

Rumors

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Rated: G

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Summary: The song, "Something to Talk About", written by Shirley Eikhard and performed by Bonnie Raitt, tells a story of how a rumor can cause a potential couple to recognize a relationship that is right in front of them. What if the story of the song were applied to the universe of Lois and Clark?

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Time Frame: Early Season 2

Act 1: Ideas

*People are talking, talking 'bout people
I hear them whisper, you won't believe it*

Verse 1 - Something To Talk About – Bonnie Raitt

As Lois looked over her notes for the fourth time, she stretched her tired muscles and wiggled into a more comfortable position on Clark's sofa. Their story was very close to being ready, but she knew that it wasn't quite there. A few years ago, she would have already taken it to Perry. Now she knew better. She could almost hear his voice bellowing, "More facts!"

One advantage of working with Clark was his sense for when the story was strong enough to publish. When he'd first started at the Planet and they'd teamed up on the space program investigation, he'd been right there backing her up when she'd gone to Perry with incomplete evidence. He'd also been right there with her when Perry chewed them out for bringing it to him before it was ready. For Lois, it had been just another "not ready yet" from Perry. But Clark seemed to take Perry's rejection of the story more to heart. More than once since then when they'd teamed on an investigation, Clark had insisted that she get more facts before taking the story to Perry. She had to admit that in this element of story preparation, he was right more often than wrong.

"Did you see this?" Clark asked from across the room.

She looked over at her partner. He was sitting at his dining table, digging through printouts of financial records. A few hours ago, they'd been working late at the office. When it had become clear that the research would run extra long tonight, Clark had offered to make dinner and they'd moved their work from the office to his apartment. Lois stood and walked over to where he was working, to look at the transaction in question. "Yeah," she said as she inspected the printout. "I found that one yesterday morning when you dis..." She stopped short. This wasn't the time to get into accusations. "...while you were out of the office," she finished.

Clark turned a little red, obviously embarrassed at her reference to his sudden departure yesterday. His disappearances were annoying, but she was coming to grips with the idea that with Clark, mysterious exits and cheesy excuses were part of the package. "Sorry," he finally replied.

It looked like he was going to say something else when the phone rang. He stood, took two steps and picked up the call. "Hello?"

Lois didn't even pretend not to listen as Clark continued. "Hi Jimmy. Yeah, Lois is here. Just a second."

Clark offered her the phone. "It's Jimmy for you."

She took the phone from Clark who immediately headed for his bedroom. He was probably trying to give her privacy for her call. He could be such a Boy Scout. She smiled at that thought as she brought the handset to her head and said, "Hi, Jimmy. What do you need?"

"Hi, Lois," Jimmy replied from the other end. "I just wanted to let you know that I finished that research into Senator Johnson. I brought copies of the materials to the office, but obviously you're not here. Do you want me to leave it on your desk?"

"No, I can't have it lying around in the open. Can you lock it up until Clark or I can get it? I don't want to risk someone discovering our investigation before we're ready."

"Sure. I'll lock it in my desk."

"Thanks, Jimmy. And thanks for tracking me down."

"No trouble. I called your apartment. When you didn't answer, I figured you'd be at Clark's. Well, goodnight."

"Good night, Jimmy."

As Lois hung up the phone, she wondered why Jimmy would be so sure he'd find her with Clark. Jimmy hadn't known that she and Clark had been working late. Sure Clark was her partner, but it was after 11:00 p.m. She guessed it seemed logical, but something about the way Jimmy had been so sure of her location left her feeling vaguely uncomfortable.

Lois flinched as she sat on the cold seat in the tiny restroom stall. She'd come in to work early this morning to get a head start on the day. She was sure that once she got her hands on Jimmy's research into Senator Johnson, it would fill the rest of her day. In her rush to get a quick start, she'd consumed more coffee than even her system was used to. The first consequence was that she'd been even shorter than usual with Jimmy and she probably owed him a low-grade apology. The second consequence was what led her to her present location. She was just about finished with her business in the stall when she heard the door to the ladies' room open, followed closely by the sound of shoes clacking on the tile floor and two voices.

"I'm telling you everyone will be there." That was Madge from accounting.

"It sure seems like it. It's going to be a heck of a singles mixer." The second voice clearly belonged to another young woman, but Lois couldn't quite place it.

Through the crack in the door, she saw the two women stop in front of the line of sinks. Madge seemed to be fixing her makeup. The other woman, a young blonde girl that Lois thought she'd seen in the office, but hadn't met, continued their discussion. "Are there any single men or women on this floor that aren't coming?"

"Well, we didn't invite anyone in a long-term relationship. After all, the whole point of a mixer is to meet other available people," Madge answered.

"Is Clark Kent coming?" the blonde asked. "I've been dying to get to know him outside of work."

"No. Like I said, no one who's in a relationship," Madge responded.

Lois felt a flush of... something. Was Madge saying that Clark was involved with a woman? Madge was one of the biggest gossips in the building, so if there was anything to know, she would be the person with the information. But there was no way Clark could be seeing someone without Lois knowing. Madge had to be mistaken this time. Then Lois considered her own reaction to the news that Clark might be romantically involved

with someone. That feeling... Why should it bother her that Clark might be in a relationship?

Before Lois could follow up on that thought, she heard the younger woman again. "I guess I knew that. I just sort of hoped that it wasn't true."

Madge seemed to be finished with whatever she was fixing, and she replied on her way out the door. "Well you don't need to give up on him. Half the women in the building are watching for their chance. If he ever breaks up..."

The other woman cut her off. "If he ever breaks up there'll be a wall of us around his desk," she said laughing.

The door closed, cutting them off. They both seemed awfully sure about Clark. Who was he seeing, and how could it be that she didn't know who this mystery woman was?

Act 2: Observations

They think we're lovers kept under covers

I just ignore it, but they keep saying

We laugh just a little too loud

We stand just a little too close

We stare just a little too long

Verse 1 - Something To Talk About – Bonnie Raitt

The rest of the day passed in a blur as Lois kept busy with her own work. Still, she kept finding her thoughts drifting back to Clark and his mystery girlfriend. She glanced over at his desk to verify that he was still out of the office. He'd been out interviewing leads on their Senator Johnson investigation early this morning, but he should have been back before noon.

She was about to look around for him when she sensed more than felt someone leaning over her shoulder. "Sorry I was gone so long," Clark said. "I was on my way back to the office when I came across a Superman rescue."

"What happened?" she asked, without turning around.

"There was a runaway tanker truck. Superman appeared and stopped it just before it plowed into a school bus taking a group of elementary school kids to the Metropolis Natural History Museum."

"Was anyone hurt?" Lois asked.

"No. Superman stopped it just in time." There was a pause as if Clark were thinking for a moment. "We should look into the Five Star trucking company," he continued. "I'm sure I remember other accidents where failures in their equipment were contributing factors."

She gave up on her story and half-turned to face Clark. "Are you sure you don't want to take it yourself? After all, this bus accident is your story."

"I only stumbled across it because I was out working on **our** story," he replied quickly. Then he broke into one of those killer Clark Kent smiles. "Besides, this looks like it might involve corporate corruption, concealed records and possibly criminal negligence. How could I think about approaching a story like that without having the master with me?"

She couldn't help but smile back. Clark was good for her. They both knew that he was more than capable of taking this story himself. But she was arrogant enough to believe that given the nature of this story, it would turn out better if both of them were involved. There were good reasons that Clark really was the only person that she enjoyed working with.

Lois turned the rest of the way from her workstation to face her partner. "You know it, Mister," she said in mock indignation. "This will probably call for bold investigation steps. What's likely to happen the first time you need information from a locked room if I'm not there to... encourage the lock to open?" It was all she could do not to laugh as she finished the sentence.

"Lo-is," he pleaded with a smile. "There are other ways to gather information."

This time she did laugh. He was so cute when he was in Boy Scout mode. "But my way is so much faster." She lifted her hands up to make her point. "These are filled with talent for getting into locked places. How can I possibly let such skills go unused?"

Clark reached out, took her hands in his, and made a show of inspecting them. "Now I understand," Clark said as if he were addressing her hands. "Well you two need to behave yourselves. Remember that Lois can't break stories from a jail cell." Then he paused as if in thought, then addressed her hands again. "At least it's a lot harder."

As they both laughed, Lois happened to glance around the bullpen. Several people, including Jimmy and the two women from the restroom, had watched her exchange with Clark. Her fleeting look around the room had caught Madge nodding her head with what looked like a satisfied smirk on her face.

An hour later, she finally managed to finish her story. It should have only taken a few minutes, but she had trouble getting her mind off Clark and the fact that their exchange had drawn the attention that it did.

As she hit the "send" button to dispatch her story to Perry, she pushed back from her desk. This particular act coincided with Jimmy scurrying by behind her. She bumped into the young gofer, causing him to stumble and fall to the floor.

"I'm sorry, Lois," he said quickly as he stood and started to collect some rolls of film he'd dropped.

"No need," she responded. "It was my fault." She took a second to glance around the room. Clark was off somewhere again and the other members of the staff were all busy with their own work. "Jimmy," she ventured tentatively, "have you heard about the big office mixer this weekend?"

"Sure," he answered brightly, clearly looking forward to the gathering. "It's supposed to be a big deal. From what I hear, everyone in the building that isn't married or dating someone seriously is going to be there."

Jimmy's simple reply wasn't what Lois wanted. She'd hoped he'd ask if she was going to be there. The instant she'd seen that look on Madge's face a while ago, Lois had a sneaking suspicion that she herself might be Clark's supposed significant other. It made a certain kind of sense, but she was looking for some level of confirmation. She was about to ask why she hadn't been invited when Jimmy lowered his voice to an almost conspiratorial level. "Do you and Clark have any plans?"

There was the information she wanted. If she understood what Jimmy was implying, she was the mystery woman that Clark was supposed to be seeing. But where had this story started? Suddenly she had a flashback to Claude and the stories he'd spread. She thought she knew Clark better than that. If Clark Kent was telling people in the office that they were a couple, she'd kick him so hard he'd be able to say hello to his parents in Kansas when he finally came down. "Did Clark tell you we were seeing each other?" she asked in a tone that reflected the irritation she was feeling.

Jimmy threw his arms up defensively. "No!" he answered emphatically. "He hasn't said anything. Ralph tried to ask him last week, but Clark insisted that nothing was going on."

She could see the truth in Jimmy's denial. Clark hadn't been spreading any rumors. In fact, he seemed to be trying to rein them in. She still wasn't happy about being the object of rumors, but the fact that Clark wasn't part of it made her feel much better.

She shifted her attention back to Jimmy who was still talking. "Everyone figures that you and Clark want to keep it to yourselves. Some of the women down in accounting said that..." He seemed to realize he'd said too much and got suddenly quiet.

Lois's eyes narrowed, but she kept her voice calm. "What did they say?" Lois asked.

Jimmy squirmed a bit under the intensity of her glare. "Well, they said that you got burned a couple of years ago and probably wanted to keep the thing with Clark private."

"Is that so?" Lois asked skeptically. "Well, if Clark hasn't said anything, and I know I haven't, why does anyone think Clark and I are seeing each other?"

"Well, I never said you were, but the rumor has been all over the building for weeks," Jimmy explained. "You two make such a great team and you both seem so comfortable around each other. I really got to thinking after... well, this woman pointed out how you two... act around the office. That's when I found out that there was this rumor going around that you and Clark were... involved."

"What do you mean, the way we act? We haven't been sneaking into the storage room." Lois could hear her irritation leaking back into her voice.

"Nothing like that," he replied quickly. "It's all those little things. You know, like the way he puts his hands on your shoulders when you two work and the way you talk to each other."

Now she was more curious than angry, but there was still an edge in her voice. "I have no idea what you mean. I talk to Clark just like anyone else."

"Lois, I don't want to get you upset. I swear I haven't been one of the people spreading these rumors. You two are my best friends here in the office. Whether or not anything is going on between you and CK is none of my business."

She figured that the best way to find out what was going on was to find out what Jimmy thought he saw. She took a second to make sure she purged any possible anger from her voice. "Relax, Jimmy. I'm not upset with you. As for the rumor, well, right this minute I'd rather not say exactly what's going on between me and Clark, but I'd appreciate it if you'd tell me what you've seen. For example, I'd have sworn that I talk to Clark just like anyone else."

"Well..." Jimmy was clearly still worried about that flash of irritation she'd shown a moment ago.

"Please, Jimmy. I'd like to know."

"All right," Jimmy said with a resigned sigh. "As for the talking part, it's not so much you as Clark. You don't talk to Clark very differently than you talk to other people. Although you do seem more relaxed around him. But I see a big difference when he talks to you."

"How is it different?"

"CK is always friendly. But you must have noticed that there is his everyone else voice and his Lois voice."

Jimmy stopped and waited for a reply. A Lois voice? Not being sure what else to do, she simply shook her head.

At her motion Jimmy continued. "I first noticed it when he answered the phone one day. He picked up the phone and answered with 'Clark Kent, Daily Planet' or something like that. Then after a second, his voice changed. It got softer. It was only later that I found out he was talking to you. Since then, I've always been able to tell if Clark is talking in his Lois voice or his everyone else voice."

Lois voice? How come she'd never noticed that he was talking to her in a different voice?

"And you have to admit that you two spend a lot of time together. Most people figure that you have been seeing each other since..." Jimmy trailed off nervously.

"Since when?" Lois insisted.

"Since Lex Luthor died," Jimmy answered hesitantly.

"Everyone who was around back then noticed how down Clark was when you first got engaged to Luthor. Since the Planet's been open again... with you two spending so much time together...

well, it just figured."

Then she remembered the other night. "That was why you called Clark's apartment to reach me."

"Well, yeah. I noticed about a month ago that if you didn't pick up your phone at your apartment, you'd almost certainly be at Clark's."

Jimmy was right. How had she not realized what people might think? After the whole aborted wedding thing, she hadn't wanted to be alone. It had started with Clark bringing dinner and a movie to her apartment. Then, once the Planet got going again, she'd fallen into the habit of spending her evenings with her partner. It was usually work related, but now that she thought about it, many of those evenings had been as much personal as professional.

She needed some time to digest this. "Please don't tell Clark we talked. And if anyone asks, please tell them..." Lois paused. To her own surprise, she wasn't sure what she'd want Jimmy to say. "Just remind them that spreading rumors isn't good for anyone."

"Thanks, Lois. I'll do that."

After Jimmy had left, Lois realized she really needed to get her head around this. The part about the rumor was just office gossip. After hearing Jimmy explain what he – and surely others – had seen, the rumor made sense. For Lois, the confusing part was her own reaction. She'd have sworn that she would have exploded at being the object of a rumor like this.

But this was Clark. Somehow that was enough to make a difference.

A big difference.

Act 3: Possibilities

*I feel so foolish, I never noticed
You'd act so nervous, could you be falling for me?
It took a rumor to make me wonder
Now I'm convinced I'm going under*

Verse 2 - Something To Talk About – Bonnie Raitt

As the day began to wind down, Lois finally conceded that the talk with Jimmy had wrecked her ability to accomplish any productive work in the afternoon.

If it were just that there was a rumor of something going on between her and Clark, it would be one thing. A few years ago, when the Claude mess had happened, she'd been a lot greener about office politics and rumors. With the experience and maturity she'd gained in the intervening time, she was confident that she could flatten the rumors. At the very least, she was sure that she could flatten anyone spreading them. That had been her first thought when Jimmy had told her about this rumor.

However, when Jimmy started talking about Clark having a Lois voice, that plan went out the window.

Jimmy's mention of Lex sent her thoughts back to her aborted wedding. She'd originally stopped the wedding because she realized that she might be in love with Clark. Lois was pretty sure that no one alive, except for maybe the Archbishop, noticed that she'd said no to Lex before the police broke in and stopped the wedding. She had been going to tell Clark, but before she could say anything to him, he'd retracted his words and told her that his own declaration of love was a lie. At the time, she'd been heartbroken. She had been so sure that her best friend was also the man she was looking for.

Now...? Could everyone else in the building be wrong? It was possible, but in light of everything else that she was suddenly noticing, Jimmy's perspective was hard to dismiss. What if Clark had been lying after Lex died? His declaration of love the day before she'd become engaged to Lex had seemed very real. She

could still remember the way his face had fallen when she'd told him that she didn't feel that way about him. What if his declaration had been true and his retraction later had been the lie? Could it be that he was afraid she wouldn't want to work with him knowing he felt... so strongly? Would he do that? Would he lie about his feelings just to make her comfortable working with him?

A plan popped into her head. It might be a little underhanded, but it could provide some information from the only source that mattered. She glanced over toward Clark's desk and saw him staring intently at his workstation monitor. Good, he wasn't off returning a book to the library or picking up his cheese of the month. She fixed a smile on her face, stood and started toward him.

"Clark, you won't believe the call I got earlier today," she said with feigned excitement when she reached his desk.

He seemed to pick up on her enthusiasm and smiled back. "Whatever it is, you seem awfully excited."

"I sure am," she replied brightly. "I got a call from an old friend at the London Times. There's an opening for a reporter on their American desk. It would be a two-year assignment based in London and would give me the chance to get the international perspective that I've always wanted. She told me that she's sure that the job is mine if I want it."

Lois watched Clark's face carefully as she spun this tale. With each phrase, his face fell a little more. By the time she was done, he looked positively miserable. It was a good thing she was already smiling. Only now, a genuine smile had replaced the fake one she'd started with.

It took several seconds for Clark to compose himself. "That sounds great," he forced out. He had pasted a smile onto his face. It was as fake as the plastic fruit her mom had always kept in the bowl on the dining room table. "But we'll sure miss you here."

It had been such a simple reply, but his tone and posture had revealed so much more. She could see that he was utterly dejected at the prospect of her leaving. Of course, it could be that he just didn't want to lose his partner.

Now that she had seen Clark's reaction, and had her information, it was time to let her partner breathe again. "I don't think I want the job right now," she said. "But it's nice to be asked."

She wondered if Clark realized how much he was giving away in his expressions. She was still watching him carefully. This time when she finished speaking, Clark looked as if the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders.

"I'll probably call her back tomorrow and tell her thanks, but right now I have commitments that are going to keep me here in Metropolis for some time."

Now Clark was practically glowing. After a second, he seemed to realize she was waiting for him to say something. "It's a great opportunity, but this is your home and... I need you," his voice trailed off as he seemed to lose his train of thought. Then his eyes got wide as he suddenly realized what he'd said. "We need you. Here!" He blurted out. "We need you here at the Planet." He said in a rushed voice.

"Then I guess it's a good thing that I'm planning to stick around," she said with a cocky grin as she turned to head back to her desk.

Lois sat down and picked up some papers while being very careful not to look in Clark's direction. She was looking at the papers in her hand, but she wasn't seeing them. Did she really just see what she thought she did? He didn't react like someone losing a work partner. He reacted like a man losing his girlfriend. And maybe more...

And if he did feel that much more, what should she do about it? When she'd called off the wedding, she'd been so sure. The idea of 'Lois Kent' had felt so right. Then he'd taken back his

confession, and she'd buried those feelings somewhere deep in the back of her mind. Did she really want to bring them out again?"

She'd thought that was all settled after the Planet reopened. Clark was her friend and partner but nothing more.

Now... Now there might be the chance to look at those feelings again. Did she want to? What if the rumors were wrong? What if she was reading more into his reaction to her London tale than was really there? Maybe Clark was just upset at the prospect of losing her as a partner.

No matter how she approached the problem, there didn't seem to be an answer. If the truth about their relationship were out there somewhere, it wasn't clear to her.

Act 4: Desires

Thinking 'bout you every day

Dreaming 'bout you every night

Hoping that you feel the same way

Now that we know it, let's really show it, Darlin'

Verse 2 - Something To Talk About – Bonnie Raitt

Lois couldn't help smiling as she walked to work with Clark. She was glad that he'd invited her to have breakfast with him. Leave it to Clark to find a restaurant that served breakfasts where chocolate was the feature item. The chocolate chip waffles had been a special treat. Of course, this was her Clark. Special was a way of life.

They were almost to work now. The stroll along the streets of the city had helped her feel a little less guilty about the rich breakfast. As they approached the Planet building, Lois was almost sorry. If they were going to get through the doorway, she'd have to let go of him. Lois glanced down at their clasped hands. Being together... holding hands... it just felt right. These sorts of moments were some of the best parts of her relationship with Clark.

As Clark reached for the door, she figured they were going to have to let go of each other to get through, so she gave his hand one last squeeze. Then she started to relax her grip on his hand, but he didn't let go.

She looked up into those handsome features. "Clark, we need to get through the door," she offered.

"We'll manage. I'm not done with this yet," he said as he glanced at their clasped hands and gave her hand a gentle squeeze.

Lois had to admit that negotiating the door while holding hands was fun. They impeded the progress of a few other people trying to get into the building, but once the others realized what she and Clark were doing, they didn't seem to mind the minor delay.

The ride in the elevator was all too short, and before long they were exiting to the bullpen. As they stepped out onto the landing, she realized that this time they really were going to have to separate. As she turned to face Clark, she couldn't resist turning this moment into a hug. That went on for a few seconds before she pulled back. "This morning has been fun," she said with a smile, "...but it's time we go our separate ways. I need to get some work done."

"Are you sure?" he asked. "Being with you is so nice."

"I'm sure," she replied almost wistfully. "If we continue like this, neither of us will get anything done today."

He looked like his favorite toy had been taken away. "I'll miss you," he said.

"Don't be silly, Clark. I sit right across from you."

Before he could reply, she turned away and headed quickly for her desk. She was afraid that if she let him get in one more

word she might not have the willpower to say no to holding hands just a little longer.

Once she settled in at her desk, it took a few more minutes to get her mind around the assignments of the day. However, before too long she opened her file on the Metropolis sewer system and dived into it with confidence that it would get her mind as far away from Clark as possible.

By the time Lois had done the first pass of the data, more than a half hour had passed. She was proud that she'd only thought of Clark one time while studying the material. Since she was at a stopping point, she looked to see if he was at his desk. Knowing her partner, she suspected that he would be gone. Almost to her surprise, she found him seated at his workspace. Lois's expression turned to a frown when she realized that he wasn't alone. That blonde girl that she'd heard talking about him yesterday was at his desk. And Clark was holding her hand.

Lois practically jumped out of her chair and hurried across the room. She reached his desk just in time to be there when this blonde hussy plopped down on Clark's lap.

For just an instant, Lois's mouth dropped open in shock. It took a full second for her to recover sufficiently to ask, "What's going on here?"

Clark pulled his eyes off the floozy and smiled up at her innocently. "Hi, Lois. Do you know Jenny?"

"I've seen her around," Lois replied coldly.

"Jenny, do you know my work partner, Lois?" Clark asked his... hood ornament.

The girl looked up at her for a second. "Yeah, I know her," she answered in a squeaky voice. Then the bimbo used both her hands to turn Clark's head back toward her and pulled him into a kiss.

For the second time in less than a minute, Lois's mouth dropped open in shock. It took only a moment for Lois to realize that Clark was kissing back... with enthusiasm! "Clark!" she called out.

He broke the kiss long enough to face her. He was wearing a dopey grin. "What do you need, Lois? Is there a story we're supposed to be working on?"

"No. How can you...? With this...? What about us?" she finally asked.

Clark looked confused for a minute. "But you told me that there was no us," he replied simply. "I mean, you said you didn't feel that way about me. And after this morning..."

"What?" she asked, cutting him off. "We had a date this morning. I thought..."

"But when we got to the office you told me we were going to go our separate ways. After you sent me away, Jenny stopped to see me." He gazed at the slut on his lap for a second. "She came by and we started talking. She told me that it was okay for her and me to be a couple even though we work together. Isn't that great?"

How was this happening? "But..." Lois sputtered.

Before she could get another word out Clark continued, "Jenny likes me a lot. I asked her to marry me."

Then some kind of alarm started going off behind Lois.

Lois bolted upright. She was in bed and her alarm was beeping at her. She looked over at her alarm clock as she tried to get her bearings.

It had been a dream. She didn't have breakfast dates with Clark. They didn't stroll the streets of Metropolis hand in hand. Clark hadn't taken up with that... girl from the office.

But was there any reason he wouldn't?

What had that dream been about? The parts where she and Clark had been acting like a couple had felt so right. It had seemed so real. It could be real.

That part with the blonde had also felt all too real. That had

been... horrid. Clark being with someone else was... wrong. Suddenly it was all too clear that she wanted Clark to be with her.

What if he did start dating someone else? What if he really did think that they had no future because of what she'd told him in the past? How would she feel if that special smile of his, or that special voice Jimmy talked about, were only for some other woman?

The more she thought of Clark with someone else, the more she came to realize how much she didn't like it. Sure, she'd treated him badly at first. Then she'd ignored him while pursuing Superman and being pursued by Lex. Now, the idea of losing him... for real... forever... was unthinkable.

It was time for Lois Lane to act.

Act 5: Actions

*Let's give them something to talk about
How about love?*

Chorus - Something To Talk About – Bonnie Raitt

Why was the elevator moving so slowly this morning? All through her morning routine at home, her mind had been in a constant spin because of her Clark situation. That dream had left her off-balance but there didn't seem to be much room left for denying her feelings.

She needed to tell Clark what she'd wanted to tell him that day in front of the Planet. Based on what she learned yesterday, and what might be true between them, he needed to know what really stopped her wedding to Lex. He needed to know that when push came to shove, he was the reason that she didn't say 'Yes' to Lex.

The part of her dream where Clark had said that Jenny thought a romance with a coworker was fine, couldn't have been a coincidence. Lois had told Clark her three rules in no uncertain terms when he'd first started at the Planet. Even though she'd also told him that she'd broken all three rules, he might still be confused on that point. After today, there would be no confusion. Whatever her attitude might have been in the past, **now** she was open to a much more personal relationship with one particular coworker. Take that, Jenny!

After that, she'd have to play it by ear. Maybe Clark would tell her that he didn't feel that way about her. It would break her heart, but better to know now than later. Then again, just maybe something else would happen. She wasn't sure how to go about talking to Clark. All she was really sure of was that she was going to do it today.

The elevator finally reached the newsroom floor. Lois exited and turned immediately toward Clark's desk. She'd barely taken two steps before she stopped. Clark wasn't there. She'd been all ready. Now she was going to have to wait.

Lois felt her excitement turning into disappointment as she headed for her desk. But she remained determined to have this talk as soon as he came in. In the mean time, if Clark wasn't around, she could at least get some work done. She was only about half way through the information that Jimmy had collected on Senator Johnson. As she pulled out the data, she almost smiled at the fact that she didn't have any ongoing investigations that related to sewage.

It took very little time for Lois to get lost in the research. She knew that the senator was doing deals under the table, but he hid his tracks as well as anyone. She was about one-third of the way through the first pile when she noticed a pair of legs standing next to her desk. Good, it was about time Clark showed up. She was going to ask him where he'd been, but when Lois turned to face her visitor she did a double take. "Jimmy!?" she exclaimed.

He immediately took a half step back. "I'm sorry, Lois. I

didn't mean to startle you."

She'd been sure it was going to be Clark and had to bite back a surge of disappointment for the second time this morning. She took a moment to compose herself before responding. "No problem. Do you need something?"

"I saw that you were going over that research and I just wanted to make sure you didn't need anything else."

"No, thanks. I haven't made it half-way through this yet."

Then she paused for a second. "Have you seen Clark?"

Jimmy turned his head in the direction of Clark's desk. "He's right there," Jimmy said, tilting his head in that direction.

She looked across the room and discovered that Clark was at his desk. And so was that blonde. And Clark was holding her hand.

A chill ran through Lois's body. This couldn't be happening. It had been a dream. It took a few seconds for her to compose herself before Jimmy's voice brought her back to reality.

"Lois, are you okay?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I'm fine. I just... need to talk to Clark." She stood and started for Clark's desk, leaving Jimmy still standing behind her. As she started for Clark's desk, she heard Jimmy muttering to himself from behind her, "Clark's in trouble."

As she closed the distance to Clark's desk, she couldn't help thinking that if that blonde hussy sat on his lap she was going to scream. Fortunately for everyone's ears – and Lois's sanity – the girl was still standing when Lois reached them.

Clark looked up at her. "Hi Lois, do you know Jamie? She was getting me a file from the morgue when a door slammed on her hand. I was just making sure there weren't any broken bones."

Lois could hardly believe the wave of relief she felt at that innocent explanation.

Then Jamie spoke up. "I need to get back to work. Thank you for checking my hand, Mr. Kent." She glanced briefly at Lois. "Ms. Lane," she said with a polite nod as she turned away.

Lois watched the younger woman depart. Thank goodness that went better than the dream! Then she turned back to find Clark smiling up at her.

"Good morning, Lois. What's up?"

She didn't intend to lose another minute, but this wasn't a conversation she wanted to have in the office. "Can we go for a walk? I wanted to talk to you about... something."

Clark's brow furrowed in confusion, or maybe in concern. "Sure," he replied.

They made the ride down the elevator in silence. Now that the moment was here, she found it difficult to begin. Clark seemed to sense her distress and simply walked with her. As they walked side by side, Lois found her eyes returning to Clark's hand. If they were holding hands, would it be as nice as in the dream?

Lois was still trying to nail down an opening line when she realized that they had reached the small downtown park that they had used so many times for quick outdoor lunches.

Clark stopped in front of an empty bench and turned to face her. "Lois, I love just walking with you, but you said there was something you wanted to talk about."

Lois dropped into the bench heavily. Clark sat beside her and reached for her hand. She looked at their hands together. It was just as nice as it had been in the dream. The feel of his hand holding hers gave her the courage she needed.

"Did anyone ever tell you what happened at my wedding to Lex?"

His eyebrows lifted for only a second. He didn't expect this. And if she knew her Clark Kent expressions as well as she thought, he didn't like it either. "Perry and Bill Henderson stopped it."

"But do you know when?" she asked.

"No. I never... I didn't want to know," Clark stuttered out. "I was just glad that they got there in time."

"They didn't," she said softly.

"They didn't what?" Clark asked, confused.

"They didn't get there in time," she clarified.

The shock was clear on his face. "Are you telling me you married him that day? But that's..."

"No, Clark," she said abruptly. "I didn't marry Lex that day."

"But you just said that Perry was..." Clark trailed off. "I don't understand."

Lois took a deep breath to try to steady her nerves. "You know the part in a wedding where the minister says, 'Do you, So-and-So take Such-and-Such to be your lawfully wedded wife' and so on?"

"Sure," Clark answered.

"Lex had already said 'I do,' and then the Archbishop asked me..."

"But if Perry was too late...?" Clark asked.

"I said, 'No.'"

"You said, 'No'?" Clark asked, his voice husky and eyes shining.

Lois felt like she could get lost in his eyes. "Over the course of that last day, I finally came to my senses. There was no way I could marry Lex when... when I was pretty sure I was falling in love with... you." She paused to give him the chance to say something, but when he remained silent she continued. "After the wedding, when we were in front of the Planet, I was going to tell you. But before I could say..."

"I lied," he said quickly, cutting her off.

She felt hope swell, but she had to be sure. "When did you lie?"

"That day in front of the Planet. After what you said in the park and all that had happened, I was afraid you wouldn't want to work with me knowing I felt... that way."

"Clark, what I wanted to tell you that day was..." she had trouble saying it. "I think I've been falling in love with you for a long time." She couldn't maintain eye contact and she ended up saying the last word to the ground.

She felt the gentle touch of his hand on her chin encouraging her to look at him again. Once they made eye contact, he took both her hands in his. "Lois, what I really wanted to tell you that day, but was too afraid, was how glad I was to have you back in my life." He paused but it seemed like he had something else to say. "And I also wanted to tell you the same thing I've wanted to say for months. I love you."

Before she knew what was happening she'd thrown her arms about Clark. She felt his arms encircle her and draw her closer. This was much nicer than just holding hands.

She felt as much as heard the low rumble of his voice in her ear. "We're okay now, aren't we?"

She could feel tears trickling down her cheeks. "Yes. Very okay," she said, hopefully loud enough for him to hear.

After another few seconds, Lois found that the hug, as nice as it was, wasn't enough. She pulled back so their faces were only inches apart. She was about to start toward him when he started the same motion. While the kiss was gentle, it was full of promise and hints of a future together.

When the kiss ended, she was content simply to look into Clark's eyes for a moment. She was still trying to get used to the idea that they were committed. Wherever they ended up, there was no going back now. It wasn't nearly as scary as she'd thought it would be.

Clark finally broke the silence. "I'm so happy that you spoke up today. I'm definitely not complaining, but I have to ask. What happened that made you want to talk?"

"I overheard some people talking," she answered with a shy

smile. “It sounds like most of the office believes we’re already an item.”

Clark’s face fell a little at this. “I’m sorry, Lois. I know how much you hate being the object of those kinds of rumors. I’ve heard some of the rumors over the last few weeks and tried to stop...”

“That’s okay,” she said, cutting him off. “For once, I found that I didn’t mind so much. When I heard, well, it got me thinking, and here we are.”

Clark’s smile came back. “If it got us together, then I’m happy to be the subject of their talk,” he said. Now he was beaming a smile that she was sure that every other woman at the Planet would love to think was for her. But it – and Clark – were all hers.

Lois stood while continuing to hold Clark’s right hand. “We need to head back.”

Clark stood without releasing her hand. “Back to the source of the gossip?”

“Yeah,” Lois replied with a smile. “I’m looking forward to really giving them something to talk about.”

THE END