

# Mixed Messages

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Summary: Always be aware of your surroundings.

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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.

Author's Note: This fic was inspired by the challenge set forth on the Lois and Clark FanFic Message Boards by Queen of the Capes. The challenge stated that someone had to acquire an undignified photograph of Superman.

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"Hi, sweetie," Lois called softly, as she heard the tell-tale *whoosh!* of her husband entering the upstairs window. "How'd the event go?" She folded a baby pink T-shirt from one laundry basket and set it aside in another, emptier one.

Clark jogged down the stairs, a smile on his face. Gone was the Superman costume that he'd been wearing when he left the house just a few hours before. Now he was clad in a faded Bills shirt and a pair of black basketball shorts.

"Great!" he piped up enthusiastically. "The kids really seemed to be into the message."

"That's wonderful!" Lois replied happily. She made to get up off the couch, but Clark stopped her by zipping over and claiming her lips with his own. When they parted, she found herself breathless, as always. Even after all these years being married to Clark, he never failed to make her heart race.

Clark beamed at her. "I wish you could have been there," he admitted.

Lois nodded. "Me too."

"How are you feeling?" he asked, indicating the small wicker trash can by her feet, which was nearly full of used, crumpled tissues.

Lois shrugged. "I'm fine. I already feel like this stupid cold is on its way out."

"Good," Clark said, giving her another kiss, this one on the top of her head. "I missed you."

Lois smiled at him. "Missed you too. Oh, and before I forget, Chris is working late and Michael said he's bringing Jenna by for dinner this weekend. And Becca went to the park with Rachael and Fran to work on a school project."

"School project? At the...park?" Clark questioned, a quizzical look on his face.

Lois chuckled. "Better than hanging around here with a sick woman. Besides, they have to present a scene from Hamlet for their English class. I think she was a little embarrassed to do it where I could hear her."

Clark laughed and sat down next to her. He let out an audible groan of pleasure as he sank into the couch cushions. He closed his eyes and slouched, and even Lois could hear some of his muscles popping as he stretched out. She smiled again, even though he couldn't see her.

"Tired?" she asked, a little concerned.

Eyes still shut, Clark nodded and yawned. "A little. It's been a crazy week. The wildfires, the mudslide, trying to help facilitate those peace talks..." His voice trailed off. "That overnight shooting at that club." He sighed. "Sometimes, I wonder how much of a difference..."

Lois shushed him with a finger to his lips. "No."

"No?" He opened his eyes in surprise.

"No," she repeated firmly. "You *are* making a difference, Clark. Like today. I bet you made a huge impression on those schoolkids. Sure, you weren't pulling people out of burning buildings in front of them, but still. Their hero took time out of his busy schedule to come talk to them. You don't think that made a difference? Those kids are going to take what you told them to heart. Bullying, smoking, drinking, drug use in kids...it's all steadily declined since Superman started making trips to schools and hosting rallies to talk to them about the dangers."

Clark sighed again and ran a hand through his hair. "Yeah, I guess you're right." He sat up a little straighter and yawned again, but said nothing more.

A sneeze from Lois tore the comfortable silence apart. Clark chuckled and rubbed his hand in circles on her back. She sighed in contentment and leaned into his body. After a moment, he gave her a soft look. "Why don't you go on upstairs and rest? I'll finish the laundry and make dinner tonight, okay?"

"You're more tired than I am," she protested.

He shook his head in amusement. "I'm not the one who's sick. But, if it makes you feel better, I'll pick up some takeout instead, okay?"

Lois laughed and slapped his shoulder lightly. "Sounds good."

She stood, but before she took more than three steps across the room, Lois' phone buzzed. She picked it up and checked the screen. It was a text from Jimmy. She opened the message and started to laugh uncontrollably.

"What?" Clark asked, shifting in his seat, his brow crinkled in confusion.

"It's...from Jimmy," Lois managed to get out between laughs. "Jimmy?"

"It's a picture from the rally," Lois explained, tears leaking down her cheeks.

Clark shook his head. "Okay...but what's so funny about that?"

"You!" Lois nearly shrieked in amusement. "You...didn't check your surroundings, did you?"

He shrugged, obviously racking his brains for what could possibly be so funny. "It's a nice day out and the school was having their gymnasium floor redone, so we were out in the school yard..." His voice trailed off in continued befuddlement.

"And did the building have, perhaps, a mural on it?" Lois teased.

He shrugged again. "Maybe? Why?"

She grinned wolfishly at him, then read from the phone as she came back to the couch. "Tell your husband to stop sending mixed messages," she recited, trying – and failing – to mimic Jimmy's voice. "This was supposed to be an *anti*-drug rally after all."

Clark scratched behind his ear. "It *was* an anti-drug rally," he offered weakly.

Lois laughed again and showed him the photograph their friend had attached to the text. In it, Superman stood behind a podium, smiling and laughing, a twinkle evident in his eyes even in the still image. He was clearly having a great time. At first, Clark seemed to grow only more confused. There was nothing wrong with Superman having a good time...right? And then, he saw it and his face fell, making Lois bite her lip to hold back further laughter. On the building behind him, an old, faded, scuffed, and peeling anti-drug mural had degraded to the point where it read...**DO DRUGS!**

THE END