

Breaching the Ivory Tower

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Rated: PG

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Summary: Lois sorts through her emotions during Season 2's "Church of Metropolis."

Word Count: 2,458 words (14Kb as text)

Thanks, Lynn S.M., for your story prompts (which appear at the end).

Thanks, as always, to Laura for being my beta reader. :)

Lois looked down into the half-eaten carton of chocolate ice cream and frowned. The level was uneven, with a concave distortion marring the otherwise smooth plane. She scraped the edge of the hole with her spoon, shaving off a neat pile of the treat and bringing it to her mouth. She flipped the spoon over and closed her lips around it, licking the ice cream out of the spoon with her tongue. She let the flavor roll around in her mouth, savoring the sweetness before swallowing it whole.

If only it were that easy to eat her feelings.

She sighed, setting the tub of ice cream on her coffee table, and pulled a throw blanket over her body. She should really get up and put the frozen treat away before it melted, but somehow the idea that her solid source of comfort could easily turn to goo seemed an apt metaphor for her current emotional state, so she made no attempt to get up from her couch. Instead, she turned her attention to her TV.

"The Ivory Tower" was reliable entertainment, regardless of her mood. She could get lost in the characters, empathize with their outrageous storylines, and never question the romantic entanglements that twisted and turned but ultimately came together. Sure, viewers often had to wait for years, wading through countless obstacles, but eventually, true love won out in the end.

Lois was definitely in the mood for an "Ivory Tower" marathon tonight.

It's not that she didn't appreciate Perry's advice — it was nice that she could turn to him as a supportive sounding board. And, despite having had to listen to several aborted Elvis stories to get there, Perry's observation that she'd never lose Clark really had temporarily reassured her about her relationship with her partner.

Relationship. Why had she chosen that word?

Lois picked up the remote and fast-forwarded past a boring plot about the villain of the week until Gwendolyn appeared on screen. Lois pressed play and snuggled into her blanket as she dove into the soap opera character's plight. Caught up in a classic love triangle; Lois sighed as Gwendolyn's storyline hit too close to home.

She eyed the tub of chocolate ice cream, knowing that calories don't really heal a broken heart, but feeling like devouring the rest of it anyway. Lois closed her eyes and shook her head, resisting the temptation. The situation was entirely her own fault. She couldn't expect him to wait forever for her to return the feelings she knew he had. After all, as Perry had said,

"Clark's a nice man but when you get right down to it, a nice man is still just a man."

But something inside her had just selfishly assumed he would wait patiently, be by her side forever. That they'd be partners and best friends until she was willing to risk her heart on something more.

It could work that way. Soap opera characters pine hopefully and yearn desperately for each other for years on end.

But this was reality; Clark was real. He was a man — a dark-haired, broad-shouldered, chisel-chested, fully developed man. She couldn't be the only woman expected to notice.

And now she knew that she wasn't: ever since she had gone to his apartment to show him relevant proof for their investigation. She had been to Clark's apartment so many times in the past and had never once found him otherwise occupied. But last night, she had looked through his window a second before knocking on his door. And she saw *her*. Kissing *him*.

Mayson Drake.

Lois frowned at the mental image burned into her retinas — the blonde hussy throwing herself at Clark. Lois grabbed the slightly melted ice cream and scooped a heaping spoonful into her mouth, trying to replace the sour taste of her memory with something sweet. How dare he fall for that pathetically desperate, probably corrupt, tragically blonde man-stealer?

Lois sucked in a breath and threw the blanket off her, marching the tub of ice cream to the freezer. No point wallowing over something that was entirely her own fault, over something that just wasn't meant to be. If Lois had only acknowledged her feelings sooner — to him, to herself — well, she somehow felt sure that Clark would have loyally belonged to her.

Maybe it wasn't too late? It was only one kiss, after all. Late night, half-naked, alone in his apartment, but surely their relationship hadn't progressed further than kissing.

Lois growled at that word again: relationship.

Men didn't need a relationship to go further than kissing.

Men could pretend to be in one to go further than kissing. Lois knew that all too well from bitter experience.

But, even though Clark was just a man (as Perry had so helpfully pointed out), Lois was sure he wasn't like that. He didn't date casually — didn't run around with a different girl on his arm every week. No, actually, he usually hung out with her. If Clark was in a relationship with anyone, it was with her.

Lois shut the freezer door, shuffled back to her couch, and wrapped herself in the blanket once more. Her eyes stung and she shut them, refusing to let any tears fall. But her realization had hurt deeply: how could she have failed to recognize the truth?

Clark had already been hers, waiting patiently for their relationship to blossom into something more. And she had let him slip away.

A loud knock startled Lois; she brushed the moisture from her eyes. "Lois, are you home?" Clark asked through the apartment door.

Clark was here? In the late evening, while she was dressed in sweatpants and a schlumpy t-shirt, wallowing in her misery? This couldn't be good.

"Just a minute," Lois said. She pressed pause on the remote and tossed her blanket to the side. At least the evidence of her ice cream binge was safely back in the kitchen. Lois crossed over to her door, made her way through the locks, and then tentatively let Clark in.

"Hey," he said quietly. His hands were shoved into his pockets, projecting a shy, nervous demeanor. "I was just in the neighborhood."

Lois cocked her eyebrow skeptically. "You don't live anywhere near my neighborhood."

Clark blushed slightly. "Okay, you caught me. I just wanted to..." He seemed unable to complete the sentence, searching for

his thoughts. “Can we sit?”

Lois motioned to her couch with her head, shutting the door and locking the bolts. She edged around him, tossing the blanket aside and sitting down; Clark sat next to her.

It seemed like he was going to say something, but he instead grabbed the remote and pressed play.

Lois looked at him, but it seemed like he was working his way up to something important; she felt that he needed some space and time to gather his courage. So she forced her attention to the screen, leaning back against the couch. She felt his arm stretch along the back edge of the sofa, but she didn’t move. And a companionable silence settled over the room as the pair watched the show together.

After a few minutes, Clark spoke. “Lois,” he said tentatively. “Yeah?”

He paused, but then said, “This show is awful.”

Lois laughed out loud. “I know! But I’m hopelessly addicted.”

Clark let out a sigh of relief and relaxed his arm around her shoulder. Lois leaned into him as if she belonged there, and her good attitude seemed to give him the courage to poke some fun at her favorite soap. “The acting is so over the top, and the dialogue is terrible.”

“Yeah, well, it’s escapist fun. Of course these characters wouldn’t exist in the real world, but it’s fun to imagine they do. And there are so many plot twists; really, the writers can probably take any idea and make it work.”

Clark smiled with just a touch of irony. “Complicated love triangles? Clones? Amnesia?”

Lois rolled her eyes. “Exactly. None of that happens in real life.”

Clark laughed. “Our lives are a crazy soap opera. No wonder you love this show.”

She sighed. “At least if you don’t like the show, you can write a new story. Change the plot to make it the way it should have been.”

“Oh, like those stories on the internet?”

Lois nodded.

Clark looked sideways at her. “You’re a writer. I bet if I looked hard enough, I’d find some of those stories posted by you.”

Lois scoffed. “You’d never figure out my screen name.”

He let the comment slide and they watched another minute of the show in silence. Then he asked quietly, “Do you ever wish you could change our story?”

Lois caught her breath and bristled slightly, but a moment later, she whispered the word, “Yes.”

Clark slowly released his breath and hugged his arm more tightly around her. Lois pulled her legs up onto the couch, naturally leaning more solidly against his body. And they stayed in that embrace for a few minutes, lost in their own thoughts.

Clark cleared his throat and reached for the remote. “Have you ever changed the dialogue while you watched the show?”

Lois shook her head. “I’m usually too busy shoving ice cream in my face and having a good cry.” Then she sucked in a breath, embarrassed by what she had just revealed. “And you’re going to pretend I didn’t say that.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Clark clicked the mute button, watched the action on screen, then said in a mock-feminine voice, “Oh, John. I’ve missed you so much. Ever since you were kidnapped and my father couldn’t afford the ransom, I was sure I’d never see you again.”

Lois laughed out loud. “Those two are brother and sister!”

Clark switched to a lower register, pretending to speak for the dark-haired man onscreen. “I couldn’t have known that. You were switched at birth and raised by a schizophrenic nurse who couldn’t have children of her own. Our parents were told you

died in the hospital from a rare genetic disease. I never would have fallen for you if I had known you were my long lost sister.”

Lois laughed, then played along. “No, John, it can never be! We’re not right for each other. You have to go on without me.”

Clark grinned. “We should probably stick to journalism.”

She nodded her head. “Probably.”

The scene changed to a dark-haired man passionately kissing a blonde bombshell. Lois sighed, then said quietly, “You’re mine, now. She could have had you, but she let you slip through her fingers.”

Clark turned to look at her, but Lois’ gaze stayed focused on the television. “I don’t understand.”

Lois closed her eyes as she pretended to supply new dialogue to the soap opera character. “She looked through the window and saw us kissing in your apartment. Now she knows that you’re with someone else. That she lost her chance.”

And it became clear that Clark understood the message. He waited for the male character onscreen to speak, then supplied his own dialogue. “You kissed me, Mayson. You know there’s nothing between us. I’ll always love somebody else.”

“You can’t love her. She treats you badly and she doesn’t deserve you.”

“She’s my best friend. And I’ve been in love with her since the day we met.”

“But what if it doesn’t work out?” The scene changed, but Lois continued to speak, no longer in synch with the characters on the television. “He’s my best friend, and I can’t lose him.”

Clark sat up; Lois leaned forward and Clark turned towards her, needing to look into her eyes. But Lois kept her head tucked down, as if she were afraid to confront the truth. “Lois, you will never lose me.”

“I already have,” she whispered.

“Never.” Clark cupped her cheek and silently urged Lois to look at him. She raised her eyes, and Clark said, “I do not have feelings for Mayson. I love you.”

Lois gasped, then placed her hands at the sides of his face. “I love you, too.”

He froze, and she memorized the moment in time: the wonder in his eyes, the pounding of her heart. Then he bent forward and pressed his lips against hers.

Her hands slid into his hair, caressing the back of his head as her tongue licked teasing glances against his. And the feeling was sheer bliss — like nothing she had ever felt in her life. Warm heat and delicate pressure, sealing their emotional bond with a kiss.

They broke apart, and she saw that his eyes lingered closed, as if he were wishing the moment wouldn’t end. But then he smiled — a shy, coy smile that sent a thrill of delight dancing through her. “I should go. It’s late.”

She smiled back at him. “Probably.”

He stood up from the couch and headed for the door; she followed a step behind him. He unlocked the bolts, then opened the door before turning back to face her. “I’ll see you tomorrow.” “Definitely.”

“And maybe we could do something this weekend?”

She nodded. “You should ask nicely.”

His face lit up in a brilliant grin. “I’ll do that.” He bent down and kissed her again — beautiful perfection. Then he whispered in her ear, “We’ll change our story together.”

He backed out of her apartment as she watched him go, but she already wished that he’d stay forever. She shut and locked the door, then turned off the lights in her apartment, readying herself for bed. Then she pressed the stop button on her remote, looking forward to the next chapter in their lives.

THE END

Author’s Note: Lynn wrote a very nice comment in the

feedback for one of my stories. So I offered to write a story just for her. These were her requests:

Want:

- 1) Word play
- 2) WAFF
- 3) In-universe fanfic. That is, fanfic which is part of the L&C universe; not necessarily fanfic about the L&C universe. It could be about The Ivory Tower, Star Trek, L&C's Superman, or anything else you wish.

Don't want:

- 1) Anything supernatural
 - 2) Villains
 - 3) An A-plot
- Season: A slight preference for season one or two, but I'm fine with any season.