

# Through My Eyes (Jor-El)

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Rated: PG

Submitted: March 2017

Summary: No one sees you quite like your family does. Clark Kent knows little of his biological father, but he treasures what he does know.

Story Size: 2,753 words (15Kb as text)

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. The first two-and-a-half lines came from a *Complete the Story* book as a story prompt.

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It was odd to be in a room full of people who all seemed to look up to my dad like he was some kind of hero. A part of me wanted to see him through their eyes just for a moment. I tried to picture him as they did — as a respected scientist, a member of the Council of Elders, a crucial member of their society. As someone who had tried to save them all.

But, try as I might, I couldn't. I'd never truly met the man, after all. All I knew of him was a far-too-brief glimpse he'd left for me — secured in a globe of Krypton that I'd never even known existed until a couple of short years ago. And those messages, though they served to fill in some of the past for me, mostly just made my parents seem more mysterious than ever. Oh, it gave me a startlingly clear picture of what they had looked like. So clear, in fact, that I could see myself in them. Mom's eyes and nose. Dad's jawline and build. I suppose, if I'd been gifted with longer messages, I would have picked up on mannerisms and personality traits that mirror my own. But I wasn't given that luxury. Dad simply hadn't had the time to relay anything more than the most crucial, straight-to-the-point messages.

All I know is, I am grateful to have been given even that much.

Without that globe, without those holograms, I would have spent the rest of my days without any knowledge of my past — the how and why I was sent away from my birth world, through the cold emptiness of space, and to my true home of Earth. My parents would have never been more than faceless, shadowy figures in my mind's eye.

Still, it wasn't easy to hear that story. To learn about how Krypton was on the verge of collapse. To know, for certain, that my birth parents had died, unable to save themselves, wiped out in a single, blinding instant when the planet tore itself apart. To recognize that, despite the fact that my parents — Jonathan and Martha Kent — are alive, I am an orphan. Until that moment, there'd always been a part of me that had harbored a hope, if not a belief, that I might one day meet the people who'd given me life.

Yet for all the agony of learning about my past, at the time when the messages started appearing for me, I craved the entire story at once. I couldn't understand why Jor-El had opted to chop up the information into five brief segments. But at the end of it all, once the holographic image of my father had faded into non-existence and I had time to reflect on all I'd learned, I was glad that I hadn't been shown everything in one sitting. By giving me five different messages, spread out over the course of several days, Jor-El had ensured that I had time to digest each piece of information before hitting me with another piece of that tragic

story.

Of course, even with each question that found an answer, more arose. I wanted to know more about Krypton. I wanted to know more about the people who'd given me life, twice over — once in birth, and once in their gamble to send me to Earth. *Who was Jor-El? Who was Lara?* Were they important people in their society? Were they average citizens? Did they rank amongst whatever passed for poor on Krypton? What had they done for a living? How had they met? Had they celebrated many years together, or had they been relative newlyweds when they'd needed to send their baby away? What had they been like? Had they been artistically or musically inclined, or gifted athletes? Had they been bookworms?

So many questions. And no way to ever find out the answers. That was, until Zara and Ching barged their way into my life. In an instant, the universe, as I understood it, tilted on its axis and spun violently around. Everything I thought I knew about Krypton and its fate changed. Suddenly, I wasn't the only survivor, as I'd once feared and then sadly accepted. There were others. More than I would have ever dared to hope for. Less than I knew they needed to truly save their civilization and race.

They needed me to save their people from Lord Nor, an evil, sadistic nobleman who'd been chomping at the bit to marry Zara and seize the throne for himself. He was a madman, they told me, and his rule would only serve to cement the demise of what remained of Krypton. I had to go back with them, they said, to New Krypton, to rule alongside Zara, who was my wife since birth. I didn't want to go, but I saw no other way to protect the people who shared my heritage. I couldn't let an entire race of people suffer and die if there was even the slightest chance I could help.

It was a debt I owed to my parents.

So, reluctantly, I agreed to help. I said goodbye to Lois, to my parents, to Earth. It killed me inside, and all I could do was cling to the hope that, one day, I'd be able to return to where I truly belong. With a broken heart, I entered a world that was completely alien to me, though I never even stepped foot on another planet.

Once aboard the Floating Palace — as they called it — I found myself in a unique situation. I was constantly surrounded by nobles, Elders, and military personnel. I rarely had contact with the general populace — something I promised myself I would rectify once the threat of Nor was neutralized. I was completely out of my element, even though I was used to taking charge of situations as Superman. Now, I was expected to take on that leadership role again, only I wasn't quite sure how. I was flying blind, trying to learn all I could about the strange customs I was faced with.

But it was how everyone viewed me that threw me for the biggest loop. Some of them looked at me with hope in their eyes. Others gazed at me with admiration — more because I was the son of Jor-El than because of what I'd given up to help them. Most looked at me with mistrust — and I couldn't blame them. After all, I was a total stranger plucked from an alien world to lead a people I had no real knowledge about. Others were openly hostile and combative to whatever I had to say. I understood their resistance too. How could they trust that I would do what was best for them? I wasn't a Kryptonian to them; I was an Earthling.

Truth be told, I felt the same way about myself.

Being surrounded with people who were, biologically, just like me only drove home the fact that, for all of my differences from Earthlings, I'm not really Kryptonian. In blood, yes. In every way that *actually* counts, though? No. I am an Earthling.

I was the last thing they expected the son of Jor-El to be. He was their shining hero. I was their grand disappointment.

I didn't have much time to myself during that ordeal. From the moment I stepped aboard the Kryptonian mothership, to the time Nor was defeated and Zara was married to Ching, I was kept

perpetually busy. Meetings with the Elders. Meetings with the military commanders. Meetings with the nobles from the other ruling Houses as I tried to make even tentative alliances. Strange ceremonies that cemented my marriage to Zara and, in turn, my authority as their leader. Eating and sleeping became a luxury I could barely afford. I took every meal I could as I worked, dreading the scrutiny of the nobles that came with every shared meal I was forced to attend. I could scarcely spare any moment for anything. It felt like every second wasted brought Nor closer to achieving his goal of killing me and destroying New Krypton. I slept in short, fitful bursts, my mind too full of worries over how to avoid a civil war. And, quite frankly, it was too hard to sleep without hearing Lois' voice before I closed my eyes. Instead, I'd spent most of those lonely private hours staring out the windows, my gaze locked on to where I knew Earth would be, talking to Lois in the privacy of my own thoughts, wishing she could hear all I had to tell her.

But for all that I disliked about the situation, I did manage to find a few bright spots. The more time I spent with the rest of the Kryptonians, the more I learned about their culture and history. It was an invaluable experience, but what I truly wanted to learn about was my family. At first, with the threat of Nor, learning about Jor-El and Lara wasn't relevant to the task at hand, so I bit back my questions, hoping that, at some point, I would get the opportunity I was waiting for.

I never got that chance, until I'd nearly died fighting Nor.

With the death of Nor and his cohorts — and the arrest of Jen Mai, who'd been uncovered as a traitor — the Kryptonians suddenly found themselves free. And so was I. My marriage had been annulled during the sham of a trial that "proved" me to be a traitor and unfit to rule. Finally, I was no longer duty-bound to the people who shared my heritage. But that didn't mean I was finished with them yet. I had questions. So many questions. And, for the first time, I found myself with an abundance of time to ask them.

So I did.

I sought out Trey, the Chief Elder, since he was one of the few allies I'd made during my time aboard the spacecraft. And, more importantly, he'd known my parents well. I asked him every question I could think of, and finally filled in the missing pieces to the images of my mother and father. In fact, I learned more than I ever would have dared to dream I would. And what I learned broke my heart.

Jor-El had been one of the members of the Council of Elders. Not the Chief Elder — that had been Trey's predecessor — but one of the Chief's most trusted confidantes. My father had been a brilliant scientist as well, and Lara worked tirelessly alongside him. Together, they'd invented many things which had bettered the lives of everyone across Krypton — from the most influential nobles to the poorest of the poor. Everyone on the planet had respected him. And then, by chance, a few of their breakthroughs hadn't gone as planned and they — Jor-El, in particular — had lost some of their credibility. So no one had taken his warnings seriously enough when he'd said that the planet's core was destabilizing. Years went by, and he continued to try to get people to believe him. But it was only when the planet began to quake with frightening frequency that people finally began to listen to him.

By then, it was too late. Only a select group of men, women, and children were able to be saved by boarding the mothership. Their mission had been to find a suitable home on which to rebuild Krypton, and then shuttle everyone to that new planet. My birth parents had been scheduled to be a part of the mission, but by then my mother was pregnant with me. Chance caused the pregnancy to be a difficult one, grounding them both from the mission. But my father looked ahead to the future and knew time was growing short. Knowing he didn't have time to build a vessel

big enough for everyone, he built a tiny spaceship just large enough to accommodate a newborn. That ship would be sent across the lonely universe to a planet where I would have a real chance at survival.

Lois was by my side when I learned all of this and I could not have been more thankful that she was. I'm rarely one to shed tears, but at the end of the tale, my cheeks were wet and my vision was obscured by a crystalline sheen of salt water. I let the tears fall silently as Lois hugged me to herself, as though she believed that her embrace was the one thing in all the universe that would keep me from falling completely apart. She wasn't wrong about that. I drew strength from her presence and felt my heart hurting far less than I know it would have if I hadn't had her love there to protect me.

Finally, I understood the hero-worship everyone seemed to possess in regard to my father. It suddenly all made sense, why I'd been so heavily scrutinized. And why I'd apparently failed to meet their lofty standards.

When I'd first arrived onboard the Kryptonian vessel, I wasn't just a stranger to these people. I was the son of Jor-El. Though I had no memory of the man, they had expected me to be like him. I'd been built up in their minds to have the same singular dedication to the Kryptonian people as he'd once had. I'd been expected to drop my life on Earth, hungry for the chance to rejoin my people, and give my life over to the role that had been prepared for me: husband to Zara and ruler of New Krypton. Instead, they'd found a man with his loyalties split — torn between wanting to help the people of his blood and staying on Earth with the people he loved. They found an Earthling at heart, when they'd spent decades looking for a Kryptonian.

As a leader, I was more than questionable to them, particularly once Nor was on Earth, wrecking havoc wherever he went, which, by his own design, had been my home of Smallville. I'd been expected to rush in, heedless of the danger to the people of Kansas, leading troops to do battle with him. My refusal to do so made me appear weak — so unlike the man who'd bundled his newborn son into a rocket in a desperate attempt to save his life. It showed them that my heart belonged to the people of Earth. I was an unworthy leader. I was unworthy of Zara. All because I valued human life. They felt as though I'd chosen humans over them, when in reality I was tearing myself apart inside, trying to figure out how to keep anyone — human and Kryptonian alike — from losing their life.

I failed. People died, despite my best efforts. I almost lost my own life.

But in the process, I'd inadvertently earned the grudging respect of the Kryptonians. Maybe they didn't look at me quite the same way as they had looked at Jor-El, but, for a fleeting moment, I felt a connection with my father, like he was there, amongst those strangers, nodding his approval of me.

I finally understood the reverence everyone felt for Jor-El, and it was beautiful.

It was exactly the closure I'd needed. I felt no guilt, no sense of remaining duty to the Kryptonians, as I said my farewells. It didn't bother me that I would never again have contact with the living remnants of my heritage. Oh, sure, I would — and do! — miss Zara and Ching, who I'd become fast friends with, but losing them would be the only true loss I would feel. Because, as everyone else had seen in me, I'd come to answer the great question we all have at some point in our lives: *Who am I?*

That answer was blindingly clear.

I am not Kal-El, though I *am* the son of Jor-El.

I am Clark — a reporter, the son of farmers, and now husband to Lois Lane.

I am an Earthling, who happens to have been born on Krypton.

THE END