

Gimme Shelter

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Rated: PG

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Summary: An alternate version of the couch scene in “The Prankster.” Lois receives a threatening call from Kyle Griffin and seeks shelter with her best friend.

A ficathon story for anonpip :)

This is a re-imagining of the couch scene from “The Prankster”. Obviously some of the details have been changed — that scene is so full of possibilities and I’ve always wanted to play with it. Several lines have been lifted directly from the episode, written by Grant Rosenberg.

Many, many thanks to Brenda for her insight, her suggestions, and the obfuscation that still cracks me up.

“Griffin? Is that you?” Lois’ breath caught in her throat as she waited for a reply.

“Aw, you figured it out. And after I went to all the trouble of killing poor Barrows.” His voice oozed equal parts glee and malice.

Lois tightened her grip on the phone’s receiver. “What do you want?”

Griffin let out a short, mirthless laugh. “Oh, I don’t know. I just kinda want to, you know, torment you the way you tormented me when you wrote your little expose. And after your reputation is ruined and your life is sufficiently miserable—.” He paused for few ominous seconds before resuming in a low and menacing tone, “—I’m going to put you out of your misery.”

Lois gasped and hung up the phone. She looked around her apartment, her heart pounding, and weighed her options. Griffin knew exactly where she was and her panicked mind wanted nothing more than to get as far away from there as possible. She grabbed her purse and fled, taking the stairs at a break-neck pace.

Outside, she glanced around frantically. There weren’t many people out this late, and the few who were around didn’t seem to be paying any attention to her. That was good, but there wasn’t a cab in sight. Lois took off at a jog, glancing behind her every few seconds to see if anyone was following.

Near the end of her block she saw an empty cab turning the corner. Desperation helped move her legs faster and she ran into the street, waving wildly. The taxi stopped and Lois quickly got inside.

“You gotta death wish, lady?” the cabbie snarled. “Whattaya doin’, stepping out into traffic like that?”

Lois was so relieved that the driver wasn’t Griffin that she was willing to let his rudeness slide. “Just drive,” she told him. “Just go.”

“Lemme guess, boyfriend trouble?” The cab started moving and the driver called over his shoulder, “So where are we goin’? Or did you just want a spin around the block?”

Where was she going? Lois realized she had no idea. The Planet? No good — the building was practically empty this late at night and there were far too many access points. Perry had offered to let her stay with him, but he was clear out in Park Ridge. What about Clark? No sooner had his face popped into her mind than she said, “Clinton Street. 344 Clinton Street.”

The usual twenty minute drive to Clark’s seemed to take infinitely longer. Griffin’s taunts replayed over and over in her

mind. She tried to take deep breaths and think of how much safer she’d feel at Clark’s. The last time she had shown up late at night after a death threat, Clark had given her a hug, and made her a strawberry smoothie before letting her sleep on his couch. Tonight that sounded like heaven to her.

At Clark’s building, Lois took the stairs two at a time. She was out of breath when she reached his door. The lights were on inside, and she almost wept with relief that he was home. She beat on his door and called out, “Clark? Clark, are you there?”

A few long seconds ticked by, and she had started to knock again when she saw his shadow on the frosted glass pane of the door just before it opened.

“Lois?” Clark asked, perplexed.

“Hi!” she chirped, trying to sound lighthearted. Lois glanced over her shoulder, half-expecting to see Griffin lurking in the gloom of the poorly-lit hallway behind her. “I, uh, I was wondering if you, uh...” Her ears picked up the sound of cheers coming from his TV and she pushed past him, desperately wanting inside. “I was wondering if you were watching the game. You know it’s always more fun to watch with a friend.”

“Great.” Clark closed the door and watched, bemused, as she scurried down his stairs. “Come in.”

Lois turned around and looked up at him. “Shouldn’t you lock that?” she asked. “I mean, this isn’t exactly an upscale neighborhood and you’ve had break-ins before. I think you’d better lock the door.”

She looked so anxious that Clark decided to humor her. He locked the door while taking a quick peek through it. There was no one outside but she was certainly acting as if someone was following her. “Lois, is something wrong?”

“Does something have to be wrong for me to want to spend some time with a friend?”

“No. Uh, no, I’m sorry. The Nets are up by six,” he answered as he came down the stairs to join her.

Lois gave him a distracted nod and walked past his couch, making a beeline for the large window in his bedroom.

“You should really keep your blinds shut, you know. There’s all sorts of sickos out there. Peeping Toms. Curious neighbors. Vindictive psychotics with a grudge.”

Clark refrained from pointing out that there was nothing but a brick wall outside and he was four stories up. Whatever the reason for her sudden social call, she obviously didn’t feel safe. “Did Griffin pull another prank?”

Lois ignored his question in favor of tugging on the cord to close his blinds. They fell into place with a clatter. Then she continued along the wall to check on his patio door. “I can’t believe you leave this open, Clark. Anybody could get in here.”

Clark leaned one shoulder against his partition wall and watched as she locked the door. “As you so astutely pointed out, I don’t live in a part of town that screams ‘this is worth the climb’. Besides, only a cat burglar could get in through that door.”

“And Superman,” Lois muttered.

“Superman?”

“Cat burglars aren’t the only ones who could get to your balcony. I’m pretty sure Superman could, too.”

“You think Superman is casing my apartment?” he teased, hoping to lighten her tension.

Lois gave a nervous laugh. “No, I guess he wouldn’t, huh?” She gave the door handle one more jiggle, and then crossed to his couch and sat down. A little of her worry ebbed away when Clark joined her.

“So what’s the score?” she asked absentmindedly.

Clark gave her a considering look as his worry deepened. The game’s score was clearly displayed at the bottom of the screen, but it obviously wasn’t registering for her. In spite of her zen-like stare, her heartbeat and breathing were rapid.

“Lois, will you please tell me what’s going on?”

Her head swiveled to face him, her eyes wide with alarm.

“What makes you think something’s going on?”

“You’re obviously upset.”

“Upset? What? No, I’m not.” Lois gave him a bright smile.

“See — I’m perfectly fine.”

Clark raised a disbelieving eyebrow. “So you showed up in the middle of the night simply to check my locks and watch a basketball game?”

She scowled at him. “Do you want me to leave?”

He held up his hands in a gesture of surrender. “No! I’m sorry. I’m glad you came over.”

Her expression softened. “Really?”

“Cross my heart and hope to—”

“Don’t say die,” she interrupted before he could finish. Lois abruptly stood up and unconsciously began pacing as she mentally debated telling Clark about Griffin’s phone call. Would he think she was a coward for being so panicked? Or would he muster up some of that protectiveness she found both charming and irksome and suggest that she stay the night? She stopped in her pacing and studied his face. Clark’s expression was baffled with just the right amount of concern.

“Tell me,” he prompted. “Maybe I can help.”

Lois nodded and took a deep, shaky breath. “He called me. Griffin called me.”

“What?” Clark sat up straighter, suddenly feeling very anxious himself. “When? What did he say to you?”

Lois shrugged and breezily said, “Oh, the usual. He said, ‘Lois, hi, how are you, long time no see, I’m gonna kill you.’” She flopped back down on the couch next to him.

“Kill you? Did you call the police?”

It was somehow reassuring to see that Clark was just as upset as she was. Lois gave his knee a soothing pat. “Clark, I am a professional reporter. This is not the first threat that I have ever received. These, these things they, they never pan out.” She picked up his open soda on the coffee table and took a long drink.

If her hand wasn’t shaking so much, Clark would have smiled at how casually she took liberties with a drink that wasn’t hers. “Well, maybe not, but I’d feel a lot better if you stayed here tonight.”

“Oh,” she said almost choking on the soda. Her instincts had been right — Clark would keep her safe. “Oh, I, I, I mean, oh, if, well, if it would make you feel better than I, I guess that...” Lois set the soda back down and was distressed to see just how badly her hand was shaking.

“Don’t let me twist your arm or anything,” he said wryly.

Lois grabbed his hand and squeezed. “Clark, I don’t want to die.”

Her expression was so vulnerable and frightened that Clark’s heart seemed to twist in his chest. At that moment he wanted nothing more than to take her in his arms and keep her safe forever.

“Lois, I would not let that happen.”

Their eyes met for a long moment. In the space of a few heartbeats Lois comprehended that Clark truly meant it. She realized that he had been watching out for her since their first story together. Clark had saved her life almost as many times as Superman. He had even done one better than Superman. It had been Clark, not Superman, who breathed life back into her after Sebastian Finn tried to strangle her. It was Clark who had murmured reassurances and rocked her in his arms on her kitchen floor. She had slept on his couch that night and now he was offering her that same security.

“Thank you,” she whispered. “For... for everything.”

Clark smiled and she wished it was because he realized just how much ‘everything’ encompassed.

“You’re welcome.” His fingers gently tightened on hers. “For everything.”

Lois gave him a shy smile. “So... is it really okay if I stay here tonight?”

“Yes, of course.”

Lois let out a sigh of relief and, feeling a little awkward, she let go of his hand. She toed off her shoes and sat back. Clark’s arm moved to rest along the back of the couch. Lois leaned closer to him, letting her head tip back to rest against his forearm.

“Have you ever had a death threat?” she asked.

Clark’s fingers brushed her shoulder as he teased, “Only when I’ve been with you.”

Lois gave a shaky laugh as she realized he was probably right. “I can’t believe you still hang out with me. I mean, we almost got blown to bits on our first story together. And then there was that awful Trask who threw us both out of a plane.”

Clark smiled. “You’re always exciting to be around, that’s for sure.”

“Exciting,” she murmured. “More like dangerous.”

“Maybe I like a little danger in my life.”

Lois grinned in spite of herself. She was just the teensiest bit thrilled that Clark might actually think she was exciting. Sure, she was constantly teasing him about being boring, but the truth was he was exciting, in a reassuring kind of way. She couldn’t say he was dangerous. At least, not with a straight face. Occasionally, though, there were times when her libido found him dangerously appealing.

She settled deeper into the couch and tried to concentrate on the basketball game. It was nearly impossible to do as she finally took notice that Clark was wearing gray shorts and a dark green sleeveless t-shirt that definitely made him dangerously appealing. Lois started thinking about those last few moments before Trask had tossed them out of the plane. Imminent death had not been the only thing making her heart beat faster. She had only meant to pretend to briefly press her lips to Clark’s but somehow she had found herself actually kissing him. What would it be like to kiss him for real? How many girls had been lucky enough to kiss him?

A time-out was called in the game and Lois turned slightly to face Clark. “Who was your first kiss? Your first serious kiss?” she asked.

His head tilted. “There’s a difference?”

“Well, sure. A first kiss is just a kiss.”

“So what’s a serious kiss?”

“When it means something,” she said, as if that should have been obvious.

“Your first kiss meant nothing to you?” he asked in disbelief.

Lois frowned at him. “You know what I mean.”

He shook his head slightly. “No, I don’t think I do.”

Lois rolled her eyes. “Okay, fine. So who was your first kiss? Obviously she means something to you.”

“I don’t kiss and tell.” His lips quirked in a suppressed grin as Clark’s attention returned to the game.

Her mouth dropped open in astonishment. “C’mon, Clark,” she cajoled. “I’ll tell you who mine was.”

He shook his head. “No.”

“Fine,” she sniffed. “It’s not that big a deal. Be a prude.” Lois shifted, putting a couple of inches between them on the couch.

Clark turned to face her. “That’s not prudish. That’s prudent. I didn’t see you complaining when I kept quiet over what happened between us in the honeymoon suite.”

Lois gasped in indignation. “Nothing happened!”

He winked at her. “Exactly.”

“No, don’t give me that smug tone. What exactly do you think happened?”

He shrugged. “Nothing.”

“I’m serious, Clark. You’re allowed to discuss what happened with the person it happened with.”

“So you’re saying that something happened?” His eyes

twinkled with mischief.

“What? No!”

Clark crossed his arms. “There you have it. Nothing happened.”

Lois fumed as she tried to figure out what Clark imagined had happened. They had played a few games. They had broken into an office. He had kissed her on the bed. Was that it? Did he honestly think that had meant something?

“You kissed me,” she stated matter-of-factly.

“Sorry?”

“You kissed me. You picked me up and threw me on the bed and [i]you/[i] kissed [i]me/[i]. If that’s what you’re thinking happened. It was all you, Clark. I had nothing to do with it.”

Clark nodded. “Like you said — nothing happened.”

“You keep saying that, but you’re saying it like something did happen.” Lois was starting to get really annoyed. What the heck did he think he was pulling here?

“Am I?” he asked, his voice full of manufactured bafflement.

“Arrrgh!” Lois smacked his arm. “Just tell me what you think happened.”

For a moment or two, Clark thought about teasing her further. Then he decided he didn’t want to aggravate her into leaving. “I guess it’s not what happened. It’s what I learned.”

“What? What did you learn?” she asked suspiciously.

“I learned that you look pretty decent first thing in the morning. You’re a stingy tipper. You’re a sore loser who pouts when she doesn’t win. And you sleep in the nude.”

“I don’t sleep in the nude! It was just, uh, hot. That room was like a sauna.” Even to Lois’ ears, that excuse sounded lame.

Clark turned back to the game and Lois decided not to pursue the subject any further. She fought the urge to squirm. Did he really think that she was a stingy sore loser who wandered around naked in her lonely apartment? He didn’t think she was exciting or dangerous. He thought she was pathetic.

Lois bit her lip, unable to resist wallowing in self-pity as she saw herself through Clark’s eyes. She was a paranoid, pathetic loser who showed up on his doorstep at all hours of the day or night because she didn’t have any other friends to bother. Her cheeks flushed as she recalled how she had once shown up dressed as Salome and stripped for him. Thank god he had never told anyone about that. There was actually a long list of stupid things she had done in his presence that he had never told a soul. Why hadn’t he?

Was it friendship? Professional respect? Common courtesy? Loyalty? Was he saving up her lesser moments to blackmail her? Or was it possible that Clark actually liked her? She snuck a peek at him. His attention was on the television, his arms still crossed over his chest. A small, sharp pang went through her. She missed the warm weight of his arm across her shoulders. She wanted that back — that feeling of friendly security from being so near Clark. She wanted a way to show him that she wasn’t a desperate loser.

Lois was so lost in thought that she didn’t realize the game was over until Clark had stood up and was moving in the direction of his bedroom. The television was still on and she gathered from the post-game chatter that the Nets had won. A minute later Clark was back, holding out a blanket and a pillow for her.

“Is there anything else I can get you?” he asked.

“No, uh, thank you.” Lois stood up and took the proffered items from him.

“Well,” he said after a few seconds hesitation, “Good night, Lois.”

He moved to go to his bedroom, and she dropped the bedding so she could grab his elbow to stop him.

“They had silk sheets,” she blurted out. “At the Lexor. I just, uh, I wanted to know what that would feel like.”

Clark smiled. She was relieved both that he understood and that he was somehow charmed by her reasoning.

“What did it feel like?” he asked.

“It was... soft. Nice.” Lois giggled. “Really nice.”

Clark nodded his understanding. “Lana Lang,” he said softly.

Lois was about to ask him what he meant when she realized what he was telling her. “Russell Sweeney,” she answered.

Their eyes met and they both smiled. Lois felt giddy that he was standing this close to her, this late at night, with a smile that definitely said he didn’t think she was pathetic. Suddenly she wanted to confess all manner of things to him.

“I, uh, I did kiss you,” she whispered. “That night at the Lexor. I kissed you back. I guess I wanted to know what that would feel like, too.” Lois looked up shyly through her lashes before adding, “It was really... nice.”

Clark’s smile widened a little. His hand cupped her cheek and her heart fluttered at the gentle affection in his touch. “Yes, it was.”

For a breathless moment or two, Lois was certain he was going to kiss her. Then Clark blinked and his cheeks colored just a little as his hand dropped and he took a step back. “Good night, Lois.”

Disappointment set in as she watched him start to walk away. “Clark? Do you want to know the last person I seriously kissed?”

That stopped him in his tracks and he turned back to her, his head tilted in curiosity. “Who was it?”

Lois took a deep breath and moved closer to him. “It was you.”

“Me?” He looked baffled. “When?”

Her hand was shaking as she touched his chest. She could feel his heartbeat pounding as rapidly as her own. Lois went on tip-toe and whispered, “Just now.”

THE END

This isn’t a song fic, but the title was inspired by a song:

*A storm is threatening
My very life today
If I don't get some shelter
I'm gonna fade away...
...I tell you love
It's just a kiss away*

‘Gimme Shelter’ — The Rolling Stones

Anonpip’s request

1. Lois and Clark teasing each other or sparring
2. Revelation other than CK=Superman
3. WaFF

Preferred season(s)/holiday [if applicable]: S1 or 2

Three things I do not want in my fic:

1. Luthor
2. Tempus/Wells/alt-Clark, etc.
3. Kryptonite