

# In the Glow of the Firelight

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Rated: G

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Summary: Martha watches Clark and Lois. Sequel to "In the Still of the Night" and "In the Light of the Morning."

Story Size: 3,058 words (16Kb as text)

Acknowledgements and Comments: Takes place a few months later. As you'll be able to tell ... Lois and Clark talked and became 'friends' after the previous two stories. Clark is convinced and resigned to the fact that Lois only thinks of Clark as a friend, and Lois is convinced that Clark feels nothing for her, and is too 'out of her reach' even if he does. Thanks go to KenJ for his beta and for helping to clarify the floor layout of the farm.

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It's not a surprise, really. Seeing that look on her face. I knew, from the first moment he spoke about her that she was the one for him, but whether she would feel the same way about him would yet remain to be seen. Then, I knew, from the moment I met her, that she would. Until that point it had just been a mother's hope. Hope, that her special boy would get his heart's desire. And for two years now, that desire has been *her* heart.

Well, he's won it. He just doesn't know.

I can see the way she looks at him when they are together, when they talk. And I can see the way she looks at him when he is looking away. Just like now. And it's not a surprise.

He's brought her here for Christmas. It was a wonderful meal, if I do say so myself. It's not the first time they've visited. It's not even the first time since she found out that he's Superman. It's as if she's already become part of the family, already become my daughter.

That time ... the first time after her discovery ... was such a wonderful surprise, and a wonderful visit. They all are. But even then, it wasn't the first time I'd seen this look on her face.

I just wish Clark could see it. She always wipes it away just before he turns to look at her. Just as he wipes away all visual hint of his love for her whenever she looks directly at him.

Even so, he's still happy during the visits. I think he's happy just to be near her: anywhere, here, Metropolis, Outer Mongolia ...

But, here on the farm, he can be himself, without the pressures of the world, or the expectations of his jobs. And to be himself, with Lois ... it recharges him. It makes him whole.

Except, whenever they leave, as he lifts into the air, with her in his arms, I can see that one bit of sadness that he carries everywhere. He thinks she doesn't love him.

I don't know why they've fallen into this 'friendship' thing. I thought that when she found out his secret it would be the final factor in their inevitable journey to ... love. But, for some reason, they both seem to think that the other just wants to be friends.

Pah.

I wish I could tan their hides.

But I can't. They aren't children anymore, even if they act like it sometimes. They are grown adults; capable of making their own choices, their own silly mistakes.

I linger at the bottom of the stairs. She's standing a few feet away from me, looking into the living room. It's not a surprise, the look on her face.

It's the same look he has, when she's not looking.

I caught it earlier ... when she was opening her presents. He had no desire to open his own. They lay at his feet, untouched, while she opened hers. I could see that her joy was bringing *him* happiness. I think he's convinced himself that *her* happiness will be enough for him. Just knowing she is happy will help him to deal with all his burdens. Yet, sometimes he despairs ... knowing it will never be enough.

I turn to ascend the stairs. It's late. Christmas Day is over. I need to go upstairs. The food has been eaten, the presents have been opened and the fire in the hearth has been lit, chasing away the cold, depressing weather. No uplifting, crisp white snow ... just dreary rain. In fact, the fire in the living room is now dying down, its embers fading away.

I catch sight of Clark in the living room. He is kneeling, trying to get the fire going again, or maybe he's trying to put it out fully. It's not safe to leave a fire overnight. You can think it's out ... but ...

The glow from the fire is casting shadows around the room. He's poking it at it and blowing gently. The embers suddenly glow brighter in the darkened room.

I smile. He's trying to get it going again. That means he's not ready for the day to be over. I can understand that. I remember spending Christmas Day here when I was only engaged to Jonathan. I knew the time was coming for me to head on home ... and I couldn't bring myself to move.

Although, with Clark, I'm guessing it's not quite the same. He doesn't know how she feels, he's just simply hoping for more time with her.

She's still watching him. I can see her sighing. In fact, I think there's a little tear running down her cheek.

"Lois," I call quietly. She turns. "I'm turning in now." I smile at her.

"All right, Martha. Thanks for today. Thanks for having me."

"You're always welcome, Lois. You know that." She drops her head to smile at her feet, then turns to gaze at Clark again as I turn to head up the stairs. "Lois," I say, stopping suddenly. "I ..."

She looks at me. My voice wavers as I contemplate the wisdom of my next words. "Do you love him?"

She looks back to the living room, and the softly glowing fire. The smile on her face is the only answer I need. She turns to speak — in the affirmative, I'm sure — but I don't let her. "He loves you." I smile as gently as I can and then continue up the stairs. I've told him that she loves him on numerous occasions, but he always denies it. Maybe it will work better this way round. You know, Jonathan always says that it's hard to take advice from someone who is close to you ... maybe you wonder if their advice is slightly biased due to their feelings for you. In that case, no wonder Clark has never believed me. Hopefully Lois will.

I can't stop thinking about them as I prepare for bed. Did Lois think I meant platonic love? Did she realise that I was trying to give her hope, trying to give them both an extra Christmas gift?

You know, I'm a little thirsty. I think I'll just pop back down to the kitchen and have a quick glass of milk.

As I reach the bottom of the stairs I can see the glow of the firelight flickering out of the living room archway and creating patterns on the hallway carpet. I slow down and creep, as quietly as possible. I'm only coming down for a drink, so I really

shouldn't let myself look in.

I won't look. When I pass the open archway, I'll keep focussed straight ahead ... on my glass of milk.

I approach and realise that there's no sound coming from in there. Did Lois go up to bed while I was in the bathroom? I sigh in disappointment. Clark will probably be setting up his bed on the couch then. I'll go in and say goodnight to him.

I turn into the open doorway ... and stare in shock.

Clark and Lois are in front of the softly flickering fire. His arms are wrapped around her. She has her fingers tangled in his hair.

They break apart, both breathing raggedly.

"Lois," Clark whispers.

"Yes, Clark?" she replies, quietly, resting her forehead on his.

"Merry Christmas." He parts their foreheads and smiles.

Lois draws his face back to hers and then they stop, lips almost touching. "Merry Christmas, Clark." Then they are kissing again.

I back away, the smile on my face almost as big as both of theirs had been. I think I better have my milk quickly and then scuttle back upstairs again.

I guess Lois took my information literally, as she was supposed to. I wonder if she said anything. Maybe she asked him if it was true. Or maybe she just told him how she felt.

Possibly she just laid one on him. I grin. I can easily imagine that. She's not afraid to go after what she wants. Clark says they both call it 'jumping in without checking the water level'.

But then, she's obviously wary when it comes to Clark. I couldn't see her finding the courage to do that in this particular case. She's as insecure about his feelings for her as he is about hers for him.

Well, not anymore, I guess.

Passing the archway on the way back to the stairs, I try to avoid looking in, but I can tell that there's no sound again. They're not talking. It's not a surprise.

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THE END