

Lois ...

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Summary: What if Clark had slightly different (better) priorities? Alternative ending to the episode "And the Answer Is..."

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A/N: Another one-shot. Thanks to bakasi for causing a plot bunny to bite me.

They stopped at a fountain. The time had finally come. After almost losing her, he wasn't going to wait any longer than he already had. He looked at her.

"Sometimes you think you're immortal, and you start to think the people around you are too. It can just take a second to realize how wrong you are about everything," Clark said softly, trying to keep his voice steady as he tried not to dwell on what might have been. He swallowed. "What I'm trying to say is, I almost lost you, Lois, and I'm ashamed."

Lois blinked, surprised. "Ashamed, why?"

"I kept pushing you away, even when I promised to stop. And if you died not knowing why, I'd never forgive myself. Because I love you, Lois, and—"

He was interrupted by a flash of lightning and a crack of thunder as the sky opened, almost tauntingly.

"Oh, come on, give me a break!" he called up, torn between exasperation and amusement, because really, what else should he have expected?

"Do you want to go back?" Lois asked with a smile.

"If the earth opened up at my feet, I wouldn't move till I'd finished saying this," he said, taking her hand with both of his. "Lois ... I should have told you something a long time ago. But I was afraid. Perhaps even a coward, if I'm honest."

Lois' eyes widened.

"But I'm not going to hide anymore." He took a deep breath to calm himself. He looked at her nervously, and then in slight confusion because she was suddenly grinning. "What?" he couldn't help but ask.

"Oh, don't let me stop you. Please continue," she encouraged, even as she continued to beam at him.

"Okay ..." he said, bewildered, but he managed to refocus and do as she directed. "I-uh, well."

Why was this so hard?

He looked back up and found her patiently waiting, or at least as patiently as Lois Lane ever could.

"I was adopted. I'm not sure if I ever told you. My parents, the ones you've met, they, uh, found me," he said, deciding when in doubt, start at the beginning.

Lois stilled, her excited grin softening slightly and shifting to ... understanding?

"They told the authorities someone had left me on their porch, but that ... that was a lie. They found me in a field not far from their property."

Lois' eyes were wide once more.

"Do you—do you remember Bureau 39?" he asked abruptly.

She slowly nodded.

"Do you remember, when they came to the Planet, how ... nervous I was?" he asked, looking away.

"Yeah."

"Well, there was a reason for that. A very good reason," he said, fiddling with his glasses so much it was a wonder they weren't already broken as he took them off. He stared at them before hesitantly lifting his face and meeting her eyes, without his glasses.

She didn't speak, waiting for him to continue.

"They had no idea how close they were to finding Superman," he said softly. He swallowed.

Did she already know? Surely she had figured it out by now....

He went on. "Because he was actually right there."

He fell silent, wondering if she had put it together. However, she still remained quiet. He suspected she wanted him to say it.

"I'm Superman," he said finally.

She smiled gently at him and stepped close, gazing up at him.

"I know. I knew the moment you did this," she said as she cupped the side of his face with her hand.

He blinked before slowly smiling back at her.

"So ... what now?" he asked.

She gave him a sly grin. "Why don't you take us flying and we'll figure it out?"

"Okay."

Taking a quick look around, he stepped back. "I've always wanted to do this in front of you," he said before promptly spinning into his uniform.

"Wow!"

He grinned before lifting her up into his arms and allowing himself to fully relax.

"You okay?" Lois asked him as he exhaled.

"Yeah. I'm just so relieved you're not upset with me," he admitted.

"Well, I think if you had decided to do something stupid, like propose to me before telling me your secret,

it'd be different. But that didn't happen," she explained, giving him a tight squeeze in joy.

Clark, or Superman, rather, closed his eyes in gratitude, so thankful he had acted as he had – choosing the best priority: Lois....

THE END