

A Day at the Beach

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Rated PG

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Summary: Lois and Clark get an unexpected weekend off.

Author's note: This is my first fanfic for Lois and Clark. Thanks goes to my dear friend Trina, who beta-read this, and to everyone who left feedback when I posted it to the fanfic message boards. You guys gave me the encouragement I needed to submit this to the archive. Also, special thanks go to IolantheAlias, my archive GE, for picking up on the mistakes that snuck through.

Some of you might recognise the beach in this story (KenJ did) as being Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. If you ever get a chance to visit Bondi, take it. It is truly beautiful.

Clark awoke, feeling unusually well-rested. For once he hadn't been disturbed in the middle of the night to go and do something Super. That, coupled with the fact that he hadn't had to get up and go to work, had put him in a good mood.

It had been a surprise last night when Perry had insisted that he and Lois take the weekend off. They'd been working on big story after big story for a few weeks now. When Clark thought about it, he couldn't actually remember the last time they'd had a whole weekend off. It had definitely been overdue. The late notice had meant that he hadn't had time to make plans. He hadn't seen his folks for a while. Maybe he'd take a trip out to Smallville.

He took his cup of tea out on to the balcony, registering as he stepped outside that it was shaping up to be another scorching hot day. The heat didn't affect him, it was true, but it gave him an idea for something to do on his unexpected day off. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. Perfect beach weather.

He went back inside and stuffed the few things he'd need into a backpack, then hesitated. On impulse, he picked up the phone and dialled a familiar number from memory, turning as he did to check the time. It was just after 8am- surely she'd be up? Even on a day off?

Her "hello" sounded a little terse. He made a face. Hopefully he hadn't woken her.

"Lois? It's Clark. Did I call at a bad time?"

"Oh, Clark. I thought you were Perry, calling us in."

He laughed, knowing the feeling. The unexpected free time seemed a little too good to be true.

"Do you have anything planned for today? I was thinking about taking a trip to the beach..."

Lois hung up the phone, a smile on her face. Clark's invitation to go to the beach had come at a good time. She'd been trying to figure out what to do with an unexpected free weekend. She hadn't been to the beach in a long time. And the opportunity to spend more time with Clark was something she welcomed.

She'd realised on her aborted wedding day to Lex Luthor that she was in love with Clark Kent. She just didn't know what to do about it. After her rejection of him in Centennial Park on that day back in the spring, she was pretty sure she'd ruined whatever chance she'd had with Clark. It wasn't the first time she'd rejected him- just the most painful one. And while she hadn't admitted it at the time, the knowledge that her kind, gentle best friend was in love with her had alternately thrilled and terrified

her. So she'd turned him down as gently as she could. It wasn't until she was getting ready to walk down the aisle that she'd realised how much she loved him. How much she needed him in her life.

But then he'd retracted his declaration of love. And he'd never given her any hint that he felt that way about her still. She sighed. At least now, a few months later, they'd gotten their friendship back on track. And even if Clark didn't love her the way she loved him, she could still spend time with him.

Lois shook herself mentally, telling herself to hurry up and get ready, otherwise she'd be late. She hesitated for a few minutes over her choice of swimwear, trying to decide between the bikini she'd picked up at the end of last summer, and something with a bit more coverage. She scolded herself mentally. She was going to the beach with Clark. She didn't have to worry about wandering eyes- or worse, wandering hands. She could trust Clark to act like the perfect gentleman. She got changed, and then quickly packed her things into a large tote bag. She'd vetoed Clark's suggestion of taking the train, telling him she'd pick him up instead. She had just enough time to get to his place.

By the time they'd reached the beach, a few miles outside the city proper, it had really started to heat up. The beach was, predictably, packed and Lois was lucky to get a parking spot. This particular beach was popular, being fairly close to the city, relatively unspoiled and serviced by public transport. It was a beautiful beach, almost half a mile long, with white sand and sparkling blue water.

Clark collected their bags out of the back of the Jeep, grinning at Lois as he handed her the tote bag.

"What?" she asked him suspiciously.

"Nothing. It's a beautiful day, we don't have to work- I'm allowed to be happy."

Lois smiled at his uncomplicated good spirits, walking beside him as they made their way down the ramp to the sand and along the beach to where the lifeguards had set up a set of red-and-yellow flags.

She took a moment to survey the beach. She'd never been here before, and she liked what she saw. The main lifeguard tower was right in the middle of the beach, and they had a clearly strong presence- a good thing, she thought, with so many people on the beach today. Digging in her tote bag, she took out her towel and sunscreen, shaking the towel out onto the sand and settling down on it. She took the opportunity to surreptitiously study her partner. He'd removed the light shirt he'd been wearing and was in the process of applying sunscreen to his chest and arms. It was sometimes easy to overlook the admittedly magnificent physique he hid behind the business suits and wild ties. It wasn't until you saw him in more casual clothes that you realised how muscular he actually was. Or in a towel, her memory reminded her. And he had the face to match the body. All in all, her partner — her best friend — was one very attractive man.

"Earth to Lois."

Startled, she snapped out of her reverie. "Sorry?"

He looked a little worried. "I'm going in for a swim. Are you coming?"

She shook her head. "I'll be there in a few minutes. But you go ahead." She tried to smile at him, fighting for composure.

"Ok." He turned to walk away, then turned back. "Is everything okay, Lois? You were looking at me with the strangest expression on your face."

She felt the heat rising in her face as she replied. "I'm fine, Clark. Really." She could see from his expression that he wasn't totally convinced, but he turned and headed towards the water.

Clark allowed himself a grin as he turned away from Lois and

made his way into the water. He was pretty certain he'd just caught his partner checking him out. She'd certainly been staring at him fairly intensely, and her tell-tale blush after he'd interrupted her had been a bit of a giveaway.

He swam strongly out, ducking under the waves until he reached a point where he could still stand comfortably before treading water. He knew he wasn't in any danger of drowning, even if he went out deeper- he could hold his breath for 20 minutes, after all. But the lifeguards on the beach didn't know that, and he didn't want to put them to the trouble of an unnecessary rescue. Plus, he wanted a chance to think without being disturbed.

Had he really just seen what he thought he'd seen? The expression he'd surprised on Lois's face was almost identical to the one he used to see on her face when she looked at Superman. He'd known all along that she was attracted to his alter-ego. It was one of the reasons that he'd tried to distance himself from her as Superman. He wanted her to be attracted to him, the real him — Clark Kent. But he wanted more than that too. He wanted her to love him, the way he loved her. If all she felt for him was attraction... He wasn't sure what to do with his newfound knowledge.

He sighed, running a hand through his hair, then quickly messing it up. He couldn't wear his glasses when swimming — if Lois saw him without his glasses and with his hair slicked back, there was no way she wouldn't put two and two together. All of a sudden he realised how much of a risk he'd taken, bringing her here. If she figured it out... He'd just have to be extra careful.

"Clark!"

He turned at the sound of Lois's voice. She was standing knee deep in the water, fifty feet away. He hadn't realised how far in he'd drifted while he'd been thinking. The sight of her made him gasp inwardly.

She'd shed the sundress she'd been wearing and was wearing a simple, royal blue bikini top and matching boardshorts. The shorts were short, only covering her to mid-thigh, while the top left enough to the imagination to be alluring, without leaving any illusions as to the beautiful figure it clung to. He bit his lip, stifling a groan. She was doing absolutely nothing for his self-control. Diving under the waves, he used the time to stuff his more romantic feelings back into their metaphorical box.

Wading the last few feet, he resolved to just enjoy the day with Lois.

And they did enjoy it. They swam; Clark taught Lois to body surf, once using his powers surreptitiously to prevent her from being dumped by a wave. They sunbathed, walked along the sand and indulged in ice cream cones from the ice creamery across the road from the beach. He did hear the occasional call for help, but every time his Super presence was unnecessary- the lifeguards on this beach were extremely skilled, and the outside world seemed to be taking a break from disaster.

Towards late afternoon, they decided to explore the tide pools hidden amongst the rocks at the northern end of the beach.

He made it back safely across the rocks, his faster reaction times making it easier for him to keep his balance. Reaching the sand again, he turned just in time to see Lois slip and fall. He rushed back, hearing a muffled curse from amongst the rocks. He got there just as she was pulling herself up.

"Lois! Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Clark." She got to her feet, an uncertain look on her face as she put her left foot to the ground. He caught the quick flash of pain that crossed her face. "Ow."

He climbed down to her. "What is it?"

"My foot."

He looked down. Sure enough, a trail of blood was trickling down her foot and onto the rocks. He scooped her up into his

arms, holding her securely against his chest.

"Clark! You'll fall!" She clutched him tighter around the neck as he clambered up, across the rocks and made it back to the beach. "Okay. You can-you can put me down now."

He shook his head. "Nope."

"Clark. I'm fine. I can walk."

"And get sand all through that cut?" He kept walking, shifting her a little so she wasn't quite as close to him. She was quiet for a moment.

"Where are we going?"

"To the lifeguard tower. They usually have first aid kits." he pointed out.

"Clark, I'm fine. I don't need a first aid kit."

He refused to put her down. "That cut needs cleaning. Do you know what you cut yourself on? Because I don't. For all we know, there could be bits of shell or something in it" he pointed out.

"Clark!"

"Lois!" He used the same exasperated tone she had, just to let her know he wasn't backing down. "Anyway, we're here now." He carried her up the steps to the tower before setting her back on her feet and knocking on the tower door.

For once he had actually wanted to let her go. Every other time he'd carried her like that, there'd been layers of fabric between them. But today... The skimpy bikini top and board shorts that had so affected him earlier left a lot of Lois's pale, creamy skin uncovered. Holding her close to his bare chest, feeling her skin rubbing against his with every step, had been a kind of torture.

He stood back a little while the lifeguard washed and disinfected Lois's foot. Once the bleeding had been stopped, the cut, down one side of her big toe, was revealed to be about an inch and a half long but luckily shallow. The lifeguard gave his opinion that Lois had managed to kick an oyster shell clinging to the rock when she fell. "But you're lucky, there are no pieces of shell in the cut. Otherwise you could get a nasty infection," he informed them.

Surreptitiously, Clark lowered his glasses and focussed on the cut, checking for his own peace of mind that the lifeguard was right. With the ease of long practise, the lifeguard dressed the cut and sent them on their way, waving one hand in response to Lois's thanks.

"See, Clark, I told you I was fine." Lois shot him a challenging look.

"Right." He sounded unbelieving. "So why are you limping?"

"I'm not limping," she informed him. "This sand is hot."

His soft chuckle told her he didn't believe her. And she had to admit, he was right. The sun was going down now, and the sand was at most warm. She ignored him for a couple of minutes while he hovered solicitously at her left side, until they made it back to where they'd left their things. She picked up her towel and shook the sand off it almost violently, annoyed with herself for falling and getting hurt.

"I guess we'd better pack up and go home," she told him. "It's starting to get dark."

"I guess so," he agreed. He sounded as disappointed as she felt. She shot him a look. He looked almost sad, she decided. Now why was that? Just because she didn't want the day to end didn't mean he felt the same way. Pushing the stray thought aside, she picked up the rest of her things, shaking and brushing the sand off her belongings before packing them back into her tote bag. Finished, she straightened up and glanced at him again. He was pulling the zipper on his backpack closed. He looked over at her and saw her watching him.

"Ready to go?" he asked softly.

She nodded, trying to think of something — anything — to say to prevent them from just climbing back into the Jeep and going back to their normal lives.

He reached out for her tote bag. “Here, I’ll take that.”

She relinquished it to him, happy to not have it banging into her side. To her chagrin, she definitely couldn’t walk without limping. “The keys are in the front pocket,” she told him.

They walked back to Lois’s Jeep in silence.

Clark had noticed how disappointed Lois had sounded when she suggested packing up and going home. The question was, why? Was it just the thought of getting back to reality? She’d seemed to be enjoying herself today. Or was it something else?

Well, as she obviously didn’t relish the thought of just heading back to Metropolis, he thought he’d better find something to delay them at least a little while. Reaching the Jeep, he opened the tailgate and placed their bags in the back. Lois reached around him, her arm brushing against the bare skin of his abdomen. It felt how he imagined an electric shock would feel. Involuntarily his muscles tensed, and for the third time today he found himself fighting for composure. Lois froze for a moment, then stretched further forward and collected the bag she’d been reaching for. Holding it up so he could see, she stammered “I’m — going to get changed.”

Clark nodded, still tongue-tied. She’d gone a few steps when he regained some presence of mind and called out to her. “Why don’t I get us something to eat? We can eat over there, on the grass.” He gestured to a gently sloping grassy area behind him, then rolled his eyes. ‘Smooth, Kent,’ he told himself.

Lois stopped for a moment, giving him a searching look. “Okay.”

Clark waited until she’d turned around, and then shook his head. What was *wrong* with him today? Normally he had much better self-control than this! He’d had plenty of practise concealing his true feelings for his partner and best friend. Why was today any different? He shrugged into his shirt, leaving the buttons open down the front, then made his way out of the parking lot.

Slowly he walked across to the row of shops that fronted onto the beach. There was the usual array of souvenir shops, takeout food places and shops selling beachwear. He found what he was looking for — a shop that sold fresh seafood, cooked to order — and made a selection.

By the time his order was ready and he’d crossed the street back to the beachfront, he could see a lone figure sitting on the grassy slope. Lois. Reaching her, he dropped to the grass next to her and silently offered her the can of diet soft drink that he knew she preferred.

“Thanks, Clark.” She smiled at him, but she looked troubled. Trying to keep the mood light, he inaugurated the kind of undemanding conversation that he was good at. Soon he had the satisfaction of hearing her laugh.

Finally, when the food was gone and she’d protested that she couldn’t fit in another bite, he picked up the paper wrappings and disposed of them in the nearby rubbish bin. Lois was still sitting where he’d left her. He stretched out a hand, silently offering to help her up. He pulled her to her feet, but when she put her injured foot to the ground, she stumbled, bracing herself against him. Her outstretched fingers ended splayed across his bare chest, his hands on her arms, stopping her from falling any further. They looked at each other for a moment before he consciously relaxed his grip, allowing her to pull away if she wanted to. Feeling like he had to say something — anything — he seized on the first thing he could think of.

“How’s your foot?” His voice came out huskier than usual. Standing the way they were, it would only take the smallest movement for him to kiss her, and all of a sudden it was only

thing he could think of.

“A little sore” she allowed. She tilted her chin up and he found himself caught by her deep brown eyes. “Clark, I’m sorry I ruined our day -”

He shook his head slightly, cutting her off. “You didn’t,” he told her softly. The urge to kiss her was overwhelming; dipping his head that last little bit, he pressed his lips to hers gently for a long moment, then pulled back slightly so he could gauge her reaction. Searching her face, he let go of her arms, sliding one hand along her jaw line into her hair and pulling her closer. “Lois...” he breathed. He kissed her again, letting some of the passion he felt for her come to the surface, feeling her eager response.

She freed her hand from where it was trapped between them, looping her arms around his neck, deepening the kiss even further. It felt like he was on fire. Her slim body, clad in a light sundress, was pressed up against his mostly bare chest, their tongues dancing together... She pulled back slightly, leaving him feeling strangely bereft.

Breathing hard, he rested his forehead against hers, marvelling at the fact that she’d left him breathless. He could hold his breath for twenty minutes, but this woman could leave him breathless.

They stayed like that for a long moment, Clark revelling in the moment, before he realised what he’d done. He’d kissed Lois. Lois. His best friend, the one woman he’d ever loved, the only woman he’d ever love — but she didn’t feel the same way about him. What had he done? After this, after stepping over the line so badly, would she really want to still be his friend? He had no excuse for his behaviour. Horrified with himself, he turned away.

Lois felt Clark go rigid and pull away from her. From the brief glimpse she got of his face as he turned away, he was about to make the worst construction possible of this turn of events. She had to stop him.

“Lois, I’m —”

She cut him off ruthlessly. For once, she was going first.

“Clark Kent, if you apologise or say one word about this being a mistake, I will never forgive you.” Her voice was shaking as much as her knees.

He swung back towards her. “You mean... You’re not upset?”

“No!” She took a halting step forward, laying her hand on his arm, feeling the taut muscles as he held himself rigid. “Clark, I’ve never been kissed like that in my life.” She heard his relieved chuckle and felt the tension leave the muscles under her hand.

“I thought — I thought you’d be mad,” he admitted.

“Why?”

He shrugged. “Because we’re friends... and partners. I didn’t think you saw me as- as anything else.”

“Oh, Clark...” she wanted to slap him for being so obtuse. “I haven’t thought of you as just a friend for a long time. It just — it just took me a while to realise it.”

She heard him draw a shaky breath. “Lois...” All of a sudden he snatched her up in his arms and she was being crushed to his chest. She choked a little and he relaxed his hold, letting her go enough so that he could look at her. She met his gaze squarely. He had a hopeful expression on his face, but his eyes were filled with so much love that it made her breath catch in her throat. How had she never realised just how strongly Clark felt about her? And in that instant she knew that she could tell him how she felt, how she really felt. “I love you, Clark.”

His face lit up. There was no other way to describe it. She’d never seen him look so uncomplicatedly happy. “You have no idea how long I’ve wanted to hear you say that, Lois.” His voice was husky. “I love you so much... I’ve always loved you.”

She felt a wide smile break out across her own face at his

words. He picked her up and swung her around in a circle, making her burst out laughing at his sheer exultation. He set her back gently on her feet, his grin fading as his expression became more intent. Without hesitation, he dipped his head and covered her mouth with his.

If she'd thought their last kiss was explosive, this one was earth-shattering. All of the passion he'd so resolutely controlled came to the fore, and she had to cling to him to stay upright. She'd heard of people going weak at the knees, and had always put it down to over-exaggeration. But her knees felt like water. She kissed him back eagerly, passionately, and was disappointed when they both had to come up for air. She drew a deep, shuddering breath and leaned against him, loving the feel of his strong arms around her.

"Wow." His voice trembled.

"Yeah." She rested her head against his chest, content to hold him and have him hold her. "So where do we go from here?" she asked shyly.

"I think a date would be appropriate." She could hear the laughter in his voice. "Say, tomorrow night?"

"Sounds good to me."

The ride home had seemed to go past in a blur. Clark had driven Lois's Jeep home, to give her injured foot a break. They'd spent the whole trip holding hands, talking about their relationship. He'd left her at her apartment, using the nearby alley to spin into the Supersuit. They still had a lot to talk about — he had to tell her about his dual identity, for starters. His stomach clenched at the thought. He knew she'd be mad; there was no getting around that. He'd tell her after their date tomorrow night.

Later tonight, he'd have to do a patrol over the city, make sure that the criminals didn't think he wasn't aware of them. But right now, he had to go and see his folks. He had to share this news with somebody, or he'd burst.

From sheer joy, he did a couple of loop the loops as he left the city limits, heading towards Kansas.

THE END