it wouldn't be long until the criminal element put two and two together.

Something *had* to change.

"Is that coffee?"

He jumped back, jerking his head around, startled by the sound of Lois' disoriented voice from the doorway of the kitchen. He let out a heavy sigh and reached over to pull a mug from the cabinet, "Just finished brewing."

He watched her uneasily as she stumbled into the kitchen, pouring herself a mug as she held the trench coat around her with steel-like grip. He quietly observed her from the corner between the refrigerator and counter space, allowing at least three feet between them in case he needed to make an abrupt exit. He waited for the usual declarations and adoration filled nonsense to come spilling out of her like some bad D-list romantic comedy but found nothing. He continued to observe her with intrigue as she brought the mug to her lips and took her first sip, still gripping the trench coat with her hand.

Then it hit him.

She was wearing the trench coat again.

She had danced the seven veils last night and had practically been strong-armed into the bedroom in order for him to get away from her. She had been more than willing to have herself seen in the blue and gold outfit that left little to the imagination last night. Now she was wearing the trench coat again.

"Do you have any Aspirin?" Lois asked, cradling her head.

"In the cabinet by the sink," he pointed to the cabinet above her head.

She nodded, reaching over to grab the white bottle from above the sink where his mother had kept her stash of Aspirin during their last visit to Metropolis. She fumbled with the cap for a minute before releasing it and tossing out two caplets and swallowing them with a swig of coffee.

He watched her uneasily, suddenly realizing that whatever had taken over Lois' senses the last two days had worn off. He took another sip from his coffee cup and finally found his voice, "Are you hungry? I can go pick up some bagels?"

"Nuh-uh," Lois shook her head adamantly and turned to look at him, her arms folded neatly across her chest. "I, uh...can't seem to remember..." Her features turned from slightly panicked to petrified as she finally fumbled out. "We didn't...?"

"What?" He caught the stern gaze she gave him and quickly shook his head when he realized what she was asking. "Uh, no...I, uh, slept on the couch."

"Okay," she let out a sigh of relief, running a hand through her hair as she went straight into full-babble mode. "I mean, I had a feeling when I saw the pillow on the couch, but then again, I can't remember anything past arguing with you and Jimmy about playing hooky in the newsroom." She looked down at the trench coat she was wearing with a wary expression. "There appear to be some missing pieces I can't quite put together and...memories I can't quite place."

"Lois, I would never take advantage of you," Clark remarked gently, uncertain how far into this conversation he wanted to go. "I was trying to tell you last night I think someone sprayed everyone in the newsroom with something that made everyone...drunk on love. You weren't yourself."

"That explains the outfit," Lois remarked casting her eyes downward as she mulled over the news he had given her. She was quiet for a moment as she processed everything and then looked at him with a perplexed expression. "But you were in the newsroom. Why wouldn't you have...?"

He shrugged his shoulders uncertainly, "Sinuses. They act up when they get overloaded like that." He gave her an apologetic smile, "That was why I was trying to play hooky."

"Probably would have been better off." Lois grumbled as a flush of pink crossed her cheeks. "So, how long was I...drunk on love?"

"About forty-eight hours give or take," Clark explained weakly, cringing when he saw Lois sink down into the dining room chair and tap her head on the table. "Lois, look I know this isn't easy to hear. I spent two days..." She lifted her head and glared at him with a look that chilled him to the bone. "You know what, never mind, it's not important. What's important is your witch's brew of love potion whatever has worn off."

"God, this is so humiliating," Lois let out a whimper, shaking her head.

"Lois, you have nothing to be embarrassed about." Clark soothed, taking a seat across from her at the table. He caught the pink flush cross her face and let out a long sigh, uncertain how to get her to hear him – really hear him. "Look, it could have been a lot worse."

"Yeah, how?" Lois glared at him with her eyebrow cocked. "You didn't embarrass yourself in front of the entire newsroom."

"Who is also under the same love potion and probably waking up with the same hangover."

"I do not have a hangover."

“The Aspirin and coffee say differently.” Clark pointed out with a bemused smile. “Okay, okay,” he held up his hands in defense when he saw the look of death she shot in his direction. “I’m sorry.” Watching her continue to sulk inside her mug of coffee, he opted a different approach. “Look, it’s an awkward situation that could have been a lot worse.”

“Oh, really? How is that exactly, Kent?” Lois challenged, propping her chin inside her palm.

“Well, you could have set your sights on someone else effected by this stuff and ... ended up in Vegas.” He fumbled for a scenario that didn’t make his entire face turn beet red under her questioning gaze.

“Well, lucky me, I just had to wake up in a skimpy whatever and...” She clamped her mouth shut, turning away. “You know what, just forget it. You don’t get it.”

“What don’t I get?” Clark asked, noting the tightness of her jaw as she looked away from him.

“I’ve lost an *entire* day...well, two.” Lois shook her head. “I have no idea what has happened and I’m basically having to rely on you to tell me what I should know. I don’t like feeling out of control and I don’t like relying on anyone else.”

A part of him wanted to snap back that it wasn’t exactly a picnic for him either and that she had been relying on him and Superman for quite some time, but hearing the anxiousness behind her tone and the uneasy expression in her eyes he thought better of it. She was right. He didn’t know what it felt like to lose time like that. He didn’t know what it felt like to not be able to recall the last few days and question everything.

“What do you want to know?” Clark finally asked, concluding that Lois needed answers despite how uncomfortable it would make the both of them.

“Let’s start with what the heck am I wearing and how did I get here?” Lois gave him a questioning gaze.

“I believe it’s called a seven veils costume.” He pointed to the living room. “The rest of the veils are in the living room or somewhere in the bedroom.” He shook his head when he saw the inquisitive expression on her face. “I don’t know. You showed up in the costume declaring more of that love babble and ignoring me again when I was trying to talk to you about this stuff everyone had been tainted with. You got to about the second veil before I locked you in the bedroom – for your safety and my sanity.” He gave her a sheepish expression. “I unlocked it after I was sure you were asleep.”

She hung her head in shame, shaking her head, “I’m so sorry.”

“Look, we’ve both seen different sides to one another over the last few months. This is just ...” He stopped, uncertain how to continue. Was he seriously going to dismiss last night as nothing more than just a consequence of being close friends and working together? He blanched slightly, feeling uneasy with where this was going.

“Just what?”

He stared into her dark brown eyes, finding himself unable to look away as he found the words tumbling out of his mouth with no regard for the consequences. “I guess, we’ve gotten closer over the last few months.”

“Yeah?” Lois’ lower lip tucked its way beneath her upper lip, curling inside the grip of her teeth as she bit down on it.

“You said a lot of things over the last few days that made me wonder ...” He shook his head, feeling the tightness in his gut twist and turn as he summed up the courage to finally ask the question he’d been so conflicted over for the past forty-eight hours. “Well, I guess it made me wonder how much of it was really the love potion and how much of it was possibly how you really felt?”

Lois’ face flushed pink and she shook her head, “I don’t know.”

“How much do you remember?” Clark finally asked.

“Enough,” Lois admitted sheepishly, shaking her head.

“Look, if you tell me it was just the love drug I’ll drop it and won’t bring it up again.” Clark said gently, feeling his heart hammering in his chest as he picked up an equally heavy heartbeat from Lois’ chest. “But if there is something more to it then maybe we should talk about it.”

Lois seemed to be mulling over the statement for an eternity and he felt like his entire world would possibly crack into two as he waited for her to respond. She tapped her hand on the table and then her eyes met his. “If I did want to ‘talk’ about what may or may not have fueled this...whatever it is...?”

“Then we’d talk,” Clark answered gently. He glanced toward her, feeling uncertain of just what was happening.

“I’m not ready to talk about it...whatever it is.” Lois said softly.

“Then, we won’t talk about it,” Clark responded, feeling a flutter run through him as he stared back at her. It wasn’t exactly a confession, but it was as close as she would get and right now he would take it. It was hope.

She nodded, standing up from her seat and pointing to the door. “I’m going home and get changed.” She looked down at the trench coat wrapped around her and added, “Maybe after we can sit down and try to figure out who’s behind this and why?”

“I’d like that,” he smiled back at her.

“Me too.” She flashed an uneasy smile in his direction. She stopped at the doorway of the kitchen and glanced back at him with a gentle smile, “Clark?”

“Hmm?” Clark looked up, caught off guard by her tone.

“Thank you.”

He nodded, unsure if he should respond then watched as she made her way to the front door with her keys in hand. He let out a heavy sigh.

Hope.

THE END