

Last Night

By Mary Potts aka Queen of the Capes
<queenofthecapes@gmail.com>

Rated PG-13

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Summary: Clark wakes up with no memory of the night before. A Kryptonite Challenge Response.

Clark's head was being struck on all sides by a kryptonite hammer. That was the only explanation he could think of for the agonizing throbbing sensation when he woke up, that morning. What on Earth had happened to him, last night? He had vague memories involving a lead box...but everything else was a complete blank.

He managed to crack an eye open wide enough to glance at the clock. Once he did so, he bolted upright. He was late for work! He threw off the covers and spun into his clothes, not having time to wonder why he was stark naked. There was no time for a shave, either; he barely remembered to snag his glasses as he sped out the door.

The elevator dinged, and Clark stepped into the newsroom just as Cat was passing by. She paused to give him a saucy wink. "Good morning, Superman," she purred.

Clark froze. Did she just call him—? No. No, he must have misheard... He turned, but Cat had already sauntered off.

Before he could run after her, Lois had spotted him and was now jogging up to him with a wide grin. "Hey! 'Morning, Superman," she said. "How are you feeling?"

Clark felt himself go pale. "Um, fine," he replied, trying to buy some time for his jumbled thoughts to reorganize. "How are you?"

"Just super," she beamed, patting him on the chest. "A little sore from last night, but it was definitely worth it."

"Last night?" Clark echoed.

"If I'm really honest," Lois continued, oblivious to Clark's increasing distress, "I'm still kind of exhausted, no thanks to you. I'm pretty sure Cat feels the same way."

"Cat?" He repeated.

"You gave us quite a workout, I hope you know." Lois quirked an eyebrow at him. "Are you okay, Clark?"

Clark tried to reply, but it took him several moments to find his voice. "...Uh..." He cleared his throat and tried again. "Lois, what happened last night?"

"Seriously?!" she shouted, looking at him incredulously. "All that, and you don't even remember?!"

"I'm sorry, Lois; I'm really, really sorry!" he stammered out. "I don't remember last night at all! Could you please just tell me what happened?"

"Go ask Jimmy," she said, waving him off. "I've got to get to back to work typing up the story; and anyway, he has pictures."

Clark started off toward the darkroom when her words suddenly registered. It was all he could do not to use his super-speed as he ran.

"All right, all right, hold your horses!" A voice called out in response to Clark's pounding on the door. The entrance to the darkroom opened just a crack, and Jimmy Olsen peered out at him. The young photographer grinned as soon as his eyes adjusted. "Hey, Superman!"

Clark groaned. "Can we talk, Jimmy?" he asked.

"Sure," said Jimmy, "just give me a minute, okay? I'm still going through those pictures from last night. Obviously, most of them aren't usable, but I think I might have one we can put on the front page! Are you all right, CK?"

Clark leaned on the doorjamb to keep from sliding to the floor. "I've been better," he admitted. "Can we talk about last night, Jimmy?"

Jimmy immediately lowered his voice. "If this is about seeing you naked, CK, don't worry about it. I've had to shower with other guys in the past, so it's not a big deal." He reached over and patted Clark on the shoulder.

Across the newsroom, Perry opened his office door and stuck his head out. "Olsen!" the editor bellowed. "Where's those photos you promised me?"

"They're coming, Chief!" Jimmy yelled back. He turned back to Clark. "Sorry, but I'd better get hopping if I'm going to have anything for the chief."

"Wait!" Clark grabbed the door as Jimmy tried to close it. "Jimmy, what's in those pictures?"

Jimmy shrugged. "It's just one of you, Lois, and Cat in the Doze Motel," he answered. "You can't see very much, but it should work all right with the headline and story to put it in context." He started to close the door again.

Clark held the door open. "Jimmy, you can't let Perry have that picture!"

"Sorry, CK," said Jimmy, "but it's the only workable one I've got. You wouldn't believe how much cropping I had to do."

Clark flushed, and Jimmy pulled the door closed. Clark pulled it open again.

"Hey!" Jimmy protested. "Lights, CK! Remember? This is the dark room!"

"Jimmy, I'm serious," said Clark. "We cannot run that picture! We can't run the story, either!"

"Very funny, CK." Jimmy flashed him a grin and grabbed for the door again. "See you at the Kerths!" The door closed.

Clark banged on the door, again. "Jimmy!"

"Kent!" a voice bellowed.

Clark grimaced and turned to face the scowl of his editor-in-chief. "Yes, Perry?"

Perry White crooked his finger, beckoning Clark into his office.

When Clark finally closed the door behind him and sat down, Perry leaned across the desk.

"Kent? Do you mind telling me what in blazes you think you're doing?"

Clark took a deep breath. "Chief, the Planet can't run the story. Frankly, I don't even see why we *would* run it! It's nothing the public should know, and I thought we were better than... than..." He trailed off at the look Perry was giving him.

"Do you mean *this* story?" Perry asked, handing him a sheet of paper. It was a print-out of an article, written by Lois and time-stamped just a few minutes ago. The story mostly just concerned a new street-drug that was being made from meteorites. Clark skimmed along until he reached a segment half-way down:

[...and causing one of the Planet's own staff members to believe himself to be Superman. This man, a normally straight-laced and level-headed "stick-in-the-mud" (according to one co-worker), sustained minor injuries when he landed in a garbage pile after attempting to "fly" from a second-story window. Fortunately, concerned coworkers were able to keep him from further harming himself during several hours of "absolutely bonkers, wacko, nut-job" behavior. Similar reports from...]

The article went on to detail the bust of several big-time dealers at the Doze Motel. Clark felt his face flush. "Minor injuries?" he asked, looking up.

Perry handed him a small mirror.

Clark studied his reflection. He had a black eye, some

bruises, and a small scratch near his lip. “Oh.”

“Now, then.” Perry raised an eyebrow. “Do you still object to our running this story?”

Clark shook his head.

“Good.” The chief stood and began walking him towards the door. “Now, I suggest you go back home and get a little sleep. I’ll have Jimmy drop by later to see how you’re doing.”

“Thanks chief,” Clark mumbled.

Perry gave him a wide grin. “Not a problem...Superman.”

THE END