

I Sense That I Love You 1: First Touch

By Anti-Kryptonite <dreamnovelist@gmail.com>

Rated G

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Summary: A few of Lois's thoughts concerning both the sense of touch and Clark.

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A/N: I've always been especially entranced by the chemistry between Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher; it fascinates me anew every time I watch the show. So, in a way, these five Sense stories are something of a tribute to them, as well as the writers of this excellent show! Also, I've been remiss in my last few stories by not properly thanking my General Editor, Deja Vu, for her great help, work, and encouragement, not to mention a lot of guidance as I stumbled my way around. Thanks a lot!

To this day, I can't explain it. I don't know why I did it — and kept doing it — or why it became such an addiction. Because it *was* an addiction — that's the only reasonable explanation.

The first time I reached out to do it, I was establishing that I was in charge and he'd better realize and accept that fact quickly if he wished to survive. But after that ... I just kept doing it. One time beget another and another and another until I was finding excuses to do it even more often. And even while I made it a habit, I couldn't explain what it was about him that drew me to him.

Claude and his treachery had prompted me to swear off men — not all men, just almost every single one I met. Lucy said I was searching for the perfect man, an ideal I subconsciously set too high so that I didn't ever have to worry about what to do if I did find Mr. Right. Little did she know that shortly after she spoke those words, I'd meet a superhero from another planet, a billionaire all set to give me the world, and a small-town farmboy who defied labeling, all three of whom possessed their own forms of perfection, all three extremely compelling in their own ways.

Superman was, literally, out of this world. I know — I wrote that line myself in my first article about him. He was drop-dead gorgeous, seemingly all-powerful, and he set the good of the people above his own needs and desires. The minute I saw him eat a bomb and smile so politely at me, I was a goner. The instant he swooped me up into his arms and flew me through the skies before a rising sun ... well, it was like every fairy-tale come true.

Lex Luthor was more than I ever thought would come my way. He was reality's Prince Charming — not as handsome, amazing, or powerful as Superman, but more real and just as seemingly unattainable. Out of all the women in the world who were more than willing to date Metropolis's most eligible bachelor, Lex chose me. And he kept choosing me, pursuing me even when my career and personality made me hard to get. The more I kept protesting that I didn't eat dessert, the more of it he offered.

They were both charismatic men with a lot of similarities,

the major difference being that one was good and the other was evil. Not that I knew that then; that didn't come out till much later — but it was true nonetheless. Back then, I only knew that Superman kept me at a distance, Luthor actively courted me, and I ... I waited.

Because there was a third man.

Clark Kent — confusing, mysterious, and open — the world's most unusual enigma. I hardly paid attention when Perry first introduced us, casting him a glance that took in only the basic facts. He was male, tall, and dark — and he stood when I walked into the room, which was just weird. I didn't even give him a second thought until Perry called me into his office to listen to the mood piece Clark had written — the mood piece *I* was supposed to have written. The whole time Perry was reading the article, I was trying to decide whether I was angry to have a story stolen or impatient to get back to real journalism.

Then Perry assigned him to work with me. Suddenly, Clark went from being an oddity to being a threat, someone who could hurt me just as badly as Claude had.

Only ... Clark didn't act like Claude. He followed me as I ranted to him about our individual rankings, smiled when I threatened him, laughed when he thought I wasn't looking, and came after me with no thought for his own safety when I was in danger.

And I trusted him. Why, I'll never know. Maybe it was because he did whatever I told him to without complaint. Maybe it was because I could tell that he liked me but wouldn't move on it unless I wanted him to. Maybe it was because even then, even as confused as everything was, I still recognized that there was something there worth keeping close. Whatever the reason, I told him things I would never have told another living soul; I let him work with me and shared my leads with him and even eventually accepted him as a partner; I allowed him to teach me how to have a friend and how to be a friend.

And I touched him.

Still angry with Perry that he had made me take Kent as my task force and determined that I wouldn't be pushed off my own story, I strode out of the editor's office, snapped out an order, and smacked Clark on the arm. That should have been the end of it.

But it wasn't.

I found myself hugging him when we found Samuel Platt's body. I kept patting his arm or his chest to get his attention or emphasize a point. I accepted a celebratory hug from him when we cracked our first story.

And maybe *that* was the moment when touching him became addictive because that hug threw me for a huge loop. I don't even know why I accepted it in the first place — I was a woman, he was a man, and we worked together, which, taken altogether, equaled a ban on hugging — and yet the instant his arms went around me, I lost all coherent thought. I couldn't remember why I was keeping him at arm's length, or why I had told him not to fall for me, or why I was doing my best to keep him too intimidated to approach me. All I knew was that it felt ... right. It felt ... like we belonged together.

I should have been scared. Instead, I was intrigued, puzzled by this odd connection, determined to get to the bottom of it. Or at least, that's what I told myself. If I realized that I was hugging him too much or standing too close to him or leaning over his shoulder a bit too often, I would tell myself that I was just trying to figure out why the feel of his

flesh beneath his shirts and suit coats was so compelling.

I've always been very good at lying to myself.

After a while, new people to the Planet would see us and automatically assume we were a romantic couple. At first, I couldn't figure out why. I mean, Clark and I were friends — didn't that mean we were allowed to hug and hold hands? Didn't that mean I shouldn't be the subject of water-cooler gossip if I gave him a massage and leaned on his shoulders? Didn't that mean he was allowed to squeeze my neck and put his arm around me and touch his forehead to mine when we were both tired or scared?

Apparently not.

But you know what? I didn't care what anybody said so long as Clark didn't mind the frequent physical touches.

And he never seemed to.

In the beginning, I was always the one to initiate the contact, but after a while, Clark seemed to accept that he could touch me without breaking my trust. He never went as far as I did, though. Whereas I might run my hand through his hair to make sure he was all right or drape myself over him at his desk or link my arm through his, he behaved more circumspectly ... but he never pulled away from me. And he handed out his hugs whenever I needed them — which, to be perfectly honest, wasn't quite as often as I took them.

Three men — one I dreamed of, one I accepted, and one I never considered more than a friend. It took a confession, a rejection, and a wedding to make me realize what I should have seen from the very beginning.

I was standing in front of a mirror, observing my white-clad body from three different angles, waiting for the signal to walk down the aisle toward a man who had actually proposed to me — to Lois Lane, the workaholic journalist Cat had sworn could never get herself a suitor.

And I was crying. Really, truly crying. Crying so hard I could only see a blur of white in the mirror. Crying so hard I knew letting Lex slip that diamond ring onto my finger had been a major mistake.

And that's when I asked myself a really important question.

If Lex were in this room and saw me crying, what would he do?

If Superman were in this room and saw me crying, what would he do?

If Clark were in this room and saw me crying, what would he do?

What would I want them to do?

Lex would say a lot of things, his cultured tone perfectly cadenced to calm my irrational weeping and bring me around to his way of thinking. He'd quote a lot of Shakespeare and make a classy joke I'd only halfway understand and then turn and lead me away, satisfied that I agreed with him.

Superman ... well, I wasn't so sure with him after our disastrous midnight meeting. He'd do whatever I asked him to, I didn't doubt that. He'd bring me a tissue and fly across the hall or the country to bring my mother to me, and he'd guard me from any danger. And then, when I was done crying, he'd fly away to save the world.

Clark ... Clark would hug me. And he'd let me cry. And he'd bury his hand in my hair and hold my head to his shoulder. Even though he had now admitted to me just how much he wanted to say and do, he wouldn't say anything besides my name, wouldn't do anything except hold me. And all my tears would disappear.

Because if he were holding me ... there wouldn't be any reason to cry.

My earth-shaking revelation had come a bit late, but at least it had come. I wouldn't let Lex caress my hair or my shoulder or my neck the way I let Clark. I wouldn't expect Superman to put his arm around me or wrap his coat — cape — around me or enfold me in a comforting embrace. Out of all the men in my life, there was only one who could touch me so casually, who could imbue each fleeting contact with so much basic, overwhelming comfort.

Well, needless to say, that was the end of that wedding. The next wedding, however ... that one I didn't stop. If anyone had tried — and boy, did they all try — I wouldn't have stood for it. Because that time I wasn't crying, and even if I had been, I wouldn't have done so for long.

Touch is a funny thing. You don't have to use your hands to touch someone. You don't have to touch someone to show how much you love them. You don't even have to know a truth yourself to convey it through touch.

I know all this because Clark taught it to me.

He touched me through his words — words that made sense even when he didn't.

He showed how much he loved me — by not touching me even when he wanted to.

He told me all the secrets he hid from me by the way he touched me — conveying his love through hugs and his identity through the caress of his hand on my cheek.

Clark assures me that I touched him just as much as he touched me. He claims Superman is the man he is because I fashioned him with my words and faith. He insists that sometimes he could only keep going because I helped him stay upright with a tiny pat or caress of my own. He tells me that he stayed in one place for so long because I grounded him with my own embraces.

And I believe him because I trust him.

Now, years after that first touch, I find myself still touching Clark and being touched by him in return. And I know — Clark might have loved me at first sight, but I loved him at first touch.

THE END