

Where There's a Will...

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Summary: A sudden loss devastates Lois... but is everything quite as it seems? And will there be a silver lining in this seemingly dark cloud?

Lois Lane stared at her computer screen, willing the paragraph that she'd just written to make sense. It didn't work, because it still didn't. She blew out a breath of frustration. She couldn't make this story mumble, let alone sing like she and Clark were usually able to. Of course, it was a pretty uninteresting story to start with. Even if Clark were there it would be hard to make a story on city budgets interesting.

But then, if she were honest with herself, that was the real crux of her problem. Clark wasn't there. He hadn't been around for over two weeks. He and his folks were on a European vacation.

"Lane, in my office!"

She didn't have to be looking in that direction to know that Perry had just stuck his head out of his office door and bellowed for her. Reluctantly, she pushed the save key and got up from her chair.

"What's up, Chief?" She strolled into his office and sat down on his couch.

Perry White glared at his number one reporter. "I think that should be my question." He held up a piece of paper. Lois couldn't tell what was written on it. She hoped it wasn't her last story. It was pretty awful. "Do you know what I have here?"

"My last story?" She had the decency to look sheepish.

"That piece of tripe? No, I tossed that in the trash right after I got it. Gave the space to advertising." Lois grimaced. "No, this is the third complaint I've gotten this week about you and how you are treating the support staff."

"What? Are you kidding?"

Perry leaned back and rolled his eyes. "Lois, you made Jennifer in research cry."

Lois frowned. "Who's Jennifer?"

"She's the one you embarrassed in front of everyone by throwing the research she did for you back in her face and telling her, and I quote, 'If this is any indication of the kind of work you do, I'm amazed you made past the fifth grade.' Not cool, Lois."

Lois pouted. "Well, if you'd quit hiring idiots..."

"Lois!" Perry's shout startled Lois into silence. "I will not have this sort of behavior in my newsroom. Is that understood?" He stared at her. "Is that understood?"

Lois bit her lip. "Yes, Perry, I'm sorry."

Her editor and mentor's demeanor instantly changed. His voice lost its anger and was replaced with genuine concern. "Lois, honey, what's gotten into you lately?"

Lois shrugged. "You know, there really haven't been any good stories to sink my teeth into lately. I just feel... bored."

"Uh huh." Perry nodded. "I don't suppose your mood would have anything to do with a certain missing partner?"

Lois pursed her lips, then sank back into the couch cushions as if she had suddenly deflated. "I know you find it hard to believe, Chief, I've always been so independent and able to fend for myself, but I miss my partner. I miss Clark."

Perry chuckled. "Really, you think I'd find that hard to believe? I know how that boy feels about you. Heck, he'd walk

on water for you... or drown trying. But, Lois, I know how you feel about him, too."

Lois blushed. "Yeah, well, he's my best friend. I've never had a best friend before. I kind of like it."

Perry's smile said more than he was saying. "Best friend... sure. But, Lois, Clark has been gone before and you were able to function just fine. Haven't you had any conversations with him?"

Lois' look was sulky. "Yeah, but he's never been gone this long before, and I haven't spoken with him since Tuesday. They were going to be out of touch of easy communications for a few days. I just..."

Suddenly she was interrupted by a knock on the door. She turned toward the office door as Jimmy poked his head in.

"Sorry to break in guys, but Lois, you have a phone call. Guy said it was important."

"Thanks, Jimmy." Lois jumped up, gave Perry a nod of acknowledgement, and moved quickly out the door and toward her desk.

She picked up the receiver and pressed the hold button to release it. "Lois Lane."

"Ms. Lane, this is Tim Spenser, I'm Clark Kent's attorney. I was wondering if I could impose on you to stay for a while after the funeral to clear up some matters before you leave Smallville. You have been named in Mr. Kent's will, and I would greatly appreciate your being able to stay long enough to get those legal necessities out of the way. It would also dispense with any need for you to come back for an official reading."

Lois felt a tightening in her throat. It was hard to speak. She was confused. "What? I'm sorry Mr. Spenser but I have no idea what you are talking about. What funeral? And what does it have to do with me being in Clark's will? I'm in Clark's will?"

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Ms. Lane. I would have thought that you would have been contacted by now. I wish I weren't the one to have to break the news to you. Clark Kent was killed yesterday while overseas. His parents are bringing home the body. They should arrive late tomorrow, and the funeral is planned for the day after. I assumed you knew. The arrangements have already been made. I'm so sorry for your loss."

Lois entire body suddenly went numb. An icy hand gripped her heart and began squeezing. Clark was dead. Her Clark, her partner, her best friend, her... he wasn't coming back.

A tiny portion of her brain began to register that someone was talking to her. She glanced around but didn't see anyone. Then it dawned on her... the phone. She forced herself to focus.

"Ms. Lane? Are you still there? Ms. Lane?"

She wasn't sure how she was able to do it, but she managed to answer. "Yeah, I'm still here."

"Again, I'm sorry to have to give you such bad news, but can I assume you'll be able to stay after and deal with the legalities of Mr. Kent's will?"

"Yeah, I'll be there." Woodenly, Lois hung up the phone and began to walk toward Perry's office.

By the time she reached his door, tears were streaming down her face. She made no attempt to wipe them off. She stepped into her boss's office.

"My god, Lois, what's wrong?" Perry was shocked by Lois' appearance.

She had to sniff back some tears to be able to speak. "That was Clark's lawyer on the phone. I need to go to Smallville." Perry stood up and came around his desk. He reached out a hand and placed it on her shoulder.

"Lois, what's this all about?"

"I have to go to a funeral, and then see the lawyer. Did you know that I'm in Clark's will?"

"What?"

"Oh, Perry, Clark is dead!" She collapsed in her mentor's arms as deep sobs began to wrack her body.

(48 hours earlier)

Kyle Griffin approached the seat facing the glass panel between him and the outside world. Seated opposite in a similar chair was his lawyer and confidant. It was a scheduled meeting, they had them every month, but this one was going to be special. He had some plans he needed carried out and his lawyer was going to be the one to make the arrangements.

He sat and picked up the phone.

The lawyer started right in. "Sorry, Kyle, but I've been having a hard time getting a parole hearing set up. Since your last escapade involved threats to the President of the United States, the board isn't too eager to consider anything in your favor."

Griffin waved off his concern. "Don't worry about that now. I have an important task for you."

"What is it?"

"I need to get some measure of revenge against that annoying Lois Lane, and you're going to be the one to set it in motion."

The man on the other side of glass leaned closer and lowered his voice. "I'm willing to help, but you know I can't do anything illegal."

Griffin chuckled. "Not to worry. I just need you to set up a prank I wish to play on the intrepid reporter. Just a mere prank. After all, I am still known as 'The Prankster.'" The lawyer joined in Griffin's laughter with a weak chuckle of his own. The Prankster leaned close to the glass. "Here's what I want you to do..."

Lois felt like she had been crying continuously for the last twenty-four hours. Mostly, because she nearly had been. Right after getting the call from Clark's lawyer, she went directly home. She barely had strength enough to call the airport and arrange her flight to Wichita the next day. She then collapsed onto her bed and cried until she got hiccups.

Sleep had been a long time coming, but eventually she tired herself out crying and fell into a restless slumber. Her pillow was still damp the next morning.

She had managed to not completely embarrass herself on the flight to Kansas. She held a hanky in her hand and stared out the window, not really seeing any scenery, dabbing at the corner of her eyes whenever another memory started the tears falling.

It had been mostly the same in the hotel room where she stayed after the flight got in. She spent the night, zombie-like, just sitting and staring. Her eyes only seeing what was in her mind, not her surroundings, and her mind replaying memories of her and Clark... together.

Awash in her grief over Clark's death, a part of Lois was angry. She was angry at Clark for leaving her, leaving before she'd even had the chance to realize how important he actually was to her. She knew the thought was irrational, but she couldn't help herself. But mostly she was angry with herself. So much of her hurt over Clark's death was selfish.

She missed him more than she thought it possible to miss anyone, and the fact that he would no longer be a part of her life was like a knife twisting in her gut. She had always thought that she never needed another person to make her complete, but Clark had changed that perception. He had insinuated himself into her life and she didn't want to imagine what that life was going to be like without him. She felt sorry for herself.

Lois pulled the rental car into the driveway of the Kent farm. She was surprised she actually remembered how to get there. She was a bit embarrassed to be coming out to the farm like this, but she realized that she didn't know where the service was to take place.

She supposed she could have just driven into town and asked around. Clark's funeral was surely going to be a big deal in the

small town. But she came early enough so that she felt confident that she would catch Martha and Jonathan before they left. She really liked Clark's parents and wanted a chance to offer them her sympathy in private.

She checked her make-up one last time. It didn't look great, but she expected it would pass. She'd had to stop twice to fix her mascara when unexpected crying jags suddenly broke through. She took a deep breath. She could do this. It hurt, but she could do this.

Lois stepped out of the car and headed up the walk toward the large front porch. She was almost there when the screen door opened and Martha stepped out.

Lois was shocked. Martha was dressed in one of her plain, everyday work dresses. Her hair was pinned away from her face and she wore a checked apron around her waist. The older woman looked up and saw Lois standing there. A large smile greeted her.

"Lois, what a pleasant surprise. When did you get in? What's the reason for your visit?"

Lois stuttered a few incoherent phrases. Her mind was all a whirl. Martha didn't exactly look or act like the grieving mother. "I... I came for the funeral."

Now it was Martha who looked confused. "Funeral? What are you talking about, Lois?"

Lois chewed her lip for a moment, needing to collect her thoughts. "You know... Clark's —"

"Hey, Mom, do you think that you would have time to mend some shirts for me before I head back to Metropolis?" Clark had just then pushed open the door and walked out onto the porch.

"Clark?" Lois voice was a whisper of awe.

Clark turned toward Lois, just realizing that she was there.

"Hey, Lois, what brings you out to the sticks? Was Perry afraid that I was enjoying my vacation too much and sent you to fetch me back?" He chuckled.

Lois felt her body tremble. "Omigod, omigod, omigod, Clark! You're alive!"

She dropped her bag to the ground and launched herself the last few feet remaining between them as if she could fly like Superman.

Clark was confused, but he caught his petite partner, even though the force of her coming caused him to stumble back a couple of steps. She grabbed the back of his head and pulled him down to her. She attacked his lips with a passion that spoke to the fear that she was only imagining him. She felt an electric jolt pass between them as she tasted her partner, knowing that the man who held her so tightly was real. He wasn't the delusion of a grief-stricken woman.

Clark, apparently, needing to take a breath, pulled back. She could see the concern in his eyes. "Lois, what's wrong? What's going on?"

Lois wrapped her arms tightly around his chest in a hug that would have possibly injured a normal man. "Oh, Clark, nothing's wrong now. You're alive, and that means I won't have to spend the rest of my life miserable and alone."

Clark carried Lois over to the porch swing and set her down. He quickly sat down next to her. "I think maybe you should start at the beginning."

"That has to be one of the cruelest, sickest things I've ever heard of. Who would do such a thing? Do you have any idea?" Clark held Lois' hand as he spoke.

She shook her head. Lois had told Clark the whole story, beginning with the phone call she'd gotten, right up to her flight to Wichita, and her arrival at the farm. It had been morning when she'd arrived, and it was now mid-afternoon. The sun felt nice on her exposed skin.

She stroked the large hand that held one of hers. "There is a

part of me that is kind of glad that someone played this cruel joke on me.”

“What? Lois, you can’t be serious. Look at all the inconvenience and expense you were caused.”

She nodded. “That’s true, and I have to admit, twenty-four hours of crying doesn’t do much for a girl’s complexion. I must look terrible.”

“You look beautiful.”

She smiled. “Still, if it weren’t for that horrible phone call, who knows how long it would’ve taken me to realize that...” She raised her eyes to capture his. “I can’t stand the thought of you not being in my life.” She dropped her head and laughed softly. “I know it sounds pretty selfish — you supposedly die and all I can think about is how it will affect me.”

Clark placed his hand on her cheek and drew her head back toward him. “No, Lois, it’s not selfish at all. It’s how we all react to loss. We can empathize, and sympathize, but what it always comes down to is how will this terrible thing affect our lives?”

She pulled his hand down and kissed his palm. “I have to admit that I feel sort of stupid, though.”

“Really, why?”

Lois shook her head. “I should have caught on that is was some prank when that phony lawyer said I was in your will.”

Lois frowned at Clark when he started to laugh.

“What’s so funny?”

Clark put his arm around her shoulders. “Let me tell you a little secret, Lois. You are in my will.”

Lois’ eyes grew wide. “I am?” He nodded. A sudden coy look came over Lois as she snuggled closer. “So, what am I going to get?”

Clark laughed harder, then gave her a squeeze. “I’m afraid you’ll just have to wait and see.”

Lois leaned back and favored Clark with a somewhat predatory smile. “It doesn’t matter.”

“It doesn’t?”

She looked smug. “Nope, if you play your cards right, Kent, I’ll wind up with all of it anyway.”

Clark’s laughter echoed off the porch’s wooden rafters. “One can only hope, Lois. One can only hope.”

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