

FOLC4EVERNADAY PRODUCTIONS



Description: This is a rewrite of the Second Season's episode, "Target: Jimmy Olsen." exploring what would have happened had Clark been actively pursuing Lois during this time instead of letting his jealousy of Dan Scardino get to him.

A/N: The Song at the beginning is called "Completely" It's performed by Jennifer Day. It's from the movie, "Where the Heart is"

PG-13

Target: Lois Lane

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<< "You'll be wearing something elegant, but not too dark. Like a charcoal suit. And I'll be wearing something in a deep...violet."

"...burgundy."

"Burgundy?"

"Or violet."

"That's what you've always dreamed of seeing me in, burgundy? I don't own anything in burgundy">>

Lois smiled fondly as she recalled the conversation between herself and Clark a few weeks before. It had been three weeks since the night of their first date. She had never followed through on wearing burgundy for any of the dates they'd had in the past few weeks. She held up her new burgundy dress she'd bought a few days before. Clark had mentioned taking her to dinner at the Metro Club. This ensemble would do nicely.

She slipped on the dress and examined herself in the mirror. It came down to mid-thigh and had a modest neckline, accentuating her curves. The spaghetti straps hung comfortably on her shoulders. The diagonal pattern along the back showed off plenty of skin and allowed her to feel sexy yet still leave plenty to the imagination. Clark would love it.

She began to apply her makeup, dabbing a little perfume on her wrists. She gave herself a once over in the mirror and smiled to herself. Clark was right; she did look good in burgundy.

A knock at the door interrupted her thoughts. She checked herself in the mirror one last time before opening the door. Clark stood there in a dark charcoal suit holding a bouquet of lilies. "Hi," she whispered softly.

"Hi, wow...Lois, you look..."

She smiled shyly at him as he tried unsuccessfully to finish his sentence. "Do you like it?" Lois spun around to give him the full effect of the dress. He walked up to her and handed her a bouquet of lilies.

"You look beautiful," he whispered hoarsely. "These are for you."





"Thanks," she whispered. "I'll just put them in some water." She took the flowers and put them in a vase for display. She then grabbed her purse and turned back to him with a smile. "Okay, I'm ready."

The conversation over dinner had been light. Clark found himself entranced by Lois' beauty, unable to keep his eyes off of her. She was her normal confident self as always, but there was something different. The rare flirtatious side he'd gotten a glimpse of every now and then - the same side that had emerged the night of their first date - seemed to reappear more and more with him. He enjoyed this side of Lois.

For so long he'd had to hide his feelings for her, afraid of losing the precious friendship he had with her. Now, he was finally able to express the feelings he'd suppressed for so long. He had fallen in love with her a long time ago, but he knew she wasn't ready for that step in their relationship. It was just a few weeks ago she'd slammed the door in his face. For now, he would enjoy her company and the way it felt to be the object of her affections.

He caught her gaze from across the table, uncertain where her mind was. Her gaze had been on him most of the night. He cleared his throat nervously, uncertain how to break the comfortable silence that had fallen between them through the course of dinner. The soft chords of a familiar love song echoed through the room. "Do you want to dance?"

"Sure." She smiled shyly up at him and took his hand as she followed him over to the dance floor.

*I'll give my all or not at all
There's no in-between*



*I'll give my best, won't second guess
This feelin' deep in me*

Lois felt his arms encircle her waist as they swayed to the soft chords of the song. She could feel his heartbeat against her fingertips as she gently moved her hands up his chest and intertwined her arms around his neck, pulling him closer. "I've always loved this song," she whispered.

She watched as the corners of his lips turned into a broad smile. She couldn't help but smile back at him. His smile was always contagious. It was a small gesture, but it still managed to melt her heart. It was always the little things Clark did that affected her so. A friendly smile; a soft squeeze of her shoulder; a friendly conversation, were all things Clark had done that had made her take a second glance at him. He'd never asked for more than friendship from her, even though she'd sensed he longed for more. When her life had fallen apart last summer, after her failed wedding to Lex Luthor he'd been her rock. Not once had he pushed her, nor had he said, 'I told you so.' He'd been her friend, even though she didn't deserve it at times.

Now, that friendship had been molded into something much stronger. She'd felt it the night of their first date and the first time he'd kissed her. Even when it had been a ruse, she'd always felt that spark between herself and Clark. Now, she was forced to face the fact that she was falling for him.

*You make me want to love you
With every breath, I'll love you, (oh) endlessly
I'll give my heart, give my soul
I won't hold back, I'll give you everything
All of me, completely*

He was terrified. Holding Lois so close, smelling her perfume and the shampoo of her hair only continued to tease him. The hardest part about beginning a relationship with her was breaking out of the boundaries of friendship. He'd had almost two years of being just her friend. He didn't know where he stood as anything more. Was it okay to kiss her? Did he have to ask?

He wanted to kiss her. He listened to the lyrics of the song that played. The words spoke so true to his current feelings for Lois. "Yeah, it's a beautiful song," he managed.

She rested her head against his chest; they were barely moving. She was moving closer and closer to him, stepping into his arms and deepening the embrace little by little until there was hardly any room between them. He marveled at how perfectly she fitted in his arms.

*You fill me up with your love
Oh I just overflow
When we touch, can't get enough
And I want you to know*

She was falling for him. How had this happened? She knew she'd had feelings for him for a while. She'd always felt a pull towards him, but she'd chalked it up to basic attraction,



suppressing her feelings and diving into her work. It wasn't until this past year that she had paid attention to how essential Clark had become in her life. He'd become her best friend. She had fallen for her best friend.

*You make me want to love you
With every breath, I'll love you, (oh) endlessly
I'll give my heart, give my soul
I won't hold back, I'll give you everything
All of me, completely*

They were barely moving. She was so close. He wanted to stay like this forever. Holding Lois like this had been a dream for many nights. He wanted to share everything with her, his life, his feelings for her.

There was always one thing holding him back, though. Superman. He had kept his secret identity from her for so long, hiding so many things about himself from her. The only way for him to truly build a lasting relationship with her was to reveal himself to her, but were they ready for that step?

*You make me want to love you
With every breath, I'll love you, (oh) endlessly
I'll give my heart, give my soul
I won't hold back, I'll give you everything
All of me, completely*

As the song came to an end, Lois lifted her head from Clark's chest and looked up into his eyes. She was scared. Falling for Clark was the last thing she'd expected. She didn't know if she was ready to say the scary words. It had taken her so long to face her feelings for him. He'd always been her safety net whenever she felt the walls closing in.

He was her best friend and she was in love with him. She wanted nothing more than for him to kiss her until she was senseless, but it terrified her at the same time. He lowered his head to whisper something in her ear. She turned her head, meeting his lips head on, moaning in pleasure as she felt the kiss deepen. He held her close, tracing the small patterns on the small of her back. Maybe if they just stayed like this forever she would be okay. She wouldn't have to say the scary words. She knew that was wishful thinking. She had no idea how she would tell him she was in love with him.

<<"Good night, Lois." >>

The low whisper of Clark's voice echoed through her mind along with the memory of his kiss. The soft touch of his lips against hers was still fresh. Last night had been different, nothing like their first date. After her apprehension that night, with her slamming the door in his face, they'd agreed taking it slowly was best. She still regretted the way she'd reacted that night. She had cried on the other side of the door as she listened to Clark reluctantly walk away from the door,



terrified of her growing feelings for him. Now, she was terrified once more of those same feelings. This time, she didn't have a door to hide behind, though.

"Lois Lane?" A courier carrying a bouquet of long stemmed white lilies stood in front of her.

"Yes?" she asked hesitantly.

"These are for you. Just sign here." He handed her the bouquet along with a clipboard and pen.

Lois took them gratefully and placed the vase of lilies on her desk. "Oh, my, thank you." She signed the receipt and handed it back to the man.

Jimmy approached her from behind and smiled. "I guess things are definitely looking up in the romance department..." He winked at her.

Lois smiled, blushing slightly. "We're taking things slowly," she replied modestly. She opened the card and read it to herself. "I had a great time last night. How about dinner at 8 tomorrow night? CK." She smiled at the note then turned her attention to Jimmy, who looked at her with a Cheshire grin on his face. "What?" she asked.

"Nothing," Jimmy said. "I think you guys are..."

"What?"

"Cute. I think you guys are cute together," Jimmy finished.

Lois gave him a funny look but was interrupted by a package being laid on her desk. A middle-aged man handed her a clipboard. "Lois Lane? Sign here, please."

"What?" She stared at the oddly shaped sculpture. "Please tell me Clark didn't send this," she pleaded to Jimmy.

The delivery man read the invoice and shook his head. "This was sent by a Daniel Scardino."

Dan Scardino was the DEA agent that had come to town a few weeks ago to investigate Mayson's murder. He had begun to pay a lot of attention to her during the investigation, something that had not gone unnoticed by Clark. Dan was nice and funny, and she knew he liked her. She kind of liked him too, but not in the same way she cared for Clark. She felt a little guilty for leading him on. She hadn't come out and told him she was seeing Clark. Dan had been out of town the last two weeks. Coincidentally, those two weeks were the same time when Clark had decided to pick their relationship up from where they had left off.

Now, Dan was back in town it seemed. She bit her lower lip as she signed the receipt. "Dan? Why?"



She'd almost forgotten about the DEA agent's existence these past few weeks. She and Clark had been out almost every night these past few weeks. It had been incredible. She felt she had gotten her best friend back. Now, Monday morning she sat at her desk, staring across the aisle at his empty desk, with two packages from two different men: one from Clark, and one from Dan.

"What is it?" Jimmy asked, fiddling with one of the wires on the sculpture.

"Well, it's obviously a...a...I have no idea..."

"I'll tell you what it is...it's ugly...and I'm not just talking about the sculpture, Lois," Jimmy added. "That Scardino guy has been hitting on you since he came into town."

"He hasn't been hitting on me...exactly," Lois argued.

Jimmy laughed. "You're joking, right? 'Wow are your eyelashes real?'" he did a fake female voice, imitating one of the many lines Dan Scardino had used. "Give me a break! Barney could come up with better lines than that."

"Ha Ha, so funny," Lois replied sarcastically.

Jimmy nodded. "Well, like I said, it's ugly."

"Jimmy..." Lois began but stopped herself when she noticed him furiously scratching his arm. She eyed the rash that had formed on his arm; it was red and swollen from his scratching. "Oh, my God! That must be some itch!"

"Yeah, I get it every year around this time. My doctor says not to worry about it."

"Still, it must be painful. Don't you have any cream you can put on it?"

"Nah, I ..." He was cut off by the sound of Dan Scardino's voice.

"Hey, guys." Dan Scardino walked up to her desk. "I see you got it." He motioned to the sculpture on her desk.

"Uh, yeah," Lois nodded, unsure of what to say or do.

"Jimmy, my office, pronto!" Perry bellowed.

"Yeah, ugly," Jimmy muttered as he strode away from her desk.

"Well, anyone can send you flowers," Dan noted, gesturing to the lilies. "I thought this could be something you could really appreciate."

Lois caught the remark about the flowers Clark had sent her. She liked flowers. Clark knew that about her. An uncomfortable silence fell over them. "So," Lois began, breaking the silence.



"So, if you remember a while back, we talked about us maybe going out sometime?" Dan asked.

"Oh." Lois' face fell, understanding now the reasoning behind his gift. "Dan, I'm really flattered, but I can't."

"You can't? Why not?" Dan asked.

"I've been seeing Clark."

"Kent?" Dan looked over at Clark who had just entered the newsroom with a local staffer. "He's nice...very polite..."

"Well, he's a lot more than that. He...He's my best friend, and..." Lois said. Her gaze drifted over to Clark as well.

Dan stepped back as Clark headed towards them. "Hey, I'll see you around. We can talk about this later." Before Lois could object, he brushed past her, nearly knocking down a fellow reporter in his wake.

Clark eyed Dan suspiciously as he left. "What did Inspector Gadget want?" Clark asked.

"Oh, he just wanted to drop by to say, 'Hi'," Lois replied sweetly.

"Yeah, I'll bet," Clark muttered. He spotted the sculpture on Lois' desk. "Did he give you that?"

"Yeah," Lois murmured. "I just wish I knew what it was."

"It's trouble," Clark muttered under his breath. He took a seat at his desk, trying not to look at Lois. He had been looking forward to seeing her all morning until he had spotted Scardino talking to her when he came in. This past week he had forgotten about the DEA Agent's existence. He had been focused on courting Lois and picking up their relationship from where they left off, before Mayson's murder. He had felt secure in his relationship with Lois until now when he was reminded of another suitor vying for her attention. Competing with Scardino was out of the question; Lois wasn't a prize to be won, and she wouldn't appreciate being treated like one either.

Jimmy came out of Perry's office looking numb. Perry followed him and called Lois and Clark over. "Lois, Clark."

"Jimmy, what's wrong?" Lois asked, concerned.

"My doctor was just murdered." Jimmy looked shaken, close to tears even. "He just called me yesterday, left a message on my machine. I was going to call him back today..."



"I want you two to go down to Dr. Goldman's office and find out what you can about this," Perry ordered.

"No problem," Clark replied. "Hang in there, Jimmy." He patted Jimmy on the shoulder. He and Lois turned to leave, heading for the elevator.

"Chief, I want to go with them," Jimmy pleaded with Perry.

"Now, son, I understand how you feel, but..."

"Chief, I knew Dr. Goldman my whole life," Jimmy argued.

"All right," Perry conceded the point.

"Thanks, Chief," Jimmy beamed and followed Lois and Clark to Metropolis General Hospital.

At Metropolis General, Lois and Clark approached the nurse's station with Jimmy in tow. A large woman in her mid-thirties was at the front counter. Clark approached her. "Excuse me; we're from the Daily Planet. We'd like to take a look at Dr. Goldman's office."

"Oh, you would? Well, we have strict orders not to turn this into a media circus," the nurse replied, "and Nurse Berkley never breaks her orders." She gave them a threatening look.

Lois nodded. "Well, Nurse Berkley, I can assure you that we..."

"Do you understand English?" Nurse Berkley looked to Clark. "Maybe you can translate for her? 'NO'. Do I need to call security? Security!!"

"Uh, that won't be necessary. We'll be going." Clark steered Lois away from the nurse.

"Do you believe that woman?" Lois asked, dumbfounded.

"Talk about your bedside manner," Jimmy commented.

"Well, we'll need a distraction to get past her," Lois remarked.

Clark watched as a pregnant woman was wheeled into the ER. "I've got an idea." He motioned for Lois to follow him. "Jimmy, watch for your chance to get into Dr. Goldman's office and see what you can find."

"Okay." Jimmy nodded.

"Where are we going?" Lois asked curiously. She followed him into the supply closet. "Clark, this isn't funny. What are we doing in here?"



Clark gazed at her humorously. "I'm looking for some scrubs. Why? What did you think I came in here for?" He winked at Lois.

"I don't know." She blushed, realizing her first assessment of Clark's intentions had been wrong. It was dark in the room. She could hear his breathing and the movements he made as he looked through the closet.

"Ah-ha. I found them," Clark said, pulling out a pair of scrubs and a hospital gown. He looked around the room then gave her a pleading look. "Here, turn around just a sec, will you? I need to change."

Lois obediently turned away from his figure. She took a deep breath as she heard the fabric hit the ground. She could feel the heat from his body, and smell the scent of his cologne. Over the past month, her attraction towards him had grown. She was so tempted to turn around...to just catch a glimpse of him...maybe without his shirt. The memory of him in nothing but a towel had been seared into her mind. She had had so many fantasies about that morning.

All of her nerves went on edge when she heard the familiar sound of a zipper coming undone. She began taking in a few shallow breaths as she fought the urge to turn around. She had always wondered: boxers or briefs?

"Okay, I'm done," Clark's voice interrupted her thoughts as he handed her the hospital gown he'd found earlier. "You can put this on over your clothes." He then began looking around when he opened the closet door and whispered, "Now, we just need to find a gurney."

Lois nodded mutely and placed the hospital gown over her suit. She watched as he opened the doors to the closet once more. She eyed him appreciatively as she took in the sight of him in scrubs. If there was anything he didn't look good in; she hadn't found it. He always seemed to fill everything he wore perfectly; a suit, scrubs, a towel...Whoa, girl, dangerous territory. She followed Clark into the hallway where he'd found an abandoned gurney.

"You ready?" Clark asked, lifting up the sheet for her and handing her the oxygen mask that was on the gurney.

"Yeah."

They made their way down the hall, approaching the nurses' station. "Oh! I'm in so much pain!" Lois cried out. She wore an oxygen mask over her face and lay on the gurney.

Clark wore scrubs and had a doctor's mask over his face as he pushed her through the hospital. "Just keep it up, Lois," he whispered to her before approaching Nurse Berkley. "Nurse! I need some help!"

"What seems to be the problem, Doctor?" Nurse Berkley asked.



From across the hall, Jimmy watched the scene unfold and couldn't help but laugh to himself. Only Lois and Clark would think to pull something like this off. He took advantage of the distraction and headed for Dr. Goldman's office.

A few uniformed officers were standing outside his former doctor's office. He spotted the familiar Detective Wolf and began to question him about Dr. Goldman's death. He had seen Lois and Clark do this a thousand times before. This was his chance to prove he had what it took to be a real journalist. "Well, here goes nothing," he muttered to himself.

"I'm in so much pain!" Lois cried.

"Uh, we need to prep for a C-section," Clark replied, uncertainly. He wasn't sure how long he could keep up the act but he was giving it his best.

"Who do you want me to call for Anesthesiology?" Nurse Berkley asked.

"Whoever can get there first," Clark replied, using his Superman-toned voice.

"Take the staff elevator," Nurse Berkley called after him.

He headed toward the staff elevator and almost ran into a trio of professionals walking down the hall. "The security in this hospital is atrocious," one of them, a woman, said. She wasn't looking where she was going and had walked right in front of his path. He stopped the gurney at the last minute.

The jolt caused Lois to lose her grip on the basketball, which fell to the ground. The trio stared at Lois and Clark in concern. Clark caught the ball and smiled. "Look, congratulations, a healthy baby basketball."

"Whoops! I guess I won't need that C-section after all." Lois smiled as she slipped from the gurney. She took Clark's hand and made a break for it.

Nurse Berkley hollered out, "Security!"

"What was all that about?" the woman asked.

"Some reporters from the Daily Planet wanted to nose around Dr. Alan Goldman's office," Nurse Berkley replied.

"You see, that's exactly what I'm talking about, Jim. The security here is atrocious."



Outside the hospital, Lois and Clark rid themselves of their masks and Lois removed the hospital gown. Clark still wore the scrubs from earlier. Lois eyed his biceps appreciatively. He really should wear short-sleeved shirts more often. "I gotta admit, Clark, that was a pretty good idea."

"Thanks." Clark smiled back at her.

"What happened? Security almost caught me," Jimmy remarked, catching up to them.

"Oh. Our, um, basketball came a little early," Lois laughed.

"Jimmy, what were you able to find out?" Clark asked.

"It's what I didn't find that was interesting. Three files were missing from Dr. Goldman's office. Mine along with two others...Dr. Goldman also tried calling them as well. What do you think? Coincidence?" He handed them his notes.

"Sarah Goodwin and G.E. Mallow," Lois read the names off Jimmy's notes.

"Yeah," Jimmy remarked.

"Okay, I'll take G.E. Mallow. Lois, you guys take Sarah Goodwin," Clark said. "I'll see you back at the Planet."

"Okay." Lois nodded.

"Keep an eye on him," Clark added. "We don't know why Jimmy's file is missing from Dr. Goldman's office. I got a funny feeling whoever took his file wasn't just interested in his blood type." With that, he left to find G. E. Mallow.

Lois and Jimmy made their way to Sarah Goodwin's apartment in silence. They were about to knock on the door when a muffled scream sounded from inside. Jimmy backed away from the door and kicked it in. A man stood above a young woman in her early twenties. The woman was sitting on the couch, screaming; the man was in his late thirties and had a needle in his hand and a strong grasp on the woman's arm.

"Get away from her!" Jimmy cried out.

The mysterious man jumped out the window in an attempt to escape. He was met by

Superman who caught him mid-air. "Going somewhere?"

Lois immediately went to the young woman's aid. "Are you okay?"



"I...I don't know. I woke up and he was standing over me..."

"You gonna start talking?" Superman stepped into the room, keeping a strong grip on the intruder.

The man didn't respond. Sarah stood up and addressed the man, threatening him,

"Listen, Blondie, unless you're a mute I want some answers!"

The man growled back, causing the young woman to jump back.

"Is everyone okay?" Superman asked.

"We're fine. Thank you, Superman," Lois responded.

"I'm going to take him down to the police station. Maybe they'll be able to get something out of him."

"No problem. Thank you, Superman." The young woman extended her hand to introduce herself. "I'm Sarah Goodwin." The sleeve to her shirt was pushed up slightly, revealing the same rash as Jimmy's.

Lois eyed the rash suspiciously. "Jimmy, her arm..."

"Oh, I've had it since I was a kid," Sarah explained.

Jimmy nodded mutely and showed his own arm to her. She was taken aback by the identical rash on his arm.

Clark waited patiently at the Planet for Lois. He wasn't sure what could be taking them so long. He had dropped the blonde mute off at the police station and had made his way back to the Planet. He had taken three calls from Dan Scardino in the past hour and it was getting on his nerves. Ever since the DEA Agent's appearance after Mayson's death, things had been strained between him and Lois. Scardino seemed to show up at the most inopportune times. He did his best to refrain from smart remarks and digs, but sometimes Scardino just got the best of him.

At the moment, his and Lois' relationship was 'undefined.' Neither of them had come out and said they were exclusive. He had no intentions of dating anyone else, but he wasn't sure what her intentions were at the moment. If they did become more serious he knew the day would come when he would be called away by his Superman duties. He still had no idea how he would handle a situation like that or how he would eventually tell her of his secret identity.

He finally spotted Lois and Jimmy exiting the elevator with Sarah in tow. "Clark, you're already here," Lois said as she approached his desk. "You won't believe what happened...."



Clark stood and extended his hand to Sarah. "Hi, I'm Clark Kent."

"Nice to meet you," Sarah replied, eyeing him up and down with a smile.

"We got to Sarah's apartment and this guy was standing over her with this needle in his hand. Luckily, Superman showed up when he did. How did it go with Mallow?" Lois asked.

"He's missing," Clark stated flatly.

"What?" Lois asked.

"The police don't have any leads. Jimmy, you probably shouldn't go home. You can stay at my apartment until we can get this thing settled," Clark said.

"Okay," Jimmy responded.

Lois turned to Sarah. "And you can stay with me."

"Great," Sarah replied.

"Mr. Mallow will demonstrate how Project Valhalla works," Dr. Wilder said, motioning for her mother and her guest, Mr. Neener, the general of the Saudi Army to follow. "As infants, the subjects are injected with a serum undetectable to many of the general pediatrics today. It isn't until they are activated with this - " She held up a long needle filled with what only one could imagine. " - that the subjects are activated and used as trained assassins."

"You've still to prove anything," Mr. Neener sniffed.

"Would you like a test-run?" Dr. Wilder inquired with an arched eyebrow.

"What did you have in mind?" he asked.

Lois wasn't sure about Sarah Goodwin. She knew the girl's life was in danger and she certainly wouldn't want anything to happen to her, but she wasn't too keen on having her stay at her apartment. It had been over a year since Lucy had lived with her. They had clashed over almost everything. Lucy was her sister and she'd tolerated a lot from her. She hardly knew Sarah.

"By the way, Agent Scardino called three times," Clark said, handing her the message slips. "Tell him to quit calling the office number. It's kinda hard to get through to Henderson when he keeps calling." His face spoke volumes. He was not happy about Scardino calling Lois.



Lois recognized the tone in his voice. "Clark..."

Dan Scardino walked up at that point, interrupting her train of thought. "Hey, guys, what's up?"

"You know some people could view this as harassment," Clark muttered under his breath. Jimmy caught the comment and laughed. Lois just shot him a look. He got up from his desk and headed toward the coffee machine. She could tell he was growing more and more irritated with Dan's presence.

"Dan, what are you doing here?" Lois asked.

"I thought you might be free for lunch."

"No," Lois replied. "I'm at work." She motioned around the newsroom and then crossed her arms over her chest. "We're in the middle of an investigation."

"I know, but you gotta eat," Dan replied.

"Dan, I appreciate the offer, but..." Lois replied calmly.

"I wasn't sure if Kent was going to give you my messages," Dan began.

"I got the messages." She waved the slips of paper in front of him. "Clark isn't petty. He's a professional, as am I." Lois took a deep breath as she began to speak again, "I told you I'm seeing Clark."

"I know, but I thought you might be interested in having lunch with me. I thought maybe we could pick up our conversation where we left off."

Where they left off? They'd left off with her telling him she was seeing Clark. She really wasn't comfortable with continuing that conversation, but he didn't seem to understand. "Come on, it's not like you're married to the guy." He shrugged his shoulders.

Lois just stared at him. "Dan...."

His beeper went off and he turned to check it. "It's the office," Dan said. "We'll talk about this later. I'll see you around."

"But..." She didn't get a chance to finish. He was already boarding the elevator, leaving her even more confused than before.

Clark approached her from behind. "Is social hour over? We need to get back to work."

"Clark, we need to talk," Lois began.

"No, what you want to do on your own time is your business. I'd just appreciate being told where I stand before you start seeing other people," Clark remarked bitterly.



"Clark, I'm not..." Lois began. Before she could finish, he had walked away again. "Great," she muttered to herself.

"I tried to warn you, Lois," Jimmy said. "Ugly..."

The next morning, Sarah woke up to pounding on the door of Lois' apartment. "I'm coming!" she hollered groggily.

She opened the door and saw Dan Scardino on the other side. "Hi, is Lois home?"

"She's in the shower," Sarah supplied. "Who are you?"

"I'm a friend."

"A friend? A boyfriend? A friend-friend or just a friend?" Sarah asked sarcastically.

"Well, gee, if I knew there was going to be a quiz I would have studied." He moved past her and entered the apartment, making himself at home. "So, how long has she been in the shower?"

"Why?" Sarah asked, taking a bite of her cereal. "Am I not good enough company?"

He just laughed at her comment. "Who are you again?"

"I'm a friend, just a friend." Sarah smiled sweetly. They fell into a comfortable silence before a knock on the door drew Sarah's attention away from Scardino. She wasn't sure what to make of him. He obviously had intentions of pursuing Lois, otherwise he wouldn't be showing up at seven in the morning at her apartment. She could tell there was something going on between Lois and Clark as well. It was hard to tell what Lois wanted in the mix. She had two men pursuing her and neither seemed willing to back down.

Clark was surprised to find Scardino at Lois' apartment. "What are you doing here, Scardino?"

"I came to talk to Lois," Scardino replied.

Clark checked his watch. "At seven in the morning?"

"What are you doing here?" Scardino shot back.

Lois came into the living room, fully dressed and ready for work. "Clark? What are you doing here? It's only seven."



"I got some information on Mallow," Clark replied, then motioned to Scardino. "What's he doing here?"

"Yes, Dan, what are you doing here?" Lois asked, arching her eyebrow at him.

"I had some information for you," Scardino smiled.

"What kind of information?" Lois asked.

"You two are investigating Dr. Goldman's murder, right?"

"Yeah," Clark began slowly, unsure of where Scardino was headed with this.

"Well, I just got assigned to trace the whereabouts of a missing shipment of Ticeon to Metropolis General."

"What does that have to do with Dr. Goldman?" Lois asked.

"Ticeon was a highly regulated drug that was ordered by Dr. Goldman," Dan explained.

"What's the connection?" Lois asked.

"His signature was forged on the latest order form," Scardino added smugly.

"Hmm, it's worth looking into," Clark remarked.

"Yeah," Lois said.

"Well, there was something else I wanted to talk to you about, but I'll catch you later." Scardino got up and headed for the door. Clark closed it behind him, a look of distaste on his face. His gaze met Lois'. She knew what he was thinking.

Sarah watched the exchange. "You know what you two are doing is classic in psychology. You're both thinking the exact same thing but you're hoping the other will speak first." She was met with a look of death from them. "Uh, I left something in the bathroom. I'll be ready in just a few."

"So, I already dropped Jimmy off at the Planet," Clark began, trying to avoid any conversation pertaining to Dan Scardino.

"How's he doing?" Lois asked.

"Good. His nerves are a bit out of whack. He keeps thinking someone's watching him."

Lois laughed. "This can't be easy for him. So, what'd you find out about Mallow?"



Clark pulled a note from his jacket pocket. "He was born at Fort Truman just like Jimmy and Sarah...where Dr. Goldman was head of for ten years before he retired and started his own practice."

"I hate military investigations. You never get anywhere," Lois muttered.

"Well, we're in luck. Perry's old fishing buddy, Admiral Whalen, is in town. Maybe he can shed a little light on this case for us."

"You mean 'Sailin Whalen?'" Lois asked.

"That's the one."

Lois sat across from 'Sailin Whalen,' playing Battleship. "D three," he challenged.

"Miss." Lois smiled back at him.

Sailin Whalen looked down at his board. There were several ships with red pegs on them. He looked up at her questionably. "You sure I didn't hit something?"

"Sorry." Lois shrugged her shoulders.

"Admiral, about the hospital at Fort Truman," Clark prodded.

"Right, right, well, I heard about something back in the 70's, something called the Valhalla Project."

"What was it?" Lois asked curiously.

The Admiral arched his eyebrows at her from across the board. "You play; I'll talk."

"G nine," Lois responded.

He grimaced. "That sinks my cruiser, damnit. According to the rumors, some rogue doctors were trying to tinker with the brains of babies, fix it so they could control their minds. The idea was to turn them into assassins when they grew up. F five," Lois just shook her head and Whalen grimaced in defeat.

"How far did they get in their testing?" Clark asked.

"Don't know. The whole thing was scuttled when the Pentagon found out about it. The General in charge kept his commission but his career went nowhere after that. Your turn."

"Uh, B three," Lois responded.



"Hit." He winced at the loss he took, then muttered, "If I didn't know any better, I'd say you had X-ray vision."

Clark smiled at the comment. "Admiral, do you know where we can find that General?"

"Wilder? No, he died a few years back, survived by his wife, Claudette. They had a kid, real smart - a girl. She grew up to be some kind of doctor herself." He looked at her expectantly. "Your turn."

"Huh? Oh, uh, C three."

"Hit and game. Guess it's a good thing I was never in combat. How are you at Stratego?" he asked.

Jimmy listened to Lois and Clark intently with Sarah on the edge of Lois' desk.

"Mind control?" he asked, baffled.

"It's just a rumor, we haven't confirmed anything yet," Clark added.

"But if it's true and we were tested on - are you saying someone can control our minds?" Sarah asked.

"It's a possibility," Lois said.

"Man and my mom kept telling me that playing video games would fry my brain," Jimmy muttered.

Perry stepped out of his office and hollered across the newsroom, "Jimmy, you promised me you'd have those photo sheets on my desk half an hour ago!"

Jimmy stood up and started towards his desk. "I'm on it, Chief!" He watched Perry go back into his office then muttered to Sarah, "Who needs drugs to control people when you can use fear?"

Brian from research approached them, irritation written all over his face. "Lois, you had three messages from a guy named Scardino while you were out." He handed her the message slips and turned away.

"Three calls? What, is he a bit insecure? Afraid you won't call him back?" Clark asked, taking the messages from her.

"Well, maybe it's something important," Lois argued half-heartedly. Truth be told, she knew he was calling to try and ask her out again.



Clark's expression was grim as he sifted through the message slips one by one. She hated it when he got like this. "Let's see. 'How about Dinner Tonight? Dinner tomorrow? Lunch?' That's real important." He handed the slips back to her.

She could tell he was angry. He tried to cover it up with sarcasm, but he couldn't hide the bitter tone in his voice. Dan's presence continued to drive a rift between them. She hated that she'd allowed things to go on as long as she had. She knew she had to put a stop to Dan's interference once and for all.

"Clark..." Lois began.

"But maybe it IS important to you," he snipped.

She could feel her own anger flaring as she turned to face him. "Clark, I don't know what..."

She was interrupted by Perry. "Lois, can I see you in my office for a minute?"

"I'll be there in a minute, Chief." Lois headed for his office. She could feel her temper flaring with each step she took. She knew Clark was angry, but embarrassing her in front of her co-workers was uncalled for. He had no right to read her phone messages aloud like that.

Clark headed back to his desk and started going through the files there. He knew he had been out of line but he couldn't help it. Daniel Scardino just brought out the worst in him. Lois didn't even seem to be bothered by the fact that the guy was deliberately interfering with their relationship. He raked a hand through his hair. They were supposed to go out tonight, and here he was acting like an ass.

Jimmy approached the forlorn-looking Clark hesitantly. "CK, you okay?"

"I don't know, Jimmy," Clark muttered.

"Let me guess. Scardino?" Jimmy asked.

"How did you know?" Clark asked. "I just, I don't know. I don't understand how she can be so afraid of a relationship, yet she's letting this guy just..."

"Have you talked to her?"

"Jimmy, she knows how I feel. I thought I knew how she felt." He looked across the newsroom into Perry's office, where Perry was talking to Lois.

"I don't know, CK. Maybe you should try and tell her again. Lois has never been easy to read."



"Tell me about it," Clark muttered.

"Good luck. Here's that fax you wanted from the medical association."

Jimmy handed him the fax then headed towards his desk. "Thanks, Jimmy," Clark said gratefully, taking the paper from him.

Lois sat across from Perry in his office, impatiently listening as he began his 'Papa Bear' lecture. Most of his famous speeches consisted of Elvis stories. Just when she thought she'd heard them all he surprised her with a new one.

"Lois, what in the Sam Hill are you doing?"

Lois looked up at him in surprise. "What are you talking about, Perry?" No Elvis story this time.

"What am I talking about?' A month ago you burst into my office declaring you wanted a new partner after your and Clark's first date. If I remember right, you had no idea what to do next. A month later, you've got this DEA Agent chasing you and Clark's pushed to the side. What in the name of Elvis is going on?"

"Dan is just a friend," Lois argued.

"Oh, really? Then why does he keep showing up here trying to take you to lunch or dinner, or whatever..." She tried to cover up her look of surprise but wasn't quick enough. "Don't look at me like that. I know what's going on everywhere," Perry snapped.

"Perry, it's not like that. I already told Dan I was seeing Clark," Lois argued.

"Well, apparently he didn't get the message, did he? Lois, you need to make up your mind and you need to do it fast. I don't want my newsroom going to hell because of this. Are we clear?"

"Completely." Lois' eyes narrowed. She hated being told what to do.

The conversation between Lois and Perry seemed tense, but he needed to share his findings with both of them. Clark knocked lightly on the office door as he opened it. "Am I interrupting?"

Lois was quick to her feet, crossing the room to meet him. "Uh, no, what's up?"

Clark showed her the fax. "The medical association came through on Katherine Wilder." He pointed to the picture. "Look familiar?"

"She was at the hospital when we were trying to escape from the clutches of Nurse Berkley."



"She's on staff," Clark added.

"Coincidence?" Lois asked.

Before he could respond, the sound of gunfire echoed throughout the room. He pushed Lois to the ground. "Get down!!" He covered her body with his own as he felt the bullets ricochet off his back. Perry flattened himself underneath his desk.

Clark started to get up to investigate the source of the gunfire when Lois grabbed him. "No, don't! Let Superman and the police handle it!"

"Lois..." He tried to argue but stopped when he saw the look on her face.

"I'll be fine. I'm just going to take a look." He released himself from her grasp and got up. He inched out of Perry's office and changed into Superman.

Clark landed outside the Daily Planet and came face to face with the source of the disturbance. A man with a rifle stood in the middle of the street, shooting randomly at the windows of the Daily Planet and various other buildings.

"That's enough," Clark said firmly.

The expression on the man's face was blank. He smiled as he turned to face Clark. He held up the rifle, hands in the air. For a brief moment, Clark thought he was going to give himself up. An array of bullets rained against his chest; one even lodged itself in between his teeth. He spat it out and advanced towards the assailant.

The man fell to the ground, rifle in hand. Clark knelt down to check his pulse as the Metropolis Police surrounded him. He found no sign of a pulse or breathing. He caught a glimpse of the man's forearm. He had the same rash as Jimmy and Sarah.

Police began to swarm the scene. He stepped back and allowed them to take control. His super-hearing picked up the sound of Perry's voice.

"Somebody, get down there right now! I want an exclusive! Olsen, grab your camera!" He smiled to himself; even in a situation like this Perry was still worried about his front page story.

Lois and Perry watched as the maintenance crew began the process of putting Perry's office back together. Perry tried to remain cool, but she could tell he was just as shaken up about the attack as anyone else. She glanced out in the newsroom, scanning for any sign of Clark. She still



couldn't believe he'd left her like that. Flashbacks of his shooting a few months ago came to her mind.

<< *"In one lousy second, I lost my partner and my best friend."* >>

Clark stepped into the office cautiously. "Everyone all right?" he asked.

"Clark!" Lois threw her arms around his neck for a moment, reveling in the relief she felt that he was all right. Then her anger took over and she pushed him away, "Are you crazy? What the hell were you thinking? You could have been shot! What?! Getting killed once wasn't enough? You wanted to go for a record?"

She was angry, but mostly she had been scared. She had lost him once and she didn't want to lose him again.

"I'm fine. See? One piece." He held his hands up for her to inspect. She relented a moment. His tone softened as he cupped her cheek. "I'm fine really. Are you okay?" He placed an arm around her shoulders and she rested her head against his solid frame for a brief moment. She knew he probably thought she was over-reacting, but reliving the pain of losing her best friend was not something she cared for.

"Yeah, I'm just a little shaky," she said. She held onto him a little longer than necessary. "What happened?"

"GE Mallow." He gestured toward the streets. "He's dead."

Later that afternoon, everyone sat in the conference room looking at the photos from the shootout earlier. Jimmy pointed to the arm of the late GE Mallow. "Look at his arm. He has the same rash we do."

"According to neighbors, his behavior was completely out of character."

"You think he was already under mind control?" Jimmy asked hesitantly.

"It's possible. It's exactly the kind of behavior the Admiral said Project Valhalla was capable of producing," Lois said.

"Hmm, what's Valhalla mean anyway?" Sarah asked.

Perry spoke up, "It's a Nordic myth. Supposedly there were a band of young women called the Valkyries. They rode great airborne war horses over the battlefields. Their job was to choose those fallen warriors who were fit to enter Valhalla."



"I just spoke with Inspector Henderson," Clark said, entering the room. "They ID'd Sarah's abductor, Claus Martin. That's about all they know about him. He made one phone call while in custody to a bail bondsman, Roxie Terrance."

Brian from research handed Clark a fax. "Clark, the medical report just came back on Mallow."

"What is it?" Lois asked.

"They found a drug called Ticeon in Mallow's blood stream." Clark thought for a minute. "Isn't that the same drug Scardino was investigating the disappearance of at Metropolis General?"

"The same," Lois acknowledged.

"Hmm, well we've got two doctors connected to this Valhalla Project. One of those is dead, and I'd bet my boots that the other one doesn't make house calls," Perry muttered.

Lois and Clark waited patiently in Dr. Katherine Wilder's office. "What do you think is taking her so long?" Lois wondered aloud. She threw the magazine she had been skimming through down on the table. Clark gave her knee a gentle squeeze.

"It is late," Clark acknowledged.

"Hmmm..." Lois muttered. She bit her lower lip, trying to suppress a groan when his hand left her knee. She could still feel the warmth on her skin, where his hand had been only a few seconds ago. It was just a simple touch.

The door behind them opened and Katherine Wilder approached them. "Can I help you?"

Lois quickly stood to her feet to greet Dr. Wilder. "Yes, I'm Lois Lane and this is my partner, Clark Kent. We're from..."

"The Daily Planet. I know. I've read your work," Katherine responded.

"So have I," A voice from behind Dr. Wilder said. A small-framed woman stepped out from behind her. The resemblance between Dr. Wilder and the woman was unmistakable. Lois guessed she must be Claudette Wilder, Katherine Wilder's mother. Claudette eyed Clark up and down appreciatively, shamelessly flirting. "You're very good," she whispered.

"Mother..." Katherine warned.

"Hi." Clark extended his hand for her to shake.

"Hi, yourself."



Clark shot Lois a pleading look. Lois couldn't help but smile inwardly. Her farm boy never did handle an aggressive woman well. She tried to steer the conversation back to a more professional matter. "Uh, Dr. Wilder, Mrs. Wilder, we'd like to talk to you about the project you and your father - " She then turned to Claudette Wilder. " - your husband - was involved in with the army."

"Well, I'd love to stay, but I have an appointment. I'm sure Katherine can answer your questions. Bye." Claudette left, leaving Katherine to apologize for her behavior. Lois watched Claudette leave then turned back to Dr. Wilder. Claudette seemed awfully eager to leave.

"My mother." Katherine gestured to her desk. "Have a seat."

They were being fed a line. Clark gave a sideways glance at Lois. She wasn't buying it either.

"Well, my father did tell me about Project Valhalla a few years back, but as far as I know the research and notes were all destroyed by the Pentagon," Katherine explained. Her phone rang interrupting them.

"Excuse me just a moment." She picked up the phone. "Dr. Wilder."

Clark used his super-hearing to overhear Dr. Wilder's phone call.

"Will I be seeing another demonstration tonight?"

'Demonstration of what?'

He glanced at Lois again who was taking advantage of Dr. Wilder's distraction to read her phone messages. He used his enhanced vision to see what she was looking at - a phone message from 'Roxie Terrance.' It was an interesting coincidence if you could call it that. Roxie Terrance conveniently happened to be linked to Sarah's abductor and the doctor.

"Of course, but I won't be able to give you more specifics until later tonight," Katherine answered. Her tone was calm and her answers were short. She was obviously covering something up. She hung up the phone then turned to Lois and Clark. "I'm sorry I couldn't be of more help."

"Uh, doctor, I was wondering, do you know a man named Roxie Terrance?" Lois asked.

Clark tried to suppress a sigh. He couldn't believe she was doing this.

Dr. Wilder was a bit taken aback, then she noticed the phone message on her desk. "Do you make a habit of reading people's phone messages, Ms. Lane?"

"It's just a bad habit I picked up from being a reporter."



"Bad habits can be hazardous to your health," Dr. Wilder shot back. "Mr. Terrance is a patient. Would you care for his diagnosis?"

"That won't be necessary," Clark interjected. "Thank you for your time." He escorted Lois out of the office, noting Dr. Wilder's anxious expression as they left.

Clark watched as the lights of Dr. Wilder's office slowly flicked off. He and Lois were watching the doctor close down the office instead of enjoying a romantic dinner for two. When they had called in and told Perry of their findings at Dr. Wilder's office he'd ordered them to stake her office out.

"If Roxie Terrace is her patient then I'm Dumbo the Elephant!" Lois snapped angrily. She then turned to face him. "And was she threatening me?"

Clark laughed. "I don't know. But I think we should keep an eye on her. I've got a hunch something might be happening tonight." He couldn't tell her what he'd overheard earlier.

"Another late night stake out," Lois muttered. She cast a sideways glance at Clark.

He nervously fidgeted in his seat. "I guess we'll have to reschedule our date." He took her hand in his, intertwining his fingers with hers. He could hear her heart rate speed up and he glanced over at her, meeting her eyes.

Her face was flushed slightly and she smiled back at him. "Do you think that means something, like on a cosmic level?"

"I don't know," he began slowly. They really needed to talk. The last few days had been tense. He wanted nothing more than to go back to the way things had been on Saturday night when all either of them had focused on was each other. Ever since Scardino had come back in town he felt like everything he said or did was wrong when it came to Lois. He hated feeling so out of control. His temper seemed to get the best of him, even though he'd practiced self-control for years. "I guess things have been kind of tense the last few days."

"I know. We haven't had a chance to really talk lately. I mean, not really talk. Between this investigation, and Jimmy and Perry wanting to butt their noses into our personal lives every five seconds." She shook her head. He smiled at her as she continued to ramble. He always found her tirades to be amusing. "You wouldn't believe the lecture I got from Perry today." She caught his gaze then looked around, trying to understand what he was staring at. "What?"

He released her hand and smiled up at her. "Lois, are you hungry?"

The grumble in her stomach answered for her. She smiled. "A little," she acknowledged. "How did you know?"



Clark just laughed. "Because you babble when you're hungry. I'll go get us some dinner. What do you feel like?"

"Mmm.... How about some Thai from that place you found? The one with the real authentic stuff.... How do you find places like that anyway?"

"Thai food it is." Clark got out of the Jeep and headed down the street before she pressed him for an explanation as to where he found the authentic food.

The closest alley was a couple blocks away. Clark checked his surroundings to make sure no one was looking and spun into his suit. Just as he was about to take off a cry for help caught his attention. He looked around and zeroed in on the source.

A block away, an elderly woman was screaming for help as she was surrounded by what appeared to be teenage gang members. He landed in front of them, startling them enough to give him the upper hand.

He used his heat vision to melt the knife they were using on the elderly woman. The man attempting to mug the elderly lady stopped and dropped the knife in pain. He turned to see Clark in his Superman suit and ran.

The other gang members were working on defacing the wall of the alley with their gang's art. "Nice work," Clark said, making his presence known. "Too bad that's a public wall and not a canvas." They tried to run but were met with his super-breath pushing them backward. "Now that you've expressed your opinion, I'm going to express mine."

The gang members were forced to clean up the alley. Clark watched in amusement as they washed the walls they had been painting mere minutes ago. "You missed a spot."

Back at the Jeep, Lois sat in the driver's seat waiting for Clark to return. "Come on Clark, I'm starving." She looked around the parking lot, still not seeing any sign of him. It was strange. The smallest gestures that seemed so trivial a few months ago were now sending jolts of electricity throughout her body. Did he feel that same jolt whenever he touched her?

She jumped up with a start when she heard a knock on her window. "Open up! It's the police."

She rolled down her window only to find Dan Scardino with a picnic basket and a bottle of wine.

"Dan, what are you doing here?"

"I got dinner. I called the office. They said you were on a stakeout. I thought you might be hungry."



She unlocked the door and let him in. "Actually Clark went for food, but I don't know what's taking him so long."

He began to unpack the picnic basket, full of an assortment of food. "I got a little bit of everything."

"Dan, really, this is very sweet, but..."

"But what?" Dan asked. "You have to eat." He must have seen the hesitancy in her face. His face expression changed. "Look, I promise, no hidden agenda, I just thought you might be hungry. You don't have to eat if you don't want to. I'll admit I did do this to hopefully convince you to go out with me, but I also did it because I know what it's like to be on a stakeout." He looked around. "Where is Kent, anyway?"

"He went to get dinner."

"No offense, Lois, but he just doesn't seem like your type."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Lois asked defensively. She could feel her temper rising as she spoke.

"Well, he's more straight-arrow and you're..." Dan hedged cautiously.

"What?" she challenged. Her tone dared him to say one wrong thing. Dan was treading on dangerous territory now. His comments about Clark had usually stayed neutral, but now he was making judgmental remarks about her dating him. He didn't even know Clark; or her for that matter.

"You're more spontaneous...fun."

Lois sobered briefly. "Clark is fun too." She smiled, recalling their undercover snooping at the hospital from the day before. It didn't matter what they were doing, Clark always found a way to make her laugh at just about anything. "You just have to get to know him; of course, when you keep trying to pick fights with him you're not bringing out his good side either."

"I'm not picking fights with him," Dan argued.

Lois shot him a look. "Really? Then why do you keep trying to hit on me, after I've told you Clark and I are seeing one another?"

"Lois, I like you a lot and in my line of work I've learned you've got to cherish every moment you have. You're not guaranteed tomorrow. I want to spend my time with you."

It was sweet. Dan was a good guy, but she was with Clark. He was her best friend; she couldn't do that to him. No matter how intrigued she was with Daniel Scardino. She couldn't do this.

There was definitely something - something big - between her and Clark and she didn't want to blow it by dating around. She didn't want a casual relationship.



She wanted more. "I can't do this, Dan." Lois pushed him away. "You need to go."

"Look, I just want you to give me a chance...I mean, if you and Clark are meant to be together then you'll know it. All I'm asking is for a chance."

"Dan, I'm working....Please leave."

"Fine, I'll see you around." Scardino moved to get out of the Jeep.

"Good night, Dan." Lois shut the door behind him and watched him leave. She looked around. Where was Clark?

Clark flew through the air as he tried to block the pain in his heart out. He had only been gone for ten minutes and he had come back to find Scardino sitting in the car with Lois sharing a glass of wine. He hadn't had the stomach for another confrontation with Scardino, so he had left the takeout by her door with a note. He didn't know what he was going to do about this situation. He loved Lois so much. Seeing her with Scardino like that hurt. He thought they had been moving forward with their relationship. Now, it seemed Lois wasn't interested in more than just a casual relationship.

He had watched her with Lex Luthor for a year. He had sat back and watched her as Luthor had manipulated her into thinking he was this decent guy. Clark had known the truth and tried to warn her several times but Lois didn't want to hear it. Dan Scardino wasn't Lex Luthor but he may as well have been. Clark had worked so hard to get his relationship with Lois to where it was and now it looked like everything was falling apart.

He took a deep breath and headed back towards his apartment. He couldn't face Lois right now. Whenever she noticed he was gone she would page him. He knew it was irresponsible to just leave but he felt he had no choice. If he hadn't left, he would have done something or said something he would have regretted. He wondered how long it would take for Lois to begin looking for him.

He sought the solace of his bed. The cool sheets felt good against his skin as he tried to block out the helplessness he felt. Jimmy was over at Lois' with Sarah. They seemed to be hitting it off pretty well. He was happy for them. He hoped the young man would finally settle down and quit bouncing around from one girlfriend to another. On second thoughts maybe he was safer not taking the relationships seriously. Clark fought back the tears that began to envelop him. His world was falling apart, and he had no way of knowing how to fix it.

Lois looked around impatiently. Clark had been gone for over an hour. She was getting worried. She hoped he hadn't gone on one of his mysterious errands. Her legs were getting stiff from sitting in the Jeep so long. She opened the door to get out and stretch her legs and found a box of takeout by her door.



"What in the world?" Lois muttered to herself. It was the Thai food Clark had gone to get for her. She felt the boxes. They were lukewarm. They had been sitting there for quite some time. She reached down to pick the takeout up and found a note.

She opened the note and read, "Lois, I didn't want to interrupt your date. Here's the food. Like I said I would appreciate being told where I stand with you before you start seeing other people. --CK."

Tears welled up in her eyes. He had seen her with Dan. He had assumed that she...Oh God, what a mess. She had to find Clark. She had to straighten this out right now. She just hoped she wasn't too late. She picked up her cell phone and called the Daily Planet.

"Hello, Allan? Yeah, I need someone to cover for me and Clark. Yeah, down at the Metropolis General Hospital. Okay, thanks. I'll be waiting."

Clark stared at the ceiling, letting out a long breath as he listened to the pounding on his front door. He knew it was Lois. He could tell by the sharp clicks of her heels and the pattern of her knocking. She was angry. He didn't care.

"Clark! Open up! I know you're in there!"

He sighed. Climbing out of bed, he headed for the door to attend to his unwanted guest. Midway, he realized he wasn't dressed and went back to his bedroom to slip on a pair of jeans before answering the door.

"Clark!"

"I'm coming already," he muttered. He glanced at the clock and shook his head. It had taken her two and a half hours to come looking for him. How long had it taken her to find his note? How long had she sat with Scardino doing whatever she was doing with him?

"What?!" he barked irritably, yanking the door open.

"Don't you 'what' me, mister!" She stormed past him, pushing him aside. "What kind of partner are you, leaving me on a stakeout by myself like that? What would have happened if we'd gotten a break? What if Wilder had left her office? Do you know it took thirty minutes for Allan to drag himself down there?"

"Are you done?" he asked irritably, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Am I done? Where do you get off?? You...you...!!!"

"ME? I'm not the one over there having a date in the middle of an investigation! I was gone for what, five, or maybe ten minutes before he showed up?"



"I was not having a date!"

"Really? You could have fooled me! You're over there having wine with the guy. I was gone for TEN minutes, Lois, then I come back and HE's there. What did you expect me to do?"

"He just showed up. What was I supposed to do, barricade my car door with your name plastered all over it?" she fumed, sarcastically.

"Well, you didn't have to invite him in to have dinner!" Clark paced around her as the fight escalated.

"He brought food. He went out of his way to bring dinner. I didn't want to hurt his feelings," Lois argued.

"You didn't want to hurt his feelings?" Clark echoed in disbelief. "Since when has sensitivity been a part of your demeanor? From the first day, we met you were anything but -- "

"That's different!" she retorted.

"How?" he challenged.

Lois grew quiet. He could feel the anger coursing through his body as he watched her withdraw. He hated seeing her like this but he couldn't take it anymore. Dan Scardino was not someone he wanted as a permanent fixture in his and Lois' life.

He could tell by the way her body language changed that she didn't have an answer for him. Did she want to be with Dan? Is that why she couldn't just tell him off like she had done to him so many times before? Or was there something else he wasn't seeing?

How?

Lois didn't have an answer for him. She hated remembering the beginning of their partnership. She had acted so arrogantly toward him. It was true she'd mellowed out over the past year, but Clark had suffered the brunt of her temper through the worst. The old Lois Lane would never have tolerated Dan Scardino and his interference with her relationship. What had happened to her?

"Well?" Clark probed, interrupting her thoughts. "Why don't you explain what is so different?"

"Because, because..."

"Because what?" Clark pressed.



She could see the frustration and hurt all over his face. She hated seeing this side of him. He hardly ever allowed himself to get this angry with her and now it seemed he wasn't going to just let this go as he had with so many other things in the past.

"Because it just is," she argued. "You're my best friend," she said quietly.

"Yeah, some best friend..." he muttered.

"What is that supposed to mean? I am a very good friend!"

"Oh, really? You ditch me on investigations every chance you get to grab the exclusive for yourself. Yeah, that's a great friend. I know, how about when you decided to teach me the ropes of being a reporter by stealing my story? That was a sign of great friendship. Then, of course, there were the countless times I tried to warn you, you were involved with a sociopath, but I don't know anything, right? Oh, and let's not forget more recently when you slammed the door in my face after our date? Or why you kept letting that Scardino guy hit on you?"

Lois had the decency to look ashamed. She fought to keep the tears from escaping the corners of her eyes. "That is not fair, Clark."

"How do you think it makes me feel when every time I try to talk to you or spend any time with you...there he is?!" Clark was fuming. "I'm not stupid, Lois."

"I never said you were," Lois said, between heated breaths.

"Well, you sure seem to act like I am. You keep him around for some reason I don't even know."

Keep him around? Is that what Clark really thought? She was keeping Dan around as a backup? She didn't want a relationship with Dan, she wanted one with Clark. Pigheaded, bonehead Clark. As frustrating as he was she still couldn't deny the fact that she was in love with him.

"Clark, I..."

He waved her off. "Just leave, please."

"What?" she asked surprised.

"Leave." He sighed. "I have better things to do than fight with you about something you don't even.... Just forget it."

Anger coursed through her as she watched him walk back towards the living room. She stalked after him, angry at him for dismissing her. "Oh, no, you don't! You started this, you're going to finish it!"

"Lois, just leave, now."



"No! For once, I would like to finish a conversation with you without you running off to do whatever it is you're really doing."

"What is that supposed to mean?" he scoffed.

"Mr. Cheese of the Month club? Give me a break!"

"I do have a life outside of your little universe, Lois, you're just too pig-headed and stubborn and ...and self-absorbed to realize that."

"I am not!"

"Really? A year ago you didn't care about me leaving; it was all about the exclusive for you."

"That is not true."

"Isn't it? You couldn't have been less bothered about my leaving before; now, all of a sudden, it's your main concern."

"Why wouldn't I care? What you do reflects on me and -- " She stopped mid sentence, realizing what she was saying. She WAS a bit self-absorbed. She glared back at him, realizing she had walked right into that one. "That is not fair. I'm a different person than I was a year ago."

She'd softened over the past year and had grown to depend on him. It was true she didn't care where he was a year ago. She'd been too busy chasing after a fantasy and refused to realize what was right under her nose the entire time.

"I know," he said quietly.

He hated this. He hated fighting with her. Most of all, he hated seeing her so upset. She was fighting valiantly to suppress the tears that were threatening to escape from the corners of her eyes.

Clark closed his eyes for a moment, pinching the bridge of his nose tightly as he fought for control over the anger that was raging through him. The adrenaline pumping through his body scared him. "Look, I'm sorry I blew up at you. It's just been so frustrating."

"I know," she said quietly. She sat down on his couch and began to cry. "You hate me," she cried. "I don't blame you. I hate myself."

Clark was unable to remain angry with her when she was this vulnerable. He took a seat next to her and pulled her into his embrace.



"I don't hate you, Lois," he tried to soothe her. He felt the moisture from her tears against his chest. The vibration from her heaved sobs subsided slightly. "Lois, look at me." She caught his gaze. "I don't hate you. I might get angry or annoyed with you but I could never hate you."

"I don't deserve you," she sobbed again.

He sighed as he held her tightly. "Lois, please stop crying."

"I don't deserve you. I'm an idiot. I kept leading Dan on after Mayson died," she continued to sob. "Now, he keeps on asking me out and I don't know what to do. I've made such a mess of things."

Mayson. This had started with Mayson's death. He had had such a hard time dealing with his guilt over her death. He'd pushed Lois away - apparently right into Scardino's arms. He silently cursed himself.

"Lois..." he sighed. "Come on, it'll be okay," he said quietly. She relaxed against his touch, allowing him to put an arm around her as she cried.

Back at Lois' apartment, Jimmy and Sarah were getting to know one another. A bowl of popcorn sat on Lois' coffee table as they watched television. Sarah shook her head. "You think this is funny?"

"Come on, it's F-troop," Jimmy said as if that explained everything. "Look, I know it's kinda hokey, but I mean Corporal Agarn, Chief Wild Eagle..." He caught the look she was giving him. "You think I'm retarded, don't you?"

"No." She traced the outline of his jaw. "I think you're just weird enough to be sexy." Jimmy smiled at her then took the remote and turned the television off. "Bag F Troop." He then moved in to kiss her.

"Do you want something to eat?" Clark asked, pulling away from her slightly.

Lois had shed her jacket and shoes and sat curled up on the couch next to him. Her stomach was in knots after their fight. She shook her head. "Not now." She reclaimed his embrace by snuggling up close to him. He was leaned back against the back of the couch. She lay against his chest as he ran his hand through her hair. Her breathing was still a little unsteady from crying earlier.

"Lois, are you okay?" he asked. She knew he was worried about her. They'd both said a lot of hurtful things to one another.



"I'm fine," she said softly, tracing random patterns against his well-chiseled chest. She rested her cheek against his chest, taking a shallow breath.

"You sure?" he inquired, shaking her slightly.

She nodded, tightening her arms around him. He was always there for her when she needed him. From Lex Luthor to Trask to Barbara Trevino she had always come to Clark for comfort. Maybe that was why it had been so hard to push things past the friendship threshold. He had always been safe.

Back at Lois' apartment, Jimmy pulled away from Sarah for a moment. "Uh, do you want something to drink?" He rose from the couch and went into the kitchen to grab a drink.

"This wouldn't be one of those avoidance of intimacy moments, now would it?" Sarah teased.

"No, it's just my mouth was really dry."

Sarah just smiled, laughing inwardly at Jimmy. It was evident he was uncomfortable in an intimate setting with a woman for very long. The phone rang and she answered it.

"Hello?"

A female voice was on the other end. "Sarah?"

"Yes?"

"It's time to choose the fallen warrior."

"What?"

"Warrior," she repeated.

"Yes, I understand."

Jimmy sat back on the couch. "All Lois has is diet. I hope that's okay."

Sarah didn't acknowledge him. She got up from the couch and went to open the door.

On the other side were two women he didn't recognize. The eldest woman handed Sarah a gun.

"Sarah, what are you doing?" Jimmy asked.

"Exactly what she's been told to do." Claudette smiled at him. "Lock the door, Sarah."



"You don't get it, do you? Martin wasn't kidnapping Sarah. He was putting her back." She pulled out a needle and headed towards Jimmy.

"I'm sorry," Clark cupped her cheek. "I never meant to hurt you."

"No." Lois shook her head. "You were right. The old me never would have tolerated any of this."

"Lois." He rubbed his hand up and down her shoulder as she continued.

"I don't know. Maybe I'm losing my touch. A year ago I was able to nip this kind of a situation in the bud before it even became anything. Present company excluded - not without me trying, though."

"Of course." Clark smiled back at her.

She had done everything in her power to push him away for months until finally, she started to let him in. He wasn't sure what had been the final breaking point for her. "I guess, no matter what, you can't go through life unchanged, huh?" she mused.

"It's been a rough year," Clark reasoned.

"Yeah." Lois nodded. "Listen, I'm sure they've got a movie on or something." She clicked the remote to the television on. "Probably much more interesting than all this emotional mess."

"Lois...." Clark reached his hand over to take the remote from her.

"Clark," her voice was shaky as she spoke. "I'm fine. I really just want to watch a movie right now."

He met her gaze. She was determined to close herself off for the moment. He relented, knowing she wasn't going to deal with the emotional tsunami that was threatening to take over until she was ready.

"All right, let's see what's on."

He leaned back against the couch. Lois leaned back against him as she clicked through the channels until she finally found the classic. 'It's A Wonderful Life.'

"I really love this movie," she whispered, resting her head in the nook of his shoulder and neck.

"Me too." He smiled down at her. "We used to watch it every Christmas."

"Sounds nice," she said, wistfully.



"Yeah, it was." He smiled. "Kind of a tradition for the holidays."

Her fingertips brushed against his skin, sending a heated chill down his spine. He looked down to see her watching the famous scene of George Bailey throwing the rocks into the abandoned house. Her right hand continued to draw random patterns against his chest as she remained oblivious to the effect she was having on him.

"What is it you want, Mary? What do you want?" George Bailey asked Mary.

Lois smiled. "This is one of my favorite scenes."

"You want the moon? Just say the word and I'll throw a lasso around and pull it down," George said to Mary.

Lois felt tears come to her eyes as she watched the scene between George and Mary Bailey. She had watched the movie more times than she could count, but something about the scene seemed different to her now. Mary had a man willing to give her anything she ever wanted. Even the moon. It made her heart ache as she watched the scene unfold. She had once dreamed of having someone to take care of her the way George Bailey had Mary. To love her so much he'd be willing to give her the moon.

For a time, she'd thought Superman was that man, but it was slowly becoming apparent that he would never be what she needed. She had turned to Lex when she had been rejected by Superman, time and time again. She had still tried to pursue a relationship with him regardless; until that fateful night that had changed everything for her.

<<"Who are you; her big brother?" Dillinger pushed Clark back a few steps, but he stood his ground, standing in front of Lois protectively.

"Clark, no!" she pleaded, knowing he was about to try and do something extremely stupid.

Clyde held up a gun and cocked the trigger. She held her breath, unable to move. He wasn't. He wouldn't.

Several shots rang out as she screamed, watching Clark fall to the ground. "Clark!!!">>

Clark nodded, resting his head against hers. "Classic love story," She smiled against his chest, tightening her arms around him. "Hey." He looked down at her in concern. "You okay?"

"Fine." She smiled up at him, turning in his arms to link her arms around his neck. "Thank you," she whispered, leaning up to brush her lips against his ever so lightly.

He smiled. "What was that for?"



“For not being like everyone else.” She smiled. “I’m not as good at the relationship thing as I may look. This...” She gestured between them. “...it’s scary, but in a good way. I don’t know if you noticed but I’m not the best at working with anyone. I guess that’s why none of my past relationships worked out. I wasn’t willing to have a partner or compromise.”

“Lois Lane, independent? Nah,” he teased.

He was trying to help ease the tension by joking around with her. He always knew what she needed. He was her best friend. That was what was so scary about this. She needed him as her best friend but she also needed him for so much more.

“Yeah.”

“So, what changed?”

“What do you mean?”

“You said you refused to partner with anyone, but we’ve been partners for over a year.” He lifted up his arms. “I don’t think you’ve killed me yet.” She thwacked him against the chest. “Sorry, bad joke.”

“Extremely,” she agreed. “I don’t know. You’re you.”

She wanted to kiss him. He was such a good kisser. She could feel the heat of his hand against her lower back as he held her in his arms. She didn’t want to move. She wanted to stay like this forever. She wanted to kiss him again. She looked up into his eyes. A drowning sensation surrounded her as he stared back at her.

Was he thinking the same thing? Did he feel the same way? She knew he cared about her, but those words - the three scary words - had not yet escaped their lips to each other yet. Was it normal to be so overwhelmed in the beginning of a relationship?

She brushed her hand against his chest. She pushed her hand up, linking her arms around his neck once more as she sat up, supporting herself on her knees. She leaned up against him brushing her lips against his once more; a little longer this time. He cupped her cheek, fingering the outline of her jaw line as they slowly pulled apart. She needed more.

She let out a shuddered breath before she reached up to recapture his lips once more. He groaned in pleasure when her weight shifted against him. The soft cotton of her blouse pressed up against his chest as she deepened their kiss.

She couldn’t get enough of him. Her hands ran through his hair, raking the soft curls as he held her against him. “Lois,” He murmured against her lips. She needed more from him; so much more. She moved his hands from her waistline to her ribcage, inviting him to touch her. He gently squeezed breasts with one hand as he tightened his arm around her waist with the other. She moaned his name as she pressed her weight up against him, deepening the kiss.



Just as quickly the contact between them was gone. He removed his hand, breaking off the kiss as he pushed her back. “Lois wait,” His hands rested by his side. He let out a shuddered breath, resting his head against the cushion behind him.

Why was he stopping? He wanted this just as much as she did. “What is it?” She asked in between shaky breaths.

She felt so good in his arms. He’d dreamed about this for so long. Holding her in his arms, kissing her, making...

He couldn’t do this. Not yet. Not like this.

“Lois,” he began. “Are you sure this isn’t too fast?”

“Positive,” she murmured, leaning in to nip at his earlobe. “All I’ve been doing is waiting. I’m tired of waiting.”

“Oh, God, Lois,” he moaned as he felt her graze her fingernails against his chest. He fought to remain in control of his body, his emotions. “Wait, wait, wait,” he pleaded with her, pushing her away from him.

“What?” Lois asked irritably.

What? Why couldn’t he just enjoy having the woman he loved in his arms? Maybe it had something to do with the fact that a few hours ago she’d been flirting with another man. He had to be sure Scardino was out of the picture. He had to be sure of where they stood.

“We need to slow this down,” he said, reaching up to cup her cheek.

Her expression sobered slightly. “Why?”

He smiled up at her. “Because I don’t want you to wake up in the morning and regret...” He was cut off by her recapturing his lips in a passionate kiss before she pulled away from him.

“You were saying?” she teased.

He laughed. “You’re trying to distract me.”

“Is it working?”

“No,” he replied softly. “I don’t want a repeat of you slamming the door in my face is all.”

“I don’t see any doors here, do you?” she teased.



“Lois,” he breathed, exasperated.

“What?” She slid off his lap, sitting next to him.

“I’m not doing this, especially not when things are so up in the air between us,”

“Up in the air?” Lois inquired.

“One minute you’re flirting with Scardino; the next you’re here trying to sleep with me. I need to know where we stand.”

“For the record, I wasn’t flirting,” Lois argued.

“Whatever it was,” Clark said. “I’m...You’re not ready...WE’RE not ready for this,” He sighed, raking a hand through his hair. “I don’t do casual relationships.”

“I could never have just a casual relationship with you, Clark,” she whispered back.

She leaned up to recapture his lips. He wrapped his arms around her, deepening the kiss.

"Warrior," Jimmy repeated in unison with Sarah.

"Very good, Jimmy," Dr. Wilder soothed. "You're friends with Lois Lane and Clark Kent, aren't you?"

"Yes," he responded in a monotone voice.

"Would you kill them for us?"

"Yes." A reddish hue flashed through his eyes as he moved towards the door with Sarah close behind.

"Well?" Claudette Wilder inquired to their guest, Mr. Neener.

"I'll have to see the end result before I start writing a check," he said haughtily.

He felt so good. His body was pressed up against hers as she wrapped her legs around him. She raked her hands through his dark silky hair as she continued to devour him. Their surroundings had changed. She felt the soft cotton of his bed sheets against her back as his weight shifted against her. “Cl...”



She hadn't even felt them move from the couch to the bed. He felt so good. He shifted his weight against her, releasing her lips as he brushed his lips against the swell of her breasts, massaging them gently through the fabric of her lace bra. She recalled tossing her blouse on the floor in the living room earlier.

"Oh, Clark," She moaned, reaching beneath the waistband of his jeans. She gasped as he rained a trail of featherlight kisses between the valley of her breasts.

"Oh, God, Lois..." he murmured.

"Oh, Clark, right there." She whispered as he raised himself to her collarbone, massaging it with his tongue.

"Lois..." He moaned against her skin.

She laughed when his lips brushed against her earlobe, nibbling at the sensitive skin. She reached out to hold his hand, intertwining her fingers with his as he continued the pleasurable assault on her body. Her heart was pounding against her chest. He felt so good pressed up against her; as if he was meant to be there in her arms forever.

"Clark..." She moaned against his lips.

A loud bang against the front door jolted them back to the present. "You have got to be kidding me," Lois muttered, covering her face with her hands, "What else could possibly happen tonight? Think whoever it is will just go away?"

Clark stared at the door a moment then shook his head. "I doubt it," he muttered, pushing himself off of her.

She shivered involuntarily as the cool air hit her skin. She wrapped her arms around her chest in an attempt to warm herself up for the moment. She looked around for something to cover up in. Clark handed her his dress shirt from earlier that lay on the floor, forgotten. "Thanks." She threw the shirt on, then made a beeline for the door with Clark in hot pursuit. She swung the door open, ready to pounce on whoever was on the other side.

On the other side of the door, Jimmy and Sarah stood looking quite disheveled. "Lois, CK, thank God! We've been looking everywhere for you. We barely escaped."

Lois visibly relaxed when she saw it was Jimmy on the other side of the door. Of course, it was Jimmy. Who else would be knocking on Clark's door at ten o'clock at night? She could still feel her heart pounding from their interrupted activities. It didn't look like they would be returning to them anytime soon. She glanced at Clark with an apologetic smile. Jimmy and Sarah seemed oblivious.

"Escaped what?" Clark asked, shutting the door behind them.



Jimmy and Sarah got a strange flicker in their eyes, then they pulled guns on both Lois and Clark.

"Jimmy, what are you doing?" Lois asked.

"Put the gun down," Clark pleaded with Sarah.

"We are the fallen warriors," they murmured in unison. Sarah fired her gun; Clark caught the bullets at super speed. Lois took advantage of the distraction and kicked the other gun out of Jimmy's hands. Clark grabbed Sarah and Jimmy as they fell to the ground.

"What the hell is going on here?"

Lois eyed him suspiciously. "How did you catch them so quickly?"

"Good reflexes, I guess," he stammered.

"I'll call the police."

"Yeah." Clark nodded. Jimmy and Sarah continued to struggle in his grasp, but he kept a firm grip on both of them, preventing them from escape.

His entire body ached, throbbing in pain from leaving the intimate embrace he and Lois had shared. He shook his head, trying to change the direction of his thoughts. All he could think about at the moment was the taste of her skin beneath his lips and the feel of her soft, ivory skin against his. He wanted nothing more than to resume their activities, but they had Jimmy and Sarah to deal with.

Lois sat in the kitchen with her back to him. He'd fantasized about seeing her wear his clothes before. He'd daydream about being with her, getting married and having children. Somehow having been interrupted by Jimmy and Sarah almost seemed like a good thing. There were so many things he still needed to tell her. Before they crossed that threshold, she needed to know him - all of him.

How could he truly share himself with her - be in a relationship with her - if she didn't truly know him? Yes, it was a blessing in disguise they'd been interrupted. The sound of the siren on the patrol car, as it pulled up, reached his ears.

Lois glanced towards him. She'd heard it too. "I guess that's Henderson."

"Yeah." She nodded, glancing wistfully at him before looking away. He watched her for a moment. He hoped she wasn't upset with him. Maybe they had pushed things too far, too fast. She had regret written all over her face.



"Lois?"

A knock at the door announced Henderson's arrival.

"That's Henderson," she said quickly, standing up to answer the door.

"Yeah."

"So, Jimmy and Sarah are going to be fine," Lois told Perry as they sat in the Daily Planet offices the next day. "Apparently, the drug only has a 12-hour effect."

"That's good to hear. I think I'm going to head over there and try and see how he's doing. You know that boy's kinda become like a son to me..." Perry said.

Lois smiled at him. "I'm sure he'll appreciate the company," Lois said.

"So, where's Clark?" Perry asked.

"Uh, he's down at Metropolis P.D. talking to Henderson. He should be back any minute," Lois said, a little too quickly.

Perry eyed her critically. "Something happen between you two that I should be aware of?"

"No, we're fine." Lois smiled up at him. The truth was she wasn't sure where she and Clark stood right now. She was terrified to face him after everything that had happened the night before. She hadn't even told him she loved him and she had almost made love to him. Part of her regretted what had transpired between them while the other part wanted to pick up where they'd left off. Clark had been right. She did regret things in the morning. He'd tried to stop things before they'd gotten out of control and she had pushed him for more. She shook her head bitterly. She was such a fool.

Last night had changed everything between her and Clark. Clark had caught that bullet with his bare hands. Only one person could do that. Superman. She had avoided him the rest of the night, trying to reconcile this revelation to herself. She had been working side by side with Superman all along and didn't even know it.

She had turned Superman's declaration of love to her down. She was an idiot. She was the Daily Planet's best investigate reporter and she hadn't even been able to figure out her partner was Superman. He had lied to her so many times. She had lied to him.

Was he ever going to tell her? Was that why he wanted to slow things down last night? She was so confused. She had no idea how she was going to approach this with him. She wasn't sure if she should confront him or let him tell her on his own.



"Uh-huh," Perry responded. He didn't want to push her. He knew she had something on her mind and by the looks of things, it was something big. "Well, I'll see you later then."

"Okay," Lois said, not looking up from her computer screen. Perry just nodded then headed out.

Lois continued typing away when a voice interrupted her thoughts. "Hi, Lois."

"What do you want, Dan?" Lois asked.

"Well, I wanted to see if you were free tonight?" Dan asked.

"No, I'm not free tonight, Dan. I have a date tonight."

"With Kent?"

"Yes." She sighed happily. "We were supposed to go out last night but we ended up having to go on a stakeout."

"Well, what about lunch? Are you free for lunch?"

"No, I'm not available Dan. I'm not available anytime. Look, you seem like a nice guy and I'm flattered but I'm in a relationship with Clark and you have to respect that."

"I know but -- "

"No, 'buts.' I need to learn to be more decisive. Clark is what I want. I'm sorry but I'm not interested."

"All right. I hope Kent knows how lucky he is," Scardino replied sadly.

Lois just smiled. "Good bye, Dan."

"Yeah." He walked away sadly and headed for the elevator. Once he was in the elevator, Lois took the opportunity to take the sculpture he had given her and throw it in the trash.

Clark walked up to her desk. "Hi." She could tell by the expression on his face he'd watched the entire exchange between herself and Dan.

"Hi." Lois smiled at him. She noticed the uncertainty in his eyes. "I told Dan I'm taken."

"I know." He smiled back at her.

She looked at him critically for a minute as if she were trying to make up her mind about something then she turned to him and asked, "Do you want to get some lunch?"



"Sure." He responded a little uncertainly. He followed her up the stairs to the elevator. She could tell he was nervous. Did he suspect she knew? She smiled inwardly. Things were going to be interesting around the Daily Planet from now on.

~The End ... For Now

