

# The Birthday Surprise

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Rated: G

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Summary: Lois thought she was going to give Clark a surprise; little did she know that the tables would soon be turned.

Comments and constructive feedback welcome, but be gentle, please...I have only been a FoLC for a couple months and this is my first LC fanfic. It is also one of my first ever pieces of fiction. (I also wrote a few very short stories and several filk in the Forever Knight universe.)

Semi-standard disclaimers apply: I wish Clark Kent were mine, but he isn't; neither is Lois, for that matter – y'all know who the creators and owners of said characters are. I am just borrowing them for a little not-for-profit fun.

Many thanks to my BRs for giving of their time so graciously, for catching the typos and spelling errors, and for offering suggestions to enhance the narrative flow. This piece is much the better for them. Any remaining faults in the story lie solely with me, of course. Thanks Jeanine, Amber, Lara, and Ray! :-)

This vignette takes place sometime between "I'm Looking Through You" and "Top Copy". AFAIK, we don't know when Clark's actual birthday is (although I am guessing that he would choose his adoption day as his alleged birthday), but the Planet's personnel files must have *some* date recorded as his birthday; and I am sure Lois would have sniffed it out...

I'd like to dedicate this piece to all the fanfic writers whose works have given me many pleasant hours, as well as those whose works I have yet to enjoy.

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Lois proffered a brightly wrapped box while wishing Clark a happy birthday.

Clark, seeing the wicked gleam in her eye, hesitantly took the few steps necessary to cross his living room to accept the gift. He resisted the temptation to "super peek" inside; instead, he methodically removed the tape from one end of the package and then slid the box out of the wrapping paper. Lifting the lid, he looked inside. His heart skipped a beat when he saw a blue T-shirt emblazoned with the yellow and red El shield. Did she know his secret? Was this her way of telling him? "Wow, Lois. What an, um, unusual gift. What made you decide to get it for me?"

Lois had not expected this reaction. Sure, it was a gag gift, bought on impulse after Clark's comments on her Superman pajamas. She hadn't expected him to fall in love with it. If truth be told, she hadn't thought he would even like it; but neither had she dreamed he would be so -- disconcerted? Distressed? What was that expression that she had seen flit across his face? "Well, you seemed to be the last holdout on having Superman apparel; I felt it my duty as your partner to make sure you kept up with the latest fashions. So go try it on."

His distress turned to desperation...she couldn't see him in that shirt! "I can't! It would, uh, embarrass Superman if he saw me wearing it."

She raised an eyebrow in skepticism of his excuse. "I don't

see him here now."

"No," Clark said slowly, to buy himself time to come up with a convincing rebuttal, "but he sometimes pops in here unannounced. He could come by at any moment, especially since he knows today's my birthday."

"Clark, criminals hurl insults and bullets at him every day, and they both bounce off of him! I think he can handle seeing you in a T-shirt."

"He expects such things from his enemies; but he and I are friends. This would be different."

Lois Lane was not the Planet's best investigative reporter for nothing...she could tell a cover-up when she saw one, especially when the perpetrator was her partner and best friend. He was acting distinctly nervous, even for him. "All right, Kent, let's have the truth! What's the *real* reason you're refusing to wear my gift?"

Clark knew at this point that he had lost the battle; continuing to refuse to don the shirt would just raise Lois' suspicions even more. Maybe if he just wore it for a minute and tried to distract her, she wouldn't notice anything....

He feigned an embarrassed laugh. "All right – I'll tell you the truth. I would just feel a little silly in it; that's all. But since I know that 'Mad Dog' Lane won't let go until I try it on...." He went into his bedroom, ostensibly just to doff his work shirt and tie (but really to make sure he also covertly ditched "the suit" which he had been wearing underneath) and put on the T-shirt. He came back out and did a quick 360 degree turn. "Enough humiliation for one day - off with the shirt!" He immediately started to remove the shirt, but he was too late. The damage had been done.

While the shirt had been on, Lois had decided, "In for a penny, in for a pound." Since he was wearing a Superman shirt, she wondered what he would look like in full Superman regalia.... She mentally substituted blue tights for Clark's gray trousers. Then she added the emblematic red cape. She went on to imagine Clark without glasses and with his hair slicked back. He and Superman could be twins! If she didn't know any better.... But then again, it would explain a lot.... She had never seen them together. And could *that* be the real reason her partner ran out on her so often, and with such flimsy excuses? Realization dawned.

"YOU?!? YOU are...?!? And you didn't ever tell me? I thought we were friends!" Stunned, her legs gave out on her and she collapsed on the sofa.

Clark sat beside her and took her hand. He felt an odd mixture of relief, resolve, and an apprehension approaching terror. "Lois, no more secrets. Let's talk."

The end -- or the beginning?

THE END