

Blind Date

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Summary: A man walks into a bar to meet a blind date. What he finds is a woman who keeps him on his toes. A new beginning to the familiar tale.

Clark walked into the bar. He was told to look for the woman with the red carnation. It was tacky, horribly tacky, but true.

He had been set up. Worse, he had been set up on a blind date with someone he knew nothing about, but her name.

He hated the concept of blind dates, although he had never been on one.

He didn't even know why he accepted.

That was a lie. Clark knew.

He was tired of being alone. Always alone. Everywhere he went, even when he was in a crowd, he felt alone.

It had nothing to do with him and yet, everything to do with him at the same time.

He promised his mom that he'd stop moving around so much.

He promised his mom that he'd go out on a date.

He promised himself to stop calling his mom so much.

He was new to Metropolis and knew nobody.

That was also a lie.

He had one friend in Metropolis. An old friend from his time in Tibet. His friend was a human rights lawyer and Clark had interviewed him for a story back in the day. They had hit it off. Two Americans fighting against injustice. The Chinese government had deported his friend before the villagers Clark had rescued from the mudslide had seen what he could do. Therefore, his friend hadn't known how hastily the reporter had left the country either.

Last week, they had bumped into each other at the mayor's press conference about the boatload of refugees that had crashed into the Hob's River docks and were now in holding cells. How bad did your life have to be when a holding cell was better than what you left back home?

They had gone for drinks and talked about old times in Lhasa. They talked about what was new. They spoke of Clark's promise to his mother and how he wished he wouldn't break it this time.

His friend knew of a woman who would be perfect for Clark, a real truth and justice type. She had a busy career, apparently, which meant that she didn't have much time for dating either.

His friend had called her, and then called Clark back and told him where to meet her. The red carnation was his friend's idea.

His friend had a sick sense of humor.

Clark wondered if she was real, or if she would show. He doubted anyone could be perfect, let alone perfect for Clark. Did he really want perfect, anyway?

This had been a bad idea.

He moved through the throng of people and saw someone sitting at the bar, twirling a red carnation in her fingers. She wore a maroon dress that had slid up her thigh as she sat on the barstool.

Suddenly, she dropped the carnation on the bar and slammed her fist down upon it. Turning away from both the smashed flower and the bar, the woman went to storm out of the room.

Her brunette bob swayed with her movement, fanning her

face and revealing it strand of hair by strand of hair. Clark's breath stuck in his throat.

She appeared both exceedingly annoyed and the most alluring woman Clark had ever seen.

His friend had been wrong. She was imperfect.

However, Clark suspected she might be perfect for him.

Lois sat at the bar. Her fingers tapped impatiently.

She hated to wait.

She had important things she could be doing.

She didn't need this date.

She didn't even want this date.

But she had promised her sister she would go on one date that wasn't an interview.

God. How was she supposed to get to know a man if she didn't ask him a thousand questions to see what he was hiding?

One date. One drink. That was all the time that Lois had.

He was new in town, the friend of the brother of a friend of a friend of a friend of her sister's. It had taken Lucy four degrees of separation, or was it six, to find someone willing to date her sister.

I feel so honored, she thought wryly.

Lucy had promised her that he had a good, honest job, a busy job, which made it impossible for him to date. It constantly pulled him away from his dates. Lois could relate.

His sense of style was rumored to be somewhat out there, but he believed in truth and he was terribly romantic.

So, Lois had agreed on the date. Worse, a blind date with tacky red carnations. The carnations had been his idea. That should have been a red flag.

By Lucy's description, Lois assumed the man to be head of a criminal organization and probably a womanizer. Perhaps she might get an article out of it, if she was lucky. If she were unlucky, her boss would be bailing her out of jail for assault, again.

Apparently, her date didn't believe in punctuality.

Okay. Lois might have arrived a little late herself, but her source had called and told her that he had lied about some aspect of the information he had given to her.

Typical male. Always lying about something.

If her date was so romantic, he should have waited.

As she considered how much longer she should wait, Lois absently twirled the red carnation in her fingers. She liked the way it felt against her skin.

Enough was enough. She slammed the carnation down on the bar and turned to leave.

Not five paces from the bar stood a tall man with dark hair and glasses. He held a red carnation, and his tie reminded her of a Picasso painting. Evening Flowers, if she recalled the name correctly. That certainly took guts. She had to admit that with his grey suit it looked good.

Normally, Lois would have stomped out of the bar, leaving the man and the carnation in her dust, but there was something open and honest about his expression, which made Lois pause.

What was one drink, anyway?

"Hi," Clark murmured, tongue tied for probably the first time in his life. He stupidly held out his flower. "Are you...?"

The woman glanced back at her flower, which she had left on the bar, and then returned her gaze to him. "On a blind date?" She nodded. "I didn't think you would show."

He had been on time to the bar, but he hadn't taken into consideration actually getting inside and over to the bar.

This, he had to admit, was a horrible place to get to know someone. The noise level was dismally high. Although, from the moment he had seen her face until she had spoken, it had seemed quiet enough to hear a pin drop.

He heard a heart thumping with anticipation, and he realized it was his own. He swallowed down his nerves and placed a smile on his face. "It's a pleasure meeting you," he said, holding out his hand.

She shook it politely. "Likewise."

"Shall we go someplace a little quieter, where we can talk?" he suggested.

She arched a brow and then shrugged. "There's a Chinese restaurant not too far from here that actually passed its last three health inspections, if you don't mind walking."

He would try to keep his feet on the ground. "I don't mind," he replied.

He would walk all night, if she asked him to.

Once they were out of the bar and out at the sidewalk, he said, "I understand you like truth and justice. May I ask what you do?"

"I wouldn't describe... no, actually, that would describe me well," she answered with a chuckle. "I'm a reporter."

What a small world.

"Really? Me, too," he replied.

She looked him over. "What's your beat?"

"The world." At her skeptical expression, he continued, "I don't have one in Metropolis yet."

"I've never... oh, right, new in town. Who do you work for?"

"I have an interview with the *Metropolis Star* the day after tomorrow," he said.

"They're a rag. The headline is more important than the facts, but it's better than the *National Whisper*," she stated.

He was refreshingly surprised by her blunt honesty. "Perhaps, over time, I will make it into less of a rag," he said. "Where do you work?"

"*Daily Planet*," she said with a decisive nod.

"I hear that's a good place to work. I wanted to interview with Perry White, but he isn't hiring and when he is it's all about who you know to get a word with him," Clark said with a frown. "I apparently don't know the right people."

She eyed him suspiciously. "I don't do favors for strangers."

He grinned. "You agreed to go on a date with me. So, I guess I owe you one."

"I don't date other reporters, either," she stated.

That made him pause for a split second, and then he said, "I agree. Dating within our profession would be a challenge."

Her eyes flashed to his. "Reporters would lie, steal, and turn in their jaywalking mother for a story."

Knowing he wouldn't convince her of his own ethics by anything he could say, he said instead, "Does that description include you?"

He saw a hint of a smile play across her lips. "Well, jaywalking is dangerous in Metropolis if you don't do it right."

"Good thing my mother crosses at the corners, then," he said with a wink. Well, most times.

"Where was your last assignment?"

"Freelance. I just returned from Central America," he said with a shiver. "They've just unearthed another mass grave from the war. This one was mostly women and children."

She set her hand on his arm. "That must have been difficult."

"I wouldn't be lying if I said I'm glad to be back among the living," he replied.

She smiled. "I don't know about that, but most of the crime in Metropolis is fresher." She winced at her slip of the tongue. "I didn't mean..."

He set his hand over hers on his arm. "I know." He realized he was basically holding her hand, and let go.

She reciprocated by removing her hand from his arm.

"That's why I've moved here, to be closer to where the action is," he said.

She jerked her thumb over her shoulder. "Then you took a

wrong turn. Gotham City is that way."

He laughed. "Yes, but Metropolis has the sunshine. I hear Gotham City can suck the soul right out of a man."

"Metropolis has the same problem," she admitted. "Luckily, though, I'm a woman."

He had noticed, but refrained from saying so.

"I'm from Metropolis, born and raised," she went on. "How about you?"

"Nope. This is my first time to the Big Apricot," he said. "I was raised in Kansas."

As they stopped on the corner to wait for a light, she stared at him. "You're a farm boy, aren't you?"

"I was raised on a farm, yes, but I haven't been a boy in over ten years," he said, giving her a knowing look.

"So, I noticed," she murmured under her breath as she started across the street.

He smiled.

Things were looking up.

Lois handed her menu to the waiter and took a sip of her water. When he left, she turned back to face her date. "They do speak English here. You didn't need to order in Chinese to impress me."

"I wasn't trying to impress you. I ordered a traditional dish that wasn't on the menu. It was easier to ask for it in Mandarin," he replied.

"So, how many languages do you know besides Chinese?"

He shrugged. "A few."

"How few?"

"More than enough to get by," he replied.

"Are you some kind of a savant?"

He thought for a moment before saying, "I wouldn't describe myself in that fashion, no. I have an eidetic memory and an ear for languages, that's all."

"That must come in handy," she said.

"I still take notes. Better safe than sorry when it comes to a quoting someone," he replied.

As she turned to look down at her purse to check her cell phone for messages, she thought to herself how she wished she could carry him around in her pocket to use on some of her stories. No messages. She guessed her source wasn't going to call her back, after all.

When she looked back at her date, his expression seemed momentarily stunned before he covered it with another one of those smiles that seemed to wind her. She wondered if she had accidentally spoken her thoughts aloud. She knew that she mumbled to herself sometimes, but she didn't think she did it loud enough for anyone else to hear.

"Politicians are the worse. Although, I have to admit that I love it when you have it on tape them saying it one way, and they still deny it," she said with a shake of her head.

"I like to give them the benefit of the doubt," he said.

"Everyone can say something we don't actually mean or that can be taken the wrong way. Politicians are human and they can make mistakes too."

"If you honestly think that, Metropolis will eat you alive," Lois returned. "Your career will be over before it begins. The politicians will see you as fresh meat and devour you whole, only to spit out your bones."

"I'd like to see them try," he said with a sly smile. "I'm tougher than I look."

The waiter returned and placed a couple of teapots and an order of spring rolls on the table. As she opened the lid of her pot to check the strength of her tea, she felt a pang of disappointment. She had hoped he would be different. A part of her had wanted to get to know him better. It was too bad he was a naive fool, though. That smile he had just given her as if he were laughing at

some inside joke meant that he was hiding something. Then again, he was male, so of course he was lying about something.

She leaned across the table and fixed him in her sights. “How tough is that?”

He swallowed and looked as if he hadn’t expected a follow-up question to his remarks. “Have I earned the fifth degree for some reason?”

She raised a brow. “Third degree,” she corrected, not missing the fact that he had answered her question with one of his own, changing the subject.

He dipped a spring roll into the sauce and took a bite. “Are you sure about that?”

“First degree is arrest. Second is transportation to the station. Interrogation is the third degree,” she said. There was a reason she never lost at Trivial Pursuit. “It’s always third degree, even with burns.”

“Yes, but with you, it’s two degrees hotter than that,” he replied, taking a sip of his water.

She didn’t know if he was referring to her interview style or her looks, either way it was a compliment. “Is it too warm in here for you?” she asked.

“It’s my impression that wherever you go, you make men sweat,” he said.

Definite flattery. She smiled modestly with a shrug of acceptance at that fact. She would rather make men sweat than ever be called an ice queen again.

“Or perhaps I should stick to sweet and sour instead of spicy mustard.”

She picked up her spring roll, dipped it into the pale yellow mustard, and took a large bite, all the while staring into his eyes. It stung her mouth, but she refused to back down. He wasn’t tougher than she was, and she would prove it. Her mouth continued to heat up, burning up her nasal passages to her eyes, causing them to tear, but she didn’t look away.

“Are you all right?” he asked, his hand briefly brushing over hers.

Lois swallowed down the burning fireball and took a gulp of her water.

She felt his hand take hold of hers. “You don’t have to prove anything to me,” he whispered in a kind tone of voice.

She pulled her hand away. She didn’t need his condescension. He had seen her efforts to show him her strength as a weakness.

She stood up. “I should go,” she said.

He rose to his feet. “I wish you wouldn’t.”

“What is it that you want?” she demanded.

He indicated her seat, and didn’t sit down until she did.

“I want what I assume most men want,” he said.

Lots of money, a fast car, power, prestige, multiple bed partners?

Slowly, he poured his tea. “I want to make a difference with what I do, and not just show up and sit at a desk all day, pushing papers around,” he said. “I’ve already traveled the world, and now I’d like to find someone who would be willing to share it with me. Someone who can look outside the box and accept me for who I am. I’d love a family, someday, but I don’t know if that’s in the cards.”

“You’re an odd duck,” she said with a shake of her head.

He gazed at her with confusion.

“I don’t know a single man who wants any of those things,” she said.

“And you know the wants of all men?” he asked with a shake of his head. “Perhaps you just know what they want you to think.”

“Well, it would fit into my profile that men are essentially liars,” Lois replied.

He laughed. “The only thing that all men are is male. You cannot judge us all on the actions of a few, as you would hate to

be judged morally loose merely because you are a female American.”

“I beg your pardon,” Lois snapped.

“I visited some countries on my journeys where this assumption about American women was made merely by the way she dressed, or simply by the fact that she did not cover her face or hair, or by how she is portrayed in Hollywood films. I didn’t say that I believed this.” He took a sip of his tea, and then said softly, “I’m glad to hear that this assumption offends you.”

Lois pressed her lips together. “You’re *glad* that I was offended?”

“Yes. If their prejudices about you were wrong, as I believed they were, then it shows that you’re open minded enough to see that your assumptions don’t hold any water either,” he replied. “Not all men lie.”

“Perhaps that makes you the exception and not the rule,” she stated.

“Most definitely,” he said with a grin.

She shook her head. “Odd duck,” she mumbled. “You’re proud of being different.”

“Pride has no factor in it. I like who I am and strive to be the man my folks see. In essentials, I am as any human male,” he said as he busied himself scooping some plum sauce onto his plate into which to dip the remainder of his spring roll.

“Male?” she said wryly.

He winked. “Most definitely.”

If he expected her to glance away or flush at this topic of conversation, he was sorely mistaken. Unfortunately, the arrival of their meal interrupted their conversation before she could bring up her next line of questioning.

He had ordered some kind of steamed dumpling, which he insisted on sharing with her. With the dexterity of a native, he picked one up with his chopsticks and set it on her plate.

“Watch out. They are scalding hot and can burn your tongue,” he cautioned.

The other dish he had ordered didn’t have the heavy sauce accompanying her beef and broccoli. “What is that?” she asked.

“Are you allergic to sea food?”

“No,” she replied, and watched as he quickly moved a couple of items to her plate. She gave him a long look.

“Try it first.”

She rolled her eyes. “After you.”

After he tried it and hadn’t died, she tentatively took a bite. It was very different from her dish.

He watched her with delight. “Sea cucumber,” he finally said, taking a bite of his dumpling.

“Get out of here. This doesn’t taste like cucumber at all,” she said, and then laughed. She raised her hand to stop him from telling her that it was an animal not a vegetable. “I know. I know.”

Clark held the door open for her as they left the restaurant.

“What does yours say?” she asked. “Mine says: Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without.”

“Ah. Confucius. A wise man,” he replied, cracking open his cookie. He tried not to gasp at the words written on his fortune. He cleared his throat and then read, “Today is the first day of the rest of your life.”

“Well, duh!” she scoffed. “What kind of fortune is that? It might have well read, ‘Yesterday was the last day of your old life. Today, you start anew.’”

“Very nicely put,” he said. “But isn’t that what it was saying?”

Her brow furrowed. “Is it?” She thought about that for a moment. “So, how did your life start anew today?”

Clark already knew the answer. “I met you.”

She chuckled and nudged him with her elbow. “Are you

always this corny and romantic?”

“That wasn’t corny,” he grumbled. “I was being honest.” He didn’t take her jab too much to heart. She had also said he was romantic.

“So, how exactly have I changed your life?” she asked.

In a thousand different ways. “You have given me hope.”

She really started to laugh now. “Me? Hope? Ms. Assumes All Men Lie? Doubtful.”

He waited until her laughter subsided. “Now, I know two people in Metropolis. That is twice as many as when I awoke this morning,” he said.

“An optimist, huh?” she said, looking him over with suspicion. “It isn’t perchance because one of these two people is on a first name basis with Perry White and can give you an introduction, now is it?”

“That is up to you,” he said. “I wouldn’t turn you down if you made the offer. For now, I’m content in just knowing you.”

“Uh-huh,” she replied skeptically.

They walked into a small park in silence. He saw her gaze down at her fortune again.

“Are you supposed to be my flawed diamond?” she asked.

“Depends on your point of view,” he said. In his opinion, his only flaw was that he wasn’t a typical man.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t see myself an inherently flawed, but others might,” he replied, hoping she wouldn’t.

“In what way?” she probed, stopping by a park bench and sitting down.

“Pardon?”

“In what way will I see that you’re inherently flawed?” she asked.

“I hope you don’t see me that way at all,” he replied, sitting down next to her.

She studied him with a contemplative expression. “How about in particulars?”

“You’ve lost me,” he said with a shake of his head.

“You said earlier that in essentials you were the same as any human male, so how do you differ from the rest of them, Mr. Exception to the Rule?” she asked.

Clark could feel the blood drain from his face as he stared at her. Had he worded it like that? He hoped that the darkness of the evening covered up his shocked expression. “That is not really something I can answer on a first date,” he said honestly.

“Is this your way of asking me out on a second date?”

“It really isn’t something I would discuss on a second date,” he said hesitantly. “Or a third.”

“How many dates would it take, then, for me to learn how you differ from all other men?” she asked. “Five? Ten? Fifty? A hundred?”

It was something he had never told anyone else, so he wasn’t sure how many dates it would take. “I... I don’t know.”

“Let’s pretend for a moment that this isn’t our first date, but our first anniversary,” she said, scooting closer to him. “Now, tell me.” She set her hand on his knee and stared deeply into his eyes.

Clark could picture it. A year from now the two of them sitting on this bench, having just enjoyed a meal at their favorite Chinese restaurant, laughing with familiarity, holding hands, sharing a kiss or two. Finally, he falls to one knee and asks for her hand in marriage. He swallowed. “Wow. You’re good.”

Her gloating smile told him that she knew that he almost caved. “I never said that I wasn’t.”

“But I’m afraid you’ll just have to date me for the next year if you want to find out,” he said, leaning against the back of the bench in what he hoped seemed like a casual manner.

She pinched her lips together in annoyance. “Only a year?”

He shrugged. “More or less.”

“What you’re saying is that you might not tell me, even if we

do date a year?” she said. “So, what will it take?”

He grinned. “Love.”

She crossed her arms self-consciously. “What if I told you that I’m saving myself for marriage?”

“I would say that I’d honor your decision,” he said, not wanting to discuss the particulars. “That isn’t the sort of love to which I’m referring.”

She relaxed her posture as she considered this. After a moment, she licked her lips and leaned towards him, whispering in a deep husky tone, “What if I told you that I’ve already fallen in love with you?”

It took all of his willpower not to lean over and claim those lips for his own. “I’d remind myself that it was you who told me that all reporters lie and would sell out their mothers for a headline.”

She sat up, but her expression seemed smug. “So, whatever it is you haven’t told me about yourself would cause headlines, would it?”

She was really a top-notch interviewer to have gotten him to admit that. Why couldn’t he recall seeing her byline in the Daily Planet, then?

Clark cleared his throat and said, “It wouldn’t be if you truly loved me.”

She raised a brow and looked him square in the eye. “And how exactly would I be able to do that if I know that you aren’t being completely honest with me?”

“I guess you would just have to trust me and give me a chance.”

“Trust is a two way street,” she reminded him.

His heart cracked, knowing that she was right. “Well, yes...” He stood up. “I wish you luck, and I’m sorry I can’t be the man you expected, Mayson.” He held out his hand. “We could’ve made quite a team, you and I.”

“What?” she stammered, rising to her feet and staring at him in disbelief. “What did you say?”

His heart accelerated with anticipation. “Have you changed your mind? Are you willing to give me another chance to start rest of my life with you? I would like to prove myself worthy to be your diamond, flawed or otherwise.”

She drew her hand to her chest and patted it. “My name isn’t Mayson!” she shouted.

Clark sputtered, “But... but you... you had... red carnation.”

“Are you even Dan?”

He shook his head as his eyes bugged with dawning comprehension. “No. I’m Clark.” He laughed. “Clark Kent. I was supposed to meet a woman named Mayson.”

She started laughing too. “Lois. Lois Lane,” she said, holding out her hand. “Nice to meet you, Clark. I was set up with Dan.”

Clark took her hand in his and drew her closer, not shaking it. “Wait. You’re *the* Lois Lane?” Everything she said made perfect sense, now.

“Well, I don’t know about *The*...”

“The best investigative reporter in Metropolis?” he amended.

She shrugged. “Yes, I’m *that* Lois Lane. Don’t you mean the world?”

“I cover the world, remember,” he said with mirthful wink.

“At least, you’re modest about your accomplishments.”

“I could say the same about you, Clark,” Lois said, playfully slapping his arm, as she laughed.

He released her hand and moved his hands to her waist. The movement caused his laughter to subside, leaving him breathless. “I wonder what happened to Mayson and Dan,” he said, his voice sounding rough to his own ears.

She gazed up at him, and he realized how intimate a gesture it had been to take hold of her. He was about to step away when her arms came up and rested on his shoulders. “Would you think me heartless if I said that I didn’t care?”

“You? Never,” he said softly. She couldn’t be heartless because she had already stolen his heart.

“To think, we almost never met,” she murmured.

He was about to argue her point, when her arms slid over his shoulders until their chests met. Instead, the words never found their way to his lips, now tingling with the yearning to kiss her. He tilted his head as she closed her eyes. They moved together and joined their lips.

Lois didn’t know what to expect from Clark’s kiss. Certainly nothing like this.

The desire that had made her kiss him exploded within her causing her body to tingle in a most intoxicating way. She felt as if they were floating in the air and dancing among the stars.

She crossed ‘bad kisser’ off her list of his possible secrets.

So, he thought he was flawed. All men were in some way, but not all men were diamonds. Knowing that he was withholding something from her gave him an air of mystery, a challenge for her to crack.

Lois only hoped that once she discovered what he was hiding from her, it would be headline worthy. How big the headline would determine if she truly loved him.

THE END

Disclaimer: Inspired by the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster as they were portrayed on the *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* television series, developed by Deborah Joy LeVine. The characters do not belong to me; they belong to themselves (although Warner Bros, DC Comics, and the heirs to Siegel and Shuster might disagree). The plot of the story is my own.

The name Mayson Drake comes from S2’s “Church of Metropolis” written by John McNamara. Dan Scardino is from S2’s “Resurrection” written by Gene Miller. Thankfully, neither character made an appearance in this story.

The film “He’s Just Not That Into You” inspired this story. Evening Flowers by Pablo Picasso is a real painting.