

Unexpected Consequences

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Summary: Drunk on red kryptonite, Superman crashed a wedding. Now he has to deal with the consequences, one of them being a massive hangover. Sequel to the author's "Unexpected Side Effects."

Story Size: 5,394 words (30Kb as text)

Read the previous story: "[Unexpected Side Effects](#)."

A sledgehammer seemed to hit Clark square on his forehead, pulling him from sleep. A low groan escaped his throat as the sledgehammer hit him another three times, as if trying to split his head in two. Anguished, he clapped his hands over his ears, in part to keep himself from hearing that annoying sound and in part to keep his brains from exploding.

He blinked in confusion as his apartment slowly swam into focus. What was he doing in his bed? Hadn't Luthor wanted to see Superman? Clark tried to remember, but that only made his head hurt more. Perhaps, for once, he'd for once done the smart thing and stayed at home? But why was his head hurting, then?

With some difficulty, he struggled against sheets that entangled him. His stomach rolled as he moved.

Another deafening sound disrupted the brief silence, and slowly, gradually, Clark realized that someone was knocking at his door. He tumbled out of bed, losing his balance. When he attempted to get up, he took a nose-dive that sent a jolt of blinding pain through his head. Whoever or whatever was assaulting him with that sledgehammer had now chosen an ax to make him even more miserable.

He fought against the wave of nausea sweeping through him and scrambled to his feet, this time more careful to avoid another ax attack. With a grunt, he steadied himself against the wall, some small part of him wondering what the heck was wrong with him.

But he didn't dare wonder that for long. Even thinking hurt!

With a groan, Clark decided to put off worrying about his state until he felt better.

He winced as another loud knock made him stagger and grab for the wall.

"Hey, CK?" Jimmy's voice reverberated through his skull, echoing through the hollowness inside. "You home?"

"Coming," Clark rasped, hoping that would keep Jimmy from knocking again.

He ran a weary hand over his face, meeting a layer of stubble that was well past a five o'clock shadow. There was a sandpaper feeling in his mouth as if his beard was now growing on the inside as well. Clark took a steady breath and looked down at his body, his brain falling against the inside of his forehead with a painful thud. He let out a low moan and checked his attire as quickly as he possibly could.

He was wearing nothing but a shirt and boxers.

Just great! Clark sighed.

After a moment's hesitation, he realized it would have to do. His queasy stomach wasn't up to changing into something else, even at normal speed.

Treading carefully so he wouldn't jostle his aching head any more than he absolutely had to, Clark shuffled toward the door. He clutched at the handrail for support as he climbed the stairs.

When he opened the door, he squinted into the blinding light outside, shading his eyes with his hand.

Clark's stomach plummeted.

It wasn't just Jimmy waiting outside. Perry and Jack were right behind him.

Oh, boy. Clark closed his eyes.

He didn't feel up to one visitor, let alone three of them. As he wearily rubbed his eyes, he realized with a start that — to top it all off — he wasn't wearing his glasses. His last working brain cell was blaring an alarm, so loud that it was probably announcing his mishap to the whole city. Panic took hold of him. However, it was too late to do anything about it now. Clark could only hope that he didn't look as disheveled as he felt.

"Hey, CK!" Jimmy exclaimed giddily.

Clark winced at the noise and just managed to keep from clapping his hands over his ears. Instead, he grunted something that could be mistaken for a greeting and stepped aside.

"Good to see you, man." With a grin, Jack slapped Clark on the shoulder, making his ears ring. "We've been worried about you."

Jack strode down the stairs into Clark's apartment as if it had already become his new home.

As Perry went past Clark, he eyed him suspiciously, raising a brow that sent Clark's heart racing with even more panic. Had he already recognized Superman in him? And what should he do if Perry had? He wouldn't know how to react on his best of days. His every muscle went rigid.

Perry's voice was laced with concern. "You all right, son?"

Clark sagged with relief. He tried to put a smile on his face and pretend that he wasn't feeling like he'd been hit by a truck.

But before Clark had a chance to speak, Jimmy waved a couple of newspapers in his face. "Have you seen the headlines? It's all over the tabloids!"

"Huh?" Clark muttered, confused.

Jimmy crossed his arms in front of his chest. "Lois? Luthor? Superman? The almost wedding, yesterday? Ring any bells?"

Clark's eyes widened in shock. "Wedding?" he exclaimed. "Yesterday? She already went through with it?"

For a moment there, he had forgotten about his pains. But his body relentlessly reminded him with another knock of that sledgehammer. He cradled his head with a groan, leaving his eyes exposed to the harsh daylight. The burst of intense brightness caused him to stagger back. He caught himself just before he would have tumbled down the stairs.

Three sets of arms reached out to steady him.

"Good grief, what happened to you, buddy?" Jimmy's expression turned from smug to worried.

Jack studied him intensely. "You look like something the cat dragged in..."

"...played with and chewed on, just to spit out the bones later," Jimmy finished the sentence and raised his brows. His voice turned sympathetic. "Rough night, huh?"

"Uh," Clark mumbled, noncommittally.

With a start, he became aware that he was drawing a blank about last night or the fact that a wedding must have taken place. Wasn't that supposed to be today? What had happened to him? Had he tried to stop another asteroid? His head sure felt like he had.

"We were wondering why you didn't turn up the other night or all day yesterday for that matter," Jimmy said quietly. "Gave us quite a scare, actually. Jack suggested that you might be out trying to drown your sorrows."

"Guess I was right, huh?" Jack said knowingly. "That's twenty bucks for me, guys."

Jimmy leaned forward to sniff at Clark's clothing. "Boy, you smell like you made that quite some drinking marathon. Sure you just downed the stuff and didn't take a bath in it? I believe I'm getting drunk just from standing near you."

As if someone had suddenly turned on his sense of smell, a waft of alcohol fumes made Clark gag. He pinched the bridge of his nose and took deep breath through his mouth, willing the nausea to subside.

"I must admit that I never expected to see you hungover, CK," Jimmy stated. He patted Clark's shoulder compassionately.

"Neither did I," Clark muttered.

None of this made sense. Perhaps he should try going to bed and waking up again. Maybe it would work better for him the second time around.

"Well, can't say that *I* am surprised," Jack added under his breath.

Clark furrowed his brows, trying to make sense of Jack's words. But his brain wouldn't cooperate. Heaving a sigh, he finally closed the door and cautiously followed his unexpected guests into the kitchen.

On his way, he remembered something that made him feel even more miserable. "So Lois is married to Luthor, huh?"

"Gosh, you really missed it all, didn't you?" Jimmy replied, obviously taken aback. "They didn't marry." He started to giggle like crazy. "Superman crashed their wedding." He chuckled some more. "Before we had a chance to, that is."

"What?" Clark stopped dead in his tracks, his brain too sluggish to stop its movement accordingly and trying to burst through his skull.

"I told you, it's all over the tabloids." Jimmy grinned and unfolded the first paper. Then he hesitated for a moment. "Perhaps you should get your glasses. You wouldn't want to miss the fun."

Clark inhaled sharply. His glasses. He refrained from slapping his hand against his forehead. "Be right back."

Swaying slightly, and still walking on eggshells, Clark made his way back to his bedroom. He was wracking his brain, trying to come up with some sort of explanation for how he could have crashed a wedding when he'd not even been there. At least not that he remembered. This was getting creepy. But all his cotton wool-filled head provided him with as yet more pain. He couldn't seriously have a hangover, now could he?

<Lois, do you think I'll have a hangover when the symptoms wear off?>

<The way you're acting now I wouldn't be surprised.>

<Darn, I was just beginning to enjoy myself.>

With a groan, Clark sank onto his bed and blindly reached for his glasses. That flash of memory had come rather unexpectedly. How was Lois fitting into the picture? Had he been at her wedding after all?

"Hey, CK, you all right?" Jimmy peeked around the corner.

"Been better," Clark admitted softly.

"Yeah, that sure looks like some killer headache," Jack said emphatically.

"You can say that again," Clark muttered.

"Virgin Mary — best thing ever," Jack piped up. "Or a pint of tomato juice with three raw eggs."

As Clark envisioned a glass of red juice, his brain rang with another blaring alarm. He shuddered.

His hands closed around a red glowing cage. A strange dizziness was taking hold of him, forcing him to his knees. He felt light-headed and inexplicably relaxed. It was as if all worries had just fed him. And as he rested his head against the cold floor, the dizziness passed. There was just this incredible sensation of floating in a void. He liked it.

Clark blinked as the memory flooded him. What had that red stuff been? He had no idea, but it seemed like it had caused his problems in the first place.

"You got some tomato juice?" Jack asked, already starting back toward the kitchen.

"No, thanks," Clark replied with a grimace. "I think I'll pass."

"Then try my spinach smoothie," Perry suggested. "Works like a charm."

Clark groaned. "Anything but red and green. Got some awful experiences."

For a moment, there was silence. Then Jimmy smacked his head. "Got it. Back in school, we had a German exchange student who swore that the only real remedy for a hangover is some sort of pickled and rolled-up fish. He had a funny name for it. Roll...roll..."

"A Rollmop?" Clark's one working brain cell supplied.

"You know that stuff?" Jimmy asked, taken aback.

"Uh huh," Clark muttered. "Tried one at the fish market in Hamburg."

"There's a German deli just around the corner," Jimmy said. "I guess I could get you one of those."

"It was an experience I'd rather not repeat, Jimmy." Clark felt his stomach roll with a vengeance. A cold, pickled herring that was wrapped around a gherkin wasn't his idea of a good breakfast, particularly not in his current state. Even thinking about that made him feel like he needed to make a mad dash for his bathroom.

"Got any Advil?" Jack asked, exasperated.

Clark cautiously shook his head. "Thank you guys, but I'll be fine."

Jack gave Jimmy a gentle shove. "Just show him the papers, and he'll forget about his misery."

Jimmy grinned and unfolded the first paper. "I really wish we had been in time to witness that conversation."

The first headline read, "Super Crashed, Super Smashed." There was a smaller line underneath. "Superman crashes Luthor's wedding and reveals his feelings for Lois Lane."

Clark gasped. "That's not true!"

Jimmy shook his head with laughter. "Believe me, it is."

He held out a second paper. The headline said, "What else did he hide?" Instead of a picture, the front page showed a cartoon. In it, Superman was x-raying Luthor's

clothing. Luthor wore boxers, a pink bra and had various arms that were strapped to his body, including a nuke.

Clark frowned. "What's the meaning of this? Superman would never x-ray someone's clothing."

"Oh, he totally did!" Jack smirked.

<Did you know that he has his name stitched into his boxers?>

Clark groaned again and rubbed his face with his hand. This had to be a nightmare! His heart and his head were pounding in tune as he reached out to take the paper from Jimmy. He froze as his super hearing suddenly picked up a neighbor's radio playing a familiar melody.

<What shall we do with a drunken hero? What shall we do with a drunken hero? What shall we do with a drunken hero, early in the morning?>

He flinched, not really wanting to hear what else that radio station had cooked up. Just as he was about to shut down his hearing, another vicious knock resounded in his ears, so violently that he was sure his eardrums would burst. He clapped his hands over his ears and couldn't even try to hide his discomfort.

"Man, that's gotta be some headache." Jack winced in sympathy. "Sure you don't wanna try that Virgin Mary?"

<Don't let him crash another wedding, don't let him crash another wedding, don't let him crash another wedding, early in the morning.>

Clark fought to get his hearing back under control.

"I'm going to see who's at the door," Perry announced. Luthor was towering over him, a smirk on his face.

His voice seemed to come from far away, muffled by the fog in Clark's brain. "How are we feeling today, Superman? Are you still reeling with the shock that I found your Achilles heel? Kryptonite!" With his index finger, he traced the red glowing bars almost tenderly. "At first, I was confused about the color. But it definitely has the desired effect. My arch enemy is on his knees and in pain."

It took a moment for Clark to understand what Luthor was talking about. Luthor thought he had kryptonite? But he wasn't in pain. In fact, he'd never felt better. It was so much easier to lie here and let himself drift than to try to decide who to rescue first. He liked it.

But Luthor didn't have to know that he'd actually done Clark a favor. It was hilarious really. He'd been asked here under the pretense of doing Luthor a favor, and now, it was just the other way around.

Clark could barely stifle the giggle that wanted to burst from his lips. If Luthor wanted to see him in pain, that was what he would get. Clark bit his lip to keep himself from grinning as he clutched at his midsection, moaning like an injured animal. Through his lashes, he watched Luthor's smug expression and doubled his efforts to make his

per firmance as realistic as possible. Let Luthor believe he'd won. Soon enough, he'd show Luthor that he hadn't.

And Lois? She'd plunged a knife deep into his heart and twisted the blade. He wouldn't go so far as to say turnabout's fair play in her case, but that didn't mean he couldn't have at least a little bit of revenge.

"Clark?" Jack asked, concerned. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah," Clark muttered, rubbing his forehead. "Just remembered something."

Jimmy sat down beside him. "About what you did yesterday?"

Clark nodded carefully. "Bits and pieces."

Perry returned to Clark's bedroom. "Lois is here. She wants to see you."

Before Clark had a chance to reply, Lois brushed past Perry. "Clark, we need to talk."

Perry gave her a stern glance and stepped in the way to block her view of Clark. "I told you to wait, Lois. Clark isn't feeling all that well. And after everything that happened, I'm not sure he *wants* to talk to you. Couldn't blame him either."

Perry had often been more like a father than a boss to them. But this was the first time Clark got to experience his protective attitude firsthand. It was obvious that no matter how much he'd tried to hide his feelings for Lois, Perry knew about them.

<Don't let him blurt out all his secrets, don't let him blurt out all his secrets. Don't let him blurt out all his secrets, early in the morning.>

Clark stifled a groan. Would they ever be done with that stupid song? And what did they mean by blurting out his secrets? He hadn't told everyone he was Superman, or had he? Obviously, Perry and Jimmy didn't know. With Jack, he'd been wondering for a while, so...

Jimmy's grim voice interrupted his train of thought. "The poor guy's got one heck of a hangover, all because of you."

He had taken up a position next to Perry, his hands folded in front of his chest. His whole stance was unusually threatening. He had straightened up to full height and stared Lois down, something he'd never dared to do before.

"I've got some of your clothes in my car," Lois said. "You should change there. Better you don't walk around in the open dressed like this."

"My...clothes?" Superman asked, confused.

"Yes, Clark, your clothes," she replied with a hint of exasperation.

Even through the fog in his brain, he registered that Lois had just called him Clark. He should be alarmed, but somehow, he wasn't.

Strangely, he wasn't sure he even cared. "You know?"

She nodded. "You just kind of told me when you said that I'd rejected you before I asked if there could be a future for us."

He nodded. "Oh, that."

"You've been lying to me for a year," she accused him.

"I've been lying all my life," he replied with a shrug.

She folded her arms in front of her chest. "Then tell me, who are you? Clark or Superman?"

"Who do you think I am?" he shot back.

A surge of white-hot anger breached the thick layer of indifference that enveloped him.

His voice was dripping with sarcasm as he spoke.

"Why, Superman of course. Clark has parents, went to school, got a driver's license and a degree in journalism, all just so you could call him a hack from Nowheresville and hand his heart right back to him."

Clark gasped at the memory. He couldn't believe he had actually said that. And — his breath suddenly quickened — Lois knew his secret. So, he'd blurted it out after all. If he hadn't already been feeling this lightheaded, he certainly would be by now. Clark ran a nervous hand through his hair and got up, swaying just a bit.

He laid one hand on Perry's shoulder, the other on Jimmy's. "Thank you, guys," he said softly. "But Lois is right. We do need to talk."

His gut was tightening with fear, his breath still coming in panting gasps. Really, the last thing he wanted right now was to have to face Lois, particularly with the disadvantage of a massive hangover. He didn't stand a chance against her any given day; how could he deal with her now when his head hurt, his beard was growing inside his mouth, and his thoughts were so sluggish?

He couldn't.

But he had to.

"Alone," Clark added, despite himself.

Somehow he managed to keep his voice firm instead of quivering like the wreck that he was.

Perry turned around. "You sure, son? Maybe it's not the best timing."

"I'm sure it's not," Clark nodded tightly. "But I'll be fine, Chief."

Perry pursed his lips. "All right, we'll leave you alone. Come on, kids, let's see if we can get the Planet back in business."

He gave Clark a firm pat on his shoulder and then reached for Jimmy and Jack to usher them out. As Clark watched them, his neighbor's radio broke through his barriers.

<Give him our thanks for exposing Luthor, give him our best for exposing Luthor, give him our best for exposing Luthor, early in the morning.>

Clark winced as that annoying song once again assaulted his ears. It took him a moment to shut his hearing off. When he opened his eyes again, he realized that Lois was still standing a few feet from him. She looked at him, her lips a tight line, her gaze drifting across his disheveled appearance.

An awkward silence stretched between them.

Clark became acutely aware of his state of dress. Another strong whiff of alcohol fumes almost knocked him out. He ran a hand through his hair, feeling more uncomfortable than ever.

His tongue was so dry that it stuck to the roof of his mouth. With some difficulty, he loosened it, trying to get some moisture back onto his lips.

“You know, don’t you?” he asked hoarsely.

Lois kept staring at him. Her face was hard to read. Clark stared back in a desperate attempt to figure out what she was thinking. Was she angry? Confused? Did she have any idea what he was talking about? Had his brief flash truly been a memory, or just some fantasy induced by whatever drug he’d been on?

The silence between them turned unbearable.

Clark felt an urgent desire to break it, to ask her outright if he’d told her his deepest secret.

“Know what?” she whispered. “That you’re Superman?”

He closed his eyes and nodded. A deep sense of helplessness settled over him. She’d been the first person he’d ever wanted to know about that part of him. But not like this, not after he’d found out that all his romantic hopes for their future had been nothing but a pipe dream.

“Clark, please, can we talk about what happened yesterday?” she asked quietly.

He stared down at his feet and couldn’t stifle a groan as his headache spiked again. “To be honest, I barely know what happened yesterday. And I don’t feel like talking either. My head is exploding, and I’m not thinking straight.”

“But I need to know, Clark,” Lois protested, her voice hurting in his ears. “I need to know how I could miss it all, that my best friend is Superman, that I almost married a monster, that I — ” She hiccupped, a sob escaping her throat.

Clark’s defiance faltered, and he heaved a sigh. “All right. We’ll talk. But let me get decent first. This is all embarrassing enough as it is, without me dressed in nothing but boxers and a shirt and smelling like a whole distillery.” He took off his glasses and wearily rubbed his eyes. “I don’t even know how *that* happened. Did I try to drink myself into oblivion after, well, after whatever I did at that marriage ceremony?”

Lois cleared her throat. “That was me. I drenched you in alcohol after you’d passed out on your bed. I thought it would keep Perry and the others from wondering why you were hungover.”

He gaped at her. She had helped him protect his secret? It was too much to wrap his mind around. All he managed was a thankful nod, before he shuffled toward the bathroom.

Not much later, Clark entered his kitchen, feeling marginally better now that he’d showered and was dressed in sweats and a shirt.

Two cups were sitting on the table, and the enticing smell of freshly brewed coffee filled the room. Lois picked up her cup and took a sip, cautiously eying Clark over the rim.

A whole battery of various pill bottles were scattered around the steaming mug that was waiting for Clark. He furrowed his brows and gestured at the assortment before he took a seat.

“What’s that?”

“I brought these in case you had a headache,” Lois replied. “I figured you wouldn’t have any painkillers at home.”

He smiled at her ruefully. “You’re right, I don’t. But why did you bring so much? This looks like you got enough pills to kill the population of a small country.”

“I just wanted to help — and I didn’t know how much you’d need, after all...” She trailed off, leaving him guessing at how to finish that sentence.

“I...” He swallowed hard, trying to focus on the fact that she’d meant well.

His heart twisted into a tight knot as he realized that now, she’d forever be aware that he wasn’t human. He set his glasses down onto the table, feeling that it was pointless to wear them. Then he reached for the steaming mug of coffee, which probably wouldn’t help either, but was much better than red or green or whatever concoction his well-meaning colleagues had come up with.

“Thank you,” he muttered, subdued. “I don’t think those pills will work on me, but I guess it’s the thought that counts.”

Lois still looked at him, half trying to hide behind her own mug. “I’m not going to print anything about your secret, Clark. It’s safe with me, I promise you that.”

“Good,” he mumbled.

He continued to nurse his cup of coffee as if it could somehow save him from having this conversation. But he knew that no matter how much he wished he could just crawl back into bed, there was no escape.

Clark set his cup down and heaved another sigh. “Okay, shoot.”

She flinched. "What?"

"You must have a ton of questions, and you're desperate to get answers." He pinched the bridge of his nose and rubbed gently, trying to ease the pain behind his eyes. For a moment, he contemplated taking some of those pills.

She sat her cup down and shifted her position. "Okay, I guess the first question is: how mad are you?"

Clark looked up, completely dumbfounded. "Huh?"

He blinked. She couldn't really have said that, could she? His hearing was playing tricks on him again. Perhaps he was confusing her wrath with another verse of that awful drunken-hero song.

She cleared her throat. "How mad are you?"

If he was having hallucinations, they sure were persistent. "You just found out that I've been lying to you for about a year, and you're asking *me* how mad *I* am?" His laughter turned into another groan because his head didn't welcome the jostling.

"What's so funny, Clark?" Lois asked.

"Nothing." Clark rubbed his temple and wondered if maybe some ice would help. "Everything."

He got up and went to the freezer to check whether he still had some ice cubes. When he found the mold empty, he filled it with water and froze it with his breath, before he looked at Lois again. She watched him, mesmerized.

"Whenever I was wondering how I might tell you my secret, or how I'd react if you found out, the question 'how mad are you?' was always my line." He wrapped the ice cubes into a towel and pressed the towel to his head. "If we absolutely do need to have this talk now, the least you could do is stick to the script."

Lois eyed him with a hint of sympathy. "And what's in the script?"

"Well, I tell you that I was sent here as a baby, when my planet was dying. The Kents found and adopted me." Clark strolled back to his chair and gingerly lowered himself to sit across from Lois. He still held the ice bag pressed against his temple, and the pressure behind his eyes seemed to finally be easing a bit.

"I was a fairly normal child till the age of five, when my powers started to develop. My parents were terrified that someone might find out about my powers and would take me away to dissect me like a frog." Clark didn't look up when he heard Lois' gasp. "Needless to say, I never told a soul. I always kept hiding what I could do. I traveled the world, trying to find a place where I might fit in, where I might be able to settle. I thought I had found that here in Metropolis. I didn't want to keep moving for the rest of my life. But I knew that ultimately I'd have to if something suspicious happened around me. That's why I created Superman."

Clark took another sip of his coffee and studied Lois carefully. His heart went out to her. She looked so lost, so thoroughly out of her depth. He wanted to comfort her, though he wasn't sure she would welcome that.

"What makes you think I'm mad at you?" he asked softly.

"How could you not be mad?" Lois whispered. "You told me time and time again that Luthor was dangerous, but I wouldn't listen. You told me about your feelings for me, and I rejected you, only to throw myself at the...other you, telling you that I'd love you if you didn't have powers." She laughed mirthlessly and buried her face in her hands. "And yesterday, you told me that Luthor had wanted to kill you. I'm making your life a living hell."

Clark stared at her, shocked. "Hey, hey, it's not that bad."

"Are you trying to tell me that none of these things happened?" she asked incredulously.

He shook his head. "It was just as much my fault as it was yours. Superman should have told you what he knew about Luthor. It was my damn pride that kept me from doing that. I wanted you to listen to Clark so badly that I wasn't thinking straight."

"I should have listened to you anyway," Lois replied unhappily. "How could I not see what kind of a man Luthor is? You were right. I am an investigative reporter; I should have investigated. But I failed miserably. Am I losing my edge?"

"You're not losing anything, Lois." Tentatively, Clark reached out to run his thumb over the back of her hand and squeeze it gently. "I knew about Luthor because I am Superman. I had an advantage no one else did, and I didn't use it very wisely. I made a lot of mistakes these past few days."

"But you never stopped trying to keep me safe, even after everything that happened between us." Lois pulled her hand back. "And now, you're feeling miserable because of me."

Clark squared his jaw. "I'm feeling miserable because of Luthor and this horrible red kryptonite, or whatever it was he exposed me to. What really worries me is how I'm going to survive the fallout. Did I really blurt out that I'm in love with you?"

Lois nodded. "You did."

Clark cradled his head in his hands. "That's horrible. Now every thug and his dog will be after you, to get Superman to do their bidding."

"Not if we tell the world that everything Superman did and said the other day was just an act to keep Luthor occupied until the cavalry arrived." This time, it was Lois reaching for Clark's hand. "You'll just keep your distance

from me as long as you're in the costume. No more exclusives for me, and the gossip will fade sooner or later."

He looked at her hopefully. "You really think this will work?"

She gave him a reassuring smile. "I'm sure it will." There was a twitch in the corner of her mouth, and her expression crumbled into one of misery. "I just wish you hadn't told me your secret, Clark."

He raised his eyebrows. "Why is that?"

"Because when I stood in front of the mirror, looking at myself in that wedding dress, I realized something." She heaved a sigh. "I realized that I could never really love Lex and how little I actually knew about Superman. And while I was walking down that aisle, I thought about all the happy times we had and how you'd always been there for me when I needed you."

Clark felt his throat constrict. "Lois, I..."

She cut him off. "And now, no matter what I do, you're never going to believe I'm in love with you, Clark. You'll always think that I chose you just because you're Superman. And now we'll never find out if we could love each other."

Clark groaned. "Now that you say it out loud — does my reasoning always sound that jumbled, or is that just because of my hangover?"

THE END