

# The Last Son of El

By Deadly Chakram <dwelf82@yahoo.com>

Rated: G

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Summary: Clark and Lois face a future without children. Each has their own thoughts on the matter.

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. All characters, plot points, and lines of dialogue belong to DC Comics, Warner Brothers, December 3rd Productions and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise. I just like to play with the characters once in a while. My only liberty to the Lois and Clark storyline is the omission of the random, unexplained infant at the end of "The Family Hour."

Dedicated to anyone facing the pain of infertility.

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~~~~~ Clark ~~~~~

Incompatible.

Infertile.

Childless.

The last son of the House of El.

The words beat around my brain, threatening to drive me insane. I try to force them out, but they are as steady and incessant as jungle drums. I abandon my patrol over Metropolis. It's a quiet night for once. A few wet tears slip down my cheeks as I fly and I brush them away angrily. Not now. Not here. There is a time and place for them.

I need to get away. I need time alone. I need to grieve. I need to run away from everyone and everything. Even Lois. Not forever. Just long enough to shed the tears that I've been holding inside. I don't want her to see me grieve. I need to appear strong for her. She's hurting too.

I feel selfish for running away. And I know that, in the end, I have to go back. In the end, all I can do is to privately cry and then put on my bravest face for Lois. I feel ashamed at the need to grieve in private. I tell myself that it is for Lois. I tell myself that I need to be her rock, even though I know that she would never blame me for feeling the way I do.

But the simple truth is, I just don't want her to see my pain.

Rocketing away from Metropolis, I cleave a path through the clouds until I arrive in Antarctica. I settle down on a glacier. I've come here before when I've needed time alone. I've come here to vent my frustrations because here, at least, there are no witnesses to my suffering. No one can see my tears. No one can hear my screams. And scream I do — primal, animal sounds torn from my twisted soul and broken heart. I scream until I have no breath left and my lungs ache from the effort. I scream until my throat is raw. In those screams, I try to funnel all of my frustrations, my sorrows, my hopelessness, my pain.

My screams give way to heaving sobs. I can no longer hold back the torrent of tears. They slip from my eyes and crystallize on my cheeks in the subzero air. I sink to my knees in the ice and snow. For a long while, I stay there on my hands and knees, chest heaving with the effort of my grief. I can't catch my breath. My lungs burn. But I can't stop, can't calm the torment in my soul. I cry until I am exhausted from the effort.

Eventually, the wracking sobs lessen and I can breathe again. How long it takes, I do not know.

I sit down on the glacier, my knees drawn up into my chest, holding my head in my hands. Silent tears still brim in my eyes

and freeze on my lashes. After a time, I look up again. For the first time, I look around at the stark, barren wasteland around me. Barren.

The same fate that I've condemned Lois to.

Guilt claws at me. I never wanted to hurt her. And now, I've hurt her beyond words. I've taken away her chance to be a mother. And it is all my fault. I'm the one with the alien DNA. I'm the one who isn't compatible with her. If I was just a normal guy — or had left her alone to be with a normal guy — this wouldn't have happened. Maybe there would have been stumbling blocks, but they never would have been so insurmountable as this. She would have had a chance to be a mother. With me, there is no chance.

It's also my fault that we can't adopt.

If Lois and I had never gotten close, she never would have been a target for as much of the criminal circuit as she has been. Since meeting me, her life has been in peril more times than I care to remember. Her life has been at risk because of me. That's not to say that she never would have faced danger. Danger is part of her job. But it is because of her connection to Superman that she's been targeted so often.

Had I never created Superman, maybe we could have adopted.

I've condemned her.

And yet, I would never trade a second of my life with her.

I feel so empty inside. I feel like my heart has been torn out and replaced with a chunk of Kryptonite. My grief cuts me like a knife, deeper and more profoundly than the radioactive rock. Once again, despair clenches around my chest.

How did my parents live like this for so many years? How did they survive the heartache day after day? How did they face every month with small shreds of hope that maybe — just maybe — they'd beaten the odds this time? How did they face the disappointment each time when that hope was dashed? It's only been a few days since Dr. Klein delivered the bad news to me. And already I am falling apart. Already my soul feels dead.

I've always done my best to emulate my parents. I've always desired to be just like them. Except for in this one thing. In this one, painful way, I never wanted to be like them.

There will be no more children falling from the sky.

There will be no miracle that will soothe the emptiness in our life.

I haven't been naive. I've always known that this was a possibility. Ever since I discovered my Kryptonian roots a few years ago, I realized that I was, in fact, an alien. I knew my DNA held no traces of humanity. But before Lois and I became a couple, I didn't worry much about my ability to procreate. I'd never loved a woman before Lois. And until Lois was mine, I never gave much thought to any hopeful, future children. That's not to say that it never crossed my mind. I'd always wanted to find my other half, to settle down, and raise a family. But until Lois loved me, that possibility never seemed real to me. It was just a wish, a dream. Lois made it a reality.

My heart is breaking.

I am a man of action. I have dedicated my life and my powers to helping those in need. As a reporter, I have worked to expose the nasty underbelly of society so that things can be fixed. I've chosen to cover stories that will shed light on worthy causes, knowing that by bringing to light the struggle of the poor or the next big charity event, I can impact lives. My articles reach thousands of people. And among those thousands are others with the means to help the less fortunate. As Superman, I have given over my powers for the good of mankind. I suppose I could have chosen to use them to gain wealth and power. But that's not who I am. I enjoy using my abilities to save lives, to stop crime, and to help out the helpless. As Superman, I can also draw attention to worthwhile causes by showing up to charity events or by giving

statements to the press.

But now, I am completely powerless.

For all of my abilities, I feel worthless. For all of my strength and power, there is nothing that I can do to fix this. For all those that I have helped, I cannot help myself. There's nothing that I can do to make my DNA mesh with Lois' to create a new, separate, perfect, beautiful life. There is nothing that I can do to ensure that one day my son will inherit his mother's smile or that I will see my eyes looking back at me from my daughter.

I want to be strong for Lois. I want to be her rock. But how?

How can I pretend that this doesn't bother me? How can I let Lois know how much I hate myself right now? How do I lie to her? How can I put on a happy face each day? How can I play the part of the eternal optimist? How can I hide the lump that forms in my throat every time I see a happy family together? How do I live with the guilt I feel, knowing that this is all my fault?

Or should I even bother to hide my feelings? Ever since Lois discovered the truth about who and what I am, I've always promised to keep no secrets from her.

She's hurting as much as I am. Perhaps we can help each other overcome this. Perhaps our being together is the only way to heal the heartache. We'll lean on each other. We'll draw strength from each other. We may never stop hurting, but together we will survive this, as we've survived everything else that life has thrown at us so far. And we have survived so very, very much.

I leave the glacier and head back home, but I don't go inside. Instead, I fly up into the night sky until I break free of the Earth's atmosphere and I can see the curve of the planet. I hover there, miles above my house and my wife. I hover there, as I've always done when I am troubled. I am not part of the sky. I am not part of the Earth.

Separate.

Alone.

Isolated.

The last child of the House of El.

My heart aches for Lois. In the last few weeks, I saw the glint in her eyes as we discussed the possibility of having children. I saw the wistful look on her face as we passed children in the streets. I saw the fires of her maternal instincts flare into life in her soul. I saw the hope in her face when she thought that the bassinet that was delivered was from me. I heard the silent plea in her voice when she'd asked if it was my way of telling her that we could have children.

And just as suddenly, I saw her hope and spirit crushed. I watched the hope flee from her eyes when I gave her the bad news. I saw something within her break. Her strength failed. Her iron will snapped. Just for a moment. And then, somehow, she was strong again. She forged ahead, refusing to just believe what Dr. Klein told us. And so, we asked her father for help.

But twice more, I saw her heart break. Her father could find nothing wrong with the data. And we were denied the ability to pursue an adoption. It broke my heart to see my wife so utterly defeated. And I hurt inside, knowing that there was nothing that I could say or do that could take away her pain.

A new thought occurs to me.

Could Dr. Klein and Sam be wrong? Could a miracle still happen? Do I dare hold any hope of that? Or am I setting myself up for further heartache?

I feel a tiny ember of hope barely light within my soul. It's only a speck and will extinguish easily if I am not careful. But it is there. I will shelter it, placing it as deep within my soul as I can. I will protect it, as best I can, from the bitter disappointments I am sure are still to come.

Oddly, I feel no relief. I feel no stronger. I feel no less pain. I only feel drained in body, mind, and spirit. But that tiny spark of hope holds me together. My heart and my soul are still fragile,

but they are no longer tearing apart at the seams. My tears have dried. I am composed once more. I can face Lois again.

Day by day — that's how I will survive this.

Day by day — I will lean on Lois and she will lean on me.

Our love is the strongest force on Earth.

United, there is nothing we can't overcome.

I may be the last of the House of El, but I am by far the luckiest. I have something that no one else has. I have Lois.

~~~~~ Lois ~~~~~

Incompatible.

Infertile.

Undesirable for adoption.

Childless.

I cannot sleep. The words refuse to leave my mind. Like a stuck record, they just replay over and over in my head. Each repetition is more painful than the last.

It's late in the night. I sit up in bed, with only the moon casting any sort of light in the room. Beside me, Clark sleeps fitfully. Even in the dark, I can see the tight lines of grief marring his features. I reach out and lightly caress his cheek. That seems to comfort him a little and some of the lines on his brow smooth out once more.

Clark.

My husband.

The man I should be raising children with.

The last child of his Kryptonian family.

It isn't fair.

Clark is the type of man that deserves to be a father. He's the type of man that any woman would dream of raising a family with. He's gentle and kind. He's the most patient, most loving man I've ever known. He has the biggest, most compassionate heart. Even without his powers, he is the best man I have ever known. Even without his powers, he gives of himself freely to others. Even without his powers, everything about him is super.

It isn't fair.

The world needs another Clark Kent.

There is an ache deep within me. It comes from everywhere and suffuses every part of me. Silent tears slip down my cheeks as I gaze at my husband. It shatters my soul to know that I can never give him a child. I feel such guilt. I know how he's always wanted to raise a family of our own.

As for me, I'd never really thought of myself as a mother before now. I didn't have the best of role models growing up. In fact, my family life was a federal disaster. My father abandoned us for his work and his mistresses. And my mother — she spent most of my childhood in a drunken stupor. I had only my sister, Lucy, to turn to for the emotional support that I needed. So I never thought that any part of me would ever feel like I would want children of my own. How could I have a maternal instinct when I'd never felt like my own mother possessed it?

In any case, I always had my work to keep me busy. The only babies I ever felt the need to birth were the hard hitting articles that I wrote. At first, I birthed those stories on my own. And then Clark joined me. More often than not, those babies were not just mine, but ours. And it felt so good, so right, to create something with him.

Until recently, any thoughts of having actual babies never really crossed my mind. I was still too focused on my career. I was still too focused on finally winning a Pulitzer. A husband and babies and a family could all come later. I had all the time in the world. I was Lois Lane — I could accomplish anything I wanted.

So, when did my views and my desires change? When did a husband and babies and a family become so important to me? I can tell you that. It changed the moment when I realized that I loved Clark. Suddenly, Clark and our life together was the most important thing in the world. And I realized something — something wonderful. Clark would be the father of my children.

Suddenly, the idea of becoming a mother was no longer scary but eagerly anticipated.

It isn't fair.

Clark and I have endured so much together. We've faced just about every conceivable disaster there is, and quite a few that were inconceivable until they actually happened. Every step of our relationship was a constant struggle against fate. Every step forward was met by the world's resistance. We fought tooth and nail for every inch of progress we made in being together. Just getting to finally say "I do" was a Herculean task.

Why couldn't fate be kind to us in this one thing? Why couldn't this one aspect of our lives be easy?

My heart is screaming within my chest. My whole body wants to scream. But I hold it in. I want to be strong. I want to be Clark's rock. He needs me right now. So I need to at least pretend that I am optimistic about the future.

Clark is hurting so much right now. I know he is. He tries to act like it doesn't bother him, but he can't fool me. I know him too well. And I know that staring into the face of a childless future is killing him inside.

I am angry, so very angry. I'm angry at fate for making Clark's DNA and mine so vastly different from each other. I am angry that Dr. Klein can't find some way to give us even a sliver of hope that we might one day be able to conceive. I am angry that my father couldn't find a flaw with Dr. Klein's findings. And I am furious with the adoption agency.

I never expected the process to be easy, if adoption was the route that we'd take. Mentally, I had already begun to prepare myself for the grueling process — the paperwork, the questions, the home visits, the waiting. But to be denied to even be considered — it makes my blood boil. It's not that I don't see the social worker's point — I admit that I don't have a very good track record with danger. But I would have been willing to sacrifice most of "Mad Dog Lane" if and when a child entered the picture.

It isn't fair.

Why does it seem like everyone else gets what they want in life? Why can so many unplanned babies result from moments of forgotten precaution or from drunken, barely remembered sex? Why can so many people who are just horrible to children be able to have them? Why does it seem that the less able to care for a child a person is, the more that they have? I've covered my fair share of stories — the homeless, abandoned children in the city, the drugged out parents who drowned their infant when he wouldn't stop crying, the neglected children living in houses of squalor. Each time, my heart broke for the children who were victims. And now, as I think of those stories, a new sense of pain lances my heart.

How can parents ever take a child for granted? How can a parent ever not care for their own flesh and blood? How can a parent ever willfully inflict harm on a child?

It isn't fair.

Clark and I would treasure and love a child more than anything on this Earth.

Beside me, Clark has finally slipped into a deeper, more peaceful sleep. I lean back against my pillows and fresh tears slip from my eyes. I don't bother to wipe them away. More will come, of that I am sure.

I press my trembling hands over my empty womb. It aches for a child within it. There is a profound sense of loss in my soul. And for once, I cannot find the right word with which to describe it. Maybe there is no such word for the emptiness and the despair that I feel.

I want so badly to be a mother.

I want so badly for Clark to be a father.

My arms ache for a child to hold. My heart aches for a child to love.

Every dream I've had about bedtime stories, Little League practices, dance recitals, family movie nights — all are shattered into millions of indistinguishable shards. I'd always pictured Clark in my mind's eye, with our son on his shoulders at a street carnival or with our daughter on his knee as he taught her how to read. I'd already pictured the little boy who looked exactly like his daddy, but with my determined spirit. I'd already pictured the little girl who had Clark's optimism and crooked grin and my eyes and penchant for mischief. I'd already pictured Clark playing the part of Santa to our wide-eyed children on Christmas Eves to come. I'd already pictured a thousand ways to surprise Clark when I'd finally get a positive on a pregnancy test.

But none of that is to be in our future. And the knowledge is crushing.

And yet, there is nothing in the world that could ever make me give up a second of my life with Clark.

I know that we will survive this. We've survived so much together. Even in our darkest hours, our love endured and helped us to overcome everything and anything that stood in our way.

Together.

That's how we will survive this. I will lend him my strength as he has always lent me his. We will hold each other close. We will lean on each other in our moments of despair and grief, just as we always have. And maybe, just maybe, our love will prevail once more.

Fate was kind to us once. It made our lives cross paths — made us partners at work and best friends. Maybe, just maybe, fate will finally smile on us once more — be it a child who is born of our love, or who we adopt, or who falls from the sky in answer to our prayers.

Until then, my husband remains the last child of the House of El.

And regardless of if we have children or not in the future, I am glad. I am glad because of all the people on Earth, Clark is the one I get to share my life with.

THE END