

Rainfall

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Rated: PG

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Summary: It has been a terrible week for Lois Lane; everything bad that could happen has happened. What can partner Clark Kent do to cheer her up? This takes place in Season 1, just before Lois starts dating Lex Luthor. Let's see if Clark's simple, friendly gesture during a summer rainstorm and great timing keep that awful misstep from happening.

Story Size: 3,549 words (21Kb as text)

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Thunder clouds heaped up like angry puffs of heavy wool hovered menacingly over Carter Street, promising a stormy summer night. A tall, strikingly handsome young man carrying an umbrella and a large white bag walked briskly down the street as the clouds became even darker. When he had departed work two hours before, the sky had been picture-perfect, but it was rapidly changing. The beautiful cocktail-blue shade had shifted into ugly slate. He quickened his pace as a light drizzle began and soon shifted into a gentle tapping on the street and pavement before swiftly turning into a tumultuous downpour.

People darted for cover as sturdy umbrellas were snapped opened and limp newspapers were held over heads. Newly formed puddles began plinking as the rainfall became heavier still. The roofs of moving vehicles danced with spray as Clark Kent struggled to tune out the background sounds of Metropolis. Normally the noises and sensations around him were easily ignored, but this cacophonous mixture of nature, traffic, and humanity was a trifle more than he could bear. Yet despite the discomfort, his mind was on someone else.

He muttered aloud, "Perfect. Yet another rainy Friday which according to the weather report, promises to stretch all the way to Sunday night. Lois needs sunshine and laughter, not gloom and doom!"

He felt terrible for his partner. What a lousy week she had had!

First: Crazy Willie, a long-time snitch of Lois' called with a juicy bit of information regarding fraud within the Defense Department. After making several phone calls to some of her Washington, D.C. sources, which ate up the better part of a Monday morning, the entire story was proven to be false. When Lois called to inform Willie he was on her 'hit' list, the hapless man never picked up the phone.

Second: The Austin and Dane article that promised to be an eye-catching headliner about corporate avarice and industrial espionage turned out to be nothing more than an overblown story of sibling rivalry between the founder's

son and daughter. Once Lois had separated fact from fiction, she had the unenviable task on Wednesday afternoon of informing Perry there was no story.

Third: Ralph. *Ralph Lombard* had scooped her on the Upper Terrace Nursing Home scandal Friday morning. The owner of a chain of these highly reputable nursing homes 'neglected' to report the deaths of several of the seniors in their care. The owner, Mitchell Quays, had been collecting pension and social security checks, from the deceased seniors. Not only that, but the man had manipulated some of the residents into leaving a sizable portion of their will to Quay rather than their relatives or other charities.

Quay, suspecting his misdeeds were about to be made public, decided to flee the country with over two million dollars. Thankfully, due to Ralph's contacting Inspector Henderson, the swindler was stopped and arrested at Metro Airport.

Perry, ecstatic to have scooped *The Star* and other media outlets, put the article on the front page over the fold. In the place where the Austin and Dane story would have appeared. It garnered considerable attention from the citizens of Metropolis. For the remainder of the day, Ralph walked around the bullpen like he owned the place.

The sheer humiliation of losing a front page scoop to such a lowlife was more than she could manage. "That does it! This week has been a federal disaster," Lois sighed wearily. "I'm done for today!"

Without the usual Mad Dog Lane bluster, she shut down the computer, packed the ever-present camel-colored briefcase full of files, lipstick and Double Fudge Crunch Bars and slipped out of the newsroom.

Surreptitiously from the coffee station, Clark watched his partner's skulking, quiet departure. This was so unlike her. Something, not just Ralph's fantastic good fortune, was behind Lois' behavior.

He decided to make a couple of stops before going to her apartment after work. With a tiny smile, he thought, first a quick visit to Amandine's patisserie, *Chez Morel* in Paris for chocolate croissants. Next, a visit to the newly opened Italian Bakery, *Sophia's*, which was not a block away from his own apartment. Elsie in Rewrite had mentioned that their cannolis were a perfection!. The cannolis were delicate, tube-shaped shells of fried pastry dough, filled with a sweet, creamy ricotta filling. He was curious to try them, especially since he had eaten them when he lived in Sicily.

Clark ran up the stairs of Lois' apartment building and opened the door. He walked down the carpeted corridor, which became marked by his wet footsteps, and once reaching the elevator, pushed the Up button. He had been thinking all afternoon about what words of encouragement to say to his friend. Surely three setbacks were not enough to make her run home and hide? That simply wasn't Mad Dog Lane's usual mode of behavior. The elevator appeared and its doors snapped open. The ride up was swift and silent, a welcome relief to his poor eardrums. With a tiny bounce, the car stopped, door slid open, and Clark exited. Walking down the hallway, the melody of the closing theme to *The Ivory Tower* reached his ears.

“Oh boy. She really *is* in a funk. Hopefully, these treats, and a little light conversation will make her feel better.”

He knocked on the door of Apt. 501 and listened. Sounds of Lois turning off the TV, followed by a burst of hurrying footsteps and her raucously opening multiple locks that guarded the heavy wooden door came to his ears.

When the door flew open and Clark looked at his partner, Lois’ clothing surprised him, the fuzzy pink sweats and worn blue bunny slippers very different from her normally polished appearance. Embarrassed, she squeaked, “Clark, what are you doing here? I thought you were the delivery guy from *Romano’s Trattoria* !”

He couldn’t help but smile and wave the now slightly damp pastry bag in front of her and said, “You looked so glum this afternoon. I came by to cheer you up ... and bring treats!”

“Thanks Clark! My rotten excuse for a week needed to be thrown in the rear view mirror! So, I came home, took a bubble bath, and watched ... ah ... educational television. Oh! Where are my manners, your jeans and polo shirt look damp! Come in!”

She had answered with rapid-fire babble, a sure sign of nervous embarrassment. He couldn’t help but smile, Lois thought the guilty delight of catching up with the misadventures of the insipid cast of the nighttime soap opera *The Ivory Tower* was a secret. If she knew Cat had told him about it, both of them would be victims of Mad Dog Lane’s wrath. His smile faded when the expression on her face softened, touched by melancholy.

As he walked into the apartment and hung up the dripping umbrella, Lois’ face lost its animation as she accepted the pastry bag from him and took it into the kitchen. That look cut through his heart. Time to cheer her up.

“Come on, Lois Lane has faced suspension, corrupt corporate bigwigs, Supervillains, and an IRS audit. What could possibly get you this down?” he said with a note of encouragement in his voice.

Before replying, she took the pastry boxes out of the bag and, like an excited little girl with pretty presents, opened the boxes. He heard squeals of delight and the word ‘chocolate’ several times. He watched as she lay the chocolate croissants on a plate and keep the cannolis in the box for later. His instincts had been spot on! The pastries had done the job and help lift his lovely partner’s mood. Surreptitiously, he lowered his glasses and warmed the croissants ever so carefully.

She responded by saying, “Yeah, well I don’t like being scooped! Especially not by a no-talent bottom-feeder like Ralph! Urgh! I look a fright! Give me a minute to change into some proper clothes.” With that, she ran into the bedroom and shut the door.

Clark took that time to dry his clothes and shoes with his heat vision enough to be presentable. The last thing he wanted to do was leave moisture on the furniture or the wooden floor. When Lois exited the bedroom five minutes later, she wore comfortable old jeans and a Metros t-shirt. When she retrieved the pastries from the counter and sat down across from him, held the plate close to her nose, breathed in the aroma and said, “These chocolate croissants

smell sumptuous and warm, like they just came out of the oven!”

It was then that Clark decided to continue his questions. “Listen, I don’t mean to pry, it’s not every day anyone beats Lois Lane on a story. But it has happened before. What’s *really* bothering you?”

The apartment became quiet while Lois took a croissant, nibbled on it, and then placed it back on the plate. Clark patiently waited.

Another minute passed and then she sighed, “Melissa Hemlock.”

Clark’s eyes widened with surprise. “*The Melissa Hemlock*? This year’s Pulitzer Prize winner for the novel, *Tumbleweeds*? Why is that a problem?”

Rolling those beautiful brown eyes, she groaned. “Yes. That Melissa Hemlock! We attended MetroU together. Actually, she was a year behind me. Quiet girl, but an excellent writer. We worked together in different departments for the school paper; she was hard working, kind, and pleasant. I never heard from her again after graduation. Still, out of nowhere, she writes a fabulous, intensely researched non-fiction book about life in Kansas during the depression. That achievement makes me feel like I’m wasting my time at the *Daily Planet*. None of the articles I’ve written so far have caused that kind of attention.”

“Wait a minute, what about your novel...” Clark’s voice trailed off. He bit the inside of his cheek.

Lois glared daggers at him and growled. “Who told you I was writing a novel?”

He held up both hands in a gesture of surrender and said weakly, “Ah, it’s kind of an open secret in the newsroom.”

Sighing, she said, “Figures, that’s what I get for leaving an open outline on my desk. I’ll bet either Cat or Jimmy saw it and started telling everybody.”

“Actually, it was Applegate. He thinks the writing style could use some help,” Clark said quietly. He could see no reason to get Jimmy in trouble.

A perfectly arched eyebrow went up, then she said in a slightly defeated tone, “Applegate? Seriously? It’s a good thing he took that job at Metropolis University! Anyway, *The Adventures of Wanda Detroit* is more of an outline than a novel. I showed it to a few agents, but we are on the verge of a new millennium. Techno-Thrillers are all the rage, what with Y2K looming on the horizon. Publishers aren’t interested in a talented, but disillusioned Chicago torch singer from the Roaring Twenties.”

“Publishers change their minds about what’s hot on a moment’s notice. To begin with, partner, you are an extremely talented writer. What would the *Daily Planet* or the newsroom do without Lois Lane? Who did Perry team me up with? Eduardo? Myers? Colson? Who did he ask to polish up Jimmy’s first story? Not me. So forget any ideas about leaving the paper.”

While this speech was going on, Lois was nibbling the last piece of chocolate croissant. She sat up straighter and said, “So what do I do?”

Clark reached out with his hand and lightly touched her shoulder. “Look, why don’t we brainstorm this? What kind of book does the writer, Lois, want to create? Fiction or

nonfiction?”

With a deep sigh, she started to babble, “My single foray into the world of fiction was a disappointment. Wanda Detroit’s character was flat and one-dimensional. Not someone who got my creative thoughts churning. I couldn’t get past the constant whining about her crumbling relationship with some guy named, ah ... Keith.”

Clark nodded thoughtfully and said, “Okay. Avoid fiction. Why not sit down and make a list of the non-fiction subjects that you could do research on and then decide what interests you? It may take some time, but it’s better than dwelling on an old classmate’s success.”

The atmosphere in the apartment became comfortably silent as Lois picked up the croissant, took a decent bite, and chewed slowly as the tantalizing chocolate flavor glided over her tongue. The quiet was punctuated by the sounds of the storm winds blowing outside and warm rain pattering against the window as the beautiful brunette considered her partner’s words.

“Yum! These are delicious! I recognize the box of cannolis; they’re from *Sophia’s* in your neighborhood. But where are the chocolate croissants from? Are you ever going to tell me where that French bakery is?”

His lips slid into a mischievous grin. “Nope. That’s part of the fun.”

With an arched eyebrow, she said, “Figures. Another Kent secret.”

Clark struggled to keep the smile intact. There was an odd quality of the suspicious tone of those words that made his spine tingle with nervousness. Someday, the truth would come out. Soon, very soon he was going to have a serious conversation with her.

Lois, oblivious to his musings, stared into his gentle brown eyes, leaned back onto the couch, and spoke thoughtfully. “There are several articles I’ve written that deserved deeper research and attention than what a story or even a series of articles could explain. Things like whether technology improves or ruins our lives and maybe what corporate corruption does to ordinary people in the long run.”

Those eyes so filled with warmth and determination spoke as loudly as his next words, “What did I tell you? Lois Lane doesn’t back down from a fight. That includes writing a book... an excellent book.”

Sitting up, she said decisively, “Time to break out a yellow pad and some number two pencils! These are just a couple of subject ideas! Oh, thanks, Clark! Your coming over and helping me get through the blues was just what the doctor ordered. Especially in this beastly weather!” She paused for a second as lightning flashed outside. “Listen, there’s no reason for you to leave right now and get soaking wet! The dinner I ordered, Salmon, Broccoli and Parmesan Pasta, is more than enough for both of us.”

He carefully considered the invitation to dinner. Outside, the storm gathered strength and was a perfect night for Superman to be on patrol. Any number of calamities could happen requiring the Man of Steel’s abilities. Yet right now, Lois could really use his help. Most important of all, he was tired of constantly ducking out on her. Tonight she needed a friend, not Superman. Being perfectly honest

with himself, he enjoyed spending time with his lovely partner and really didn’t want to go home to an empty apartment.

He was about to answer when the doorbell rang.

Lois jumped up, grabbed her wallet, and ran toward the door. “Oh, that has to be the delivery guy! He’s getting a fat tip for bringing dinner over so quickly in a miserable downpour!”

She opened the door and looked up to see the form of a tall, gangly teenager with curly brown hair and kind grey eyes holding a large orange and white plastic shopping bag. He was wearing a long yellow raincoat that dripped water onto the hallway carpet and over the left breast pocket it read, *Romano’s Trattoria*. The boy said quietly, “Good evening, Miss Lane. Oh, hello, Mr. Kent.” Turning back to Lois, he continued, “My dad thought, ‘cause of the weather, to get this dinner over here pronto!”

Taking the heavy bag from him, she said, “Oh, Connor, thanks! It smells delicious! Please come in and dry off. It’s wretched outside.”

“Thanks, Miss Lane, but this is my last delivery tonight. Got a lot of homework to do.”

She nodded. “That’s right, working to get that scholarship at New Troy Medical College?”

Connor bowed his head and said shyly, “Yes, Ma’am. My teachers and guidance counselor all think it’s possible. But only if I keep hitting the books.”

Clark came up and extended a twenty dollar bill. “Thanks for bring dinner over so quickly! Let this be my contribution.”

Shaking his head, the boy said, “No. That’s too much.”

“Coming in all this lousy rain? I don’t think so!” Lois took the bill from Clark and also handed over an additional twenty. “Please, tell your dad thanks! I’ll be ordering again soon.”

A grin came to Connor’s lips, lighting up his features. “Thanks to both of you for the generous tips! Have a good night.”

After closing the door, Lois chuckled softly. “In the three years I have ordered from his dad’s restaurant, he has grown into such a considerate young man his parents can be proud of!”

“He’s a good kid. It’s going to take a long time for him to become a doctor. Maybe I should ask Pete to talk with him about life in the medical field. Oh, that salmon smells too tempting! Hey, if the invitation still stands, dinner sounds great.”

A smile of pure contentment appeared on her lips. “Connor would appreciate that! Just so you know, after dinner we are going to work on this list of possible subjects for the book.”

He shrugged. “Sure, why not? It’s what partners do, help one another.”

Lois was about to reply when her phone rang. This seemed to be a night for untimely interruptions. Before she could cross the room and pick it up, Lex Luthor’s voice, with its cultured, confident tones, could be heard coming out of the answering machine. “*Lois! I thought since it was a dismal Friday night and the weekend is upon us, how do you feel about spending some time with me in sunny*

Miami? Asabi can come by to pick you up in the Rolls Royce and take you to the airport. Imagine, within three hours we can be sipping cocktails at one of my favorite restaurants."

THE END

Lex's voice droned on about visiting the Wynwood art museum, which was just north of downtown Miami, as well as taking part in the Art Walk. He also hinted at letting Lois purchase whatever she wanted when they visited the upscale boutiques in Coral Gables.

"Aren't you going to pick that up?" Clark asked, trying hard to stamp down his annoyance at hearing the billionaire's request, which in his mind was worse than the noisy barrage he had endured on the street earlier. Lately, Luthor had developed a maddening habit of interrupting time between Lois and Clark. He suspected Luthor was interested in Lois, but this invitation to dine with him in sunny Florida confirmed his suspicions. The man was more than dangerous, he was downright evil. Somehow, he had to convince his partner to avoid seeing Luthor on a personal basis.

Finally, the machine shut off and Lois said while shaking her head, "No. No, I don't think I will. Lex Luthor is a lot of things, rich, handsome, and accomplished, but ..."

"Yeah?" Clark prompted, his tone carrying the slightest hint of jealousy.

She looked up at him and a wicked smirk slid over her face. "Can you honestly imagine him coming here on foot during a rainstorm to cheer me up? What about helping me develop the outline of a non-fiction book without it serving his own interests? Would he even think about helping Connor? He's a lot of things, but fun ain't one of them! Enough about him. How about splitting a cannoli for dessert? Can you set the table while I get some wine? I have lovely oak-aged chardonnay that pairs perfectly with salmon."

Relief cascaded over him as he nearly floated into the kitchen for plates and cutlery. Lois saw through Luthor's façade! Tonight he had accomplished a lot more than raising Lois' spirits. Hopefully, by his presence, he had derailed any of Luthor's plans for ensnaring her in a relationship.

Faint echoes of thunder and lightning flashes had moved away from the city as well as the heavy downpour. The howling wind had died down, and the onslaught of warm rain was now lightly pattering against the windows. Metropolis and its citizens were enjoying the restful echoes of gentle rainfall.

Inside Lois' apartment, the easy sounds of laughter and relaxed conversation punctuated the atmosphere. The dinner, accompanied by an excellent chardonnay, far exceeded Clark's expectations. He imagined himself at a lovely restaurant in Rome called Tony's that made the best seafood. It was located in the charming neighborhood of Trastevere, which is filled with picturesque winding Roman streets and ivy-covered buildings. But right now, he was enjoying the cannolis they were having for dessert. There was also something intangible spicing the air: warmth, friendship, and the tiniest beginnings of something more.