

# The Letter

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Rated G

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Summary: Superman receives a completely unexpected letter. Will he have to face up to decisions he has made in the past? Will he have to face emotions that he had buried for years?

Story Size: 3,322 words (17Kb as text)

Acknowledgements and Comments: Warning — this is not your usual KK WAFF (for some reason I seem to have a reputation for WAFF \*shrugs\*). While I will not go so far as to give a WHAM warning this is very bittersweet. WHAM's in my opinion are for unexpected bad/evil things, and none of this fic is unexpected. At least, that is my opinion. But, you have still been warned. Although, by saying all that I've kind of given the warning anyway. Thanks to Morgana and KenJ for their beta ... even though I had to argue with them over the ending!!!

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To say that he was surprised to receive the summons was an understatement. They hadn't spoken in years. Not since she retired and stopped getting herself into trouble. It had certainly been a relief when those days of swooping in at the last moment to save her finally came to an end. But the pain of no longer being in her life — even in the distant saviour capacity — was not easy to deal with. Not that it had made any difference to his feelings; nothing ever would. It had been over half a century since their last conversation of a personal nature. Instead they had all involved some reference to her being in danger, or him giving an interview. Yet, still he loved her.

Every fibre of his being called out for her.

And he steadfastly ignored it.

Every day he pushed away those thoughts, those feelings. If he didn't then he would not be able to continue living, to continue doing the job he had taken onto his shoulders.

His last words to her were probably something on the lines of 'Take more care next time you attempt to search the Mayor's office after dark,' or 'What if I'd been in China dealing with an earthquake?' Possibly it had been in congratulations of her Pulitzer, awarded just days before her retirement. He actually couldn't be sure.

And now, he'd been summoned.

Why he was required at this ... proceeding ... was beyond him. He considered not going. Whether he was 'available' to attend could even become a moot point, depending on natural disasters and criminal activity, but he still needed to decide whether to accept, or decline ... whether to turn up, or not.

Would the pain overwhelm him as he stood there? It had almost done so as he watched on from the clouds, weeks ago. He'd thought he was over it, though. He'd, naively, thought the grief had lessened, and passed. But seeing this summons brought it all back. It hadn't lessened, or gone anywhere. He'd just been ignoring it. Just like he ignored his love for her.

He tried to picture what it would be like — standing in the

plush office, surrounded by strangers ... all in black. He would still be in the red and blue. He'd been summonsed as Superman. Well, who else was there to summons. Clark no longer existed. It had been over half a century in that regard too.

*Bang, bang, bang.*

The shots rang out in his memory, just as clear as ever.

"Clark." He heard her strangled voice again. He'd never heard such pain, such loss, in her voice before, or since. It had surprised him at the time. He knew she cared ... quite deeply, but it was still purely platonic. Except, she seemed more devastated than he ever expected. This increased his own pain, knowing that his hope of ... more ... had actually nearly come to pass, only to be ripped away from him — from both of them.

But life had gone on.

Well, hers had, anyway. His life had ended that day. Clark Kent was no more.

There was only Superman.

Over half a century had passed since that day. He spent most of his time in the skies, dressed in blue and red. Especially after his parents died. The farm had been his only refuge, but even that was now denied him. His parents couldn't even leave it to him in their will. Clark Kent was already dead.

They found a way though: it was bequeathed to the Superman Foundation.

In a moment of logical clarity he had allowed someone else to take over the decisions when it came to this piece of land. He knew that it would just lay untouched if he had anything to say about it. There were times when he regretted that decision. It would have been nice to hide himself away on the farm sometimes — even a ramshackle, tumbling-down farm. But, as he'd passed over responsibility for the place, it had been dealt with efficiently to make the most money for the Foundation.

He had nowhere.

He had no-one.

Even his liaison at the Foundation was only an acquaintance. Whenever he stopped by to pick up his mail she would quickly run through anything that needed his approval or not, and they would be done within an hour.

And that's where he'd just been. Flying away from the office with a pile of papers in his hand, he'd been facing a perfectly normal day. A ribbon cutting, a visit to the children's hospital and whatever disasters and accidents crossed his path.

But now, time stretched ahead of him ... empty ... aching ... terrifying.

He stood on top of the Daily Planet building. Every piece of mail, bar one, was now in a pile at his feet. The legal envelope which he had slit open moments ago was now fluttering around on the ground and the letter in his hand was waving in the breeze. There was little chance of the wind stealing it away though; his grip was vice-like.

Two days.

In two days he should come to the offices of Merton, Wallace and Hannah at 10:30am. There, the Last Will and Testament would be read out of one Lois Joanne Lane.

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Another envelope.

Another letter.

That's what he'd been left in her will. There was money, antiques, possessions, books and much more all split between Lucy's children and grandchildren with some things going to Jimmy's children. They all called her Aunt Lois and were all present, every single one. The mingled grief and love was very evident in the room.

Her apartment was to be sold and the money to go to the Superman Foundation. He'd been shocked by that. Although maybe he shouldn't have been. What other reason was there for him being summoned. But, many people left a legacy to the

Foundation and nobody from the Foundation was required to be there at the will reading, the money just turned up through the correct channels.

It became clear why he was required when the lawyer pulled out a thick envelope. The name embossed on the front, in beautiful, neat, script writing, was Superman. She'd written a letter to him. A personal letter.

It was handed over with the instructions to fly to her apartment and enter 'in the usual manner' and only then was he to open the envelope.

The window had been open. Had she kept it open for him all these years? Or possibly someone from the lawyer's office had the instruction to make sure the window was open on the day of the will reading.

His fingers trembled and his heart pounded as he slid his thumb under the flap. The envelope was well sealed. Possibly it had been this way for years, the glue steadily getting stronger, seeping further into the paper. As his thumb pinched at the tiniest open part of the flap he gripped tightly and pulled. The soft tearing sound mirrored his internal emotional thoughts. He knew his heart had broken years ago when he'd said goodbye to any chance of romance with Lois, but there was a whole new tearing in his soul taking place. He'd tried to say goodbye again, at her funeral, over a month ago. It hadn't worked. His need for her, his love for her, was stronger than ever.

And this letter could be a balm to soothe his soul, or the salt to rub into the wound.

Which would it be?

He took a deep breath and gingerly slid out the cream folded papers.

*Clark*

He frowned and looked back at the name on the envelope. *Superman*. Was this a mistake? Looking back to the letter he started reading again.

*Clark*

*I've written this letter so many times. Sometimes I had the intention of giving it to you the next time I saw you. Other times I knew it was just for catharsis. In any case, every single one ended up in my shredder.*

*No-one can know what is in this letter. No-one but you. And I want you to know. This time ... this letter stays. I just have to be careful what I write because I'm not going to shred it this time. You are going to see this. But not until ...*

*I nearly started this letter with "If you are reading this letter then I am dead". How cliché is that? I never cared for cliché. That being said I'm pretty sure I'm going to use a lot of them in the next few pages.*

*I miss you. I miss you like the desert misses the rain. My soul is incomplete without you. When you died a piece of me died too. I fell apart. I don't know if you noticed or not. Perry did. He led me gently back to life over the months following your funeral. He was wonderful. I could expect no less from him. He encouraged me to keep writing, keep working, but never pushed or forced. If he had I may have run in the opposite direction altogether. Seeing your empty desk every day was hard. It became harder when someone filled it. If Perry had tried too hard then I would have said goodbye to the newsroom and not looked back. I needed to do it slowly. Learning to live with the pain and grief was a slow process.*

*It didn't help that I still saw you on a regular basis. How could I say goodbye to you and get on with my life when you would show up every time I got into trouble. I admit that I purposefully put myself into trouble sometimes just to see you. Some days I missed you so much that I just needed to be near you. Even if it was just a shadow, a façade. Even if you didn't know that it was Clark I was trying to be with.*

*I eventually learned to live with my grief. The aching loss,*

*which would come over me within moments of waking each day, became so natural, so expected, that I was able to get up and shower through it, instead of sobbing in bed until it passed. But, it never truly passed.*

*The loss of my best friend has stayed with me every day since.*

*It's my 82nd birthday tomorrow and I still miss you. It doesn't help that you look the same as always, whereas I have clearly aged. Some say that I've aged well, but I think they are being diplomatic.*

*Maybe it's for the best that Clark Kent died that day. I mean, how would you explain looking this way at 83? We couldn't have had a life together, no matter how much I fantasise about it. I can just imagine us out on an anniversary meal and some passer-by commenting on how nice it is for this handsome young man to take out his grandmother.*

*I bet you're wondering how I knew. (Another cliché song line there!) When I knew. What gave you away.*

*I can't really say. It came gradually. No single thing sparked a recognition. It didn't help that you were different around me whenever you rescued me ... after the shooting. It most definitely didn't help when you looked at me with painful longing. Your parents' reactions to your death were probably a big clue. I've only spoken to them four times since that day — so clearly out of character for them, that I had to notice. I miss them too.*

*Oh, Clark. Why did you have to die? Why did you leave me? Why did you decide that we couldn't be together? I would have gone anywhere with you: become anyone, done anything, just to spend time with you, just to be with you. But you decided that there was no room for romance in a Superhero's life.*

*Although, I guess I should be grateful for that Superhero really, because if you weren't ... you ... then I really would have lost you that day. As it is, I've been able to see you on occasion ... touch you, hug you. I've even been cradled in your arms and flown with you. Those memories keep me warm at night. In my cold, empty bed I can sometimes feel close to you ... imagine you there, holding me tight. Oh, I wish you would hold me tight. The whole night through.*

*I miss you, Clark.*

*And I think that you miss me. I think that you miss 'life'.*

*I watch you on the news and I can tell that you are lonely. You've been lonely for sixty years. At least I have my family, my nieces and nephews. Who do you have? I suspect you don't have anyone anymore. You know you could always have come to me. I was ready to talk, to comfort, to love ... at the drop of a hat.*

*But you chose to burn that bridge. You turned us into acquaintances ... when we could have been lovers.*

*And now it's too late. I'm too old. You still look thirty.*

*And ... if you are reading this letter then ... well, you know.*

*I think that is what hurts me most. That you are completely alone. You give everything for this world. You protect us every day, with all your gifts, and yet we cannot repay you. The world is not enough. I sometimes think, narcissistically, that only I would have been enough. Am I right? Could I have been enough for you? Would you have been happy with me?*

*I know I would have been happy with you. At least until I saw the distance that time was putting between us. A distance greater than the space between ... the sun and the moon. Or even Earth and Krypton. Insurmountable.*

*But I wish ... I so much want ... that you can be happy.*

*If you ever find someone ... if there is a woman ...*

*Maybe she reminds you of me. Maybe she is the complete opposite, and that is what attracts you.*

*Don't be alone, Clark.*

*Don't forget me, but don't be alone. Make a life for yourself again. Live again. Love again. Because, you, of all people, should be loved. Fiercely, totally, obsessively loved. By someone*

*who will stand by you through every disaster, every storm, every disappointment. Find her. Find her and never let her go. (I told you I'd be using a lot of clichés.)*

*I wish I could have said all this to you while I was still alive, but my pride, and my nerves would get the better of me were I to attempt it.*

*In the end, though, only one thing matters. Only one thing I should have told you.*

*I love you.*

*Yours*

*Lois*

Clark felt the tears streaming down his face. They dripped off his chin and onto the pages in his hand. "I love you too, Lois," he whispered out. "So very much." Lifting his head he dropped his hand down to rest on his knees, still holding onto the letter. He let his eyes close as his head touched the back of the sofa. Breathing was difficult. In and out. In and out. He had to concentrate to keep from succumbing to his emotions.

After an inordinate amount of time his carefully measured breathing calmed his heart and his thoughts and he drifted into a light sleep.

*"You could have come to me," she whispered.*

*Lois was there, in front of him. He could reach out and touch her.*

*"I was waiting for you. Every night I waited for you."*

*"I wanted to come, Lois. Every night." He lifted his hand and was surprised to see starched white sleeves rather than blue spandex.*

*"Don't be alone, Clark," she pleaded.*

*"Lois, I am." His voice came out on a choke. "I am alone, without you. Don't leave me."*

*"I can't stay. But ... I'll never leave you. Clark, I'm always in your heart."*

*"Lois." He called and reached out again, but only clasped at ethereal images. "Lois!"*

He woke and sprang out of the sofa immediately, her name still on his lips. Looking around at her apartment he knew that he needed to leave. Staying here would mess with his mind ... play with his heart.

He stepped over to the window and turned to take one final look around. As his eyes passed over the sofa he noticed the cream papers on the floor. They'd fallen out of his hands while he was asleep. His breath hitched and he closed his eyes against the pain. He couldn't leave the letter here. Yet, he didn't know if he'd ever be able to face reading it again.

Steeling himself against the flood of emotions he strode back over to the sofa and picked up the letter. It only took a second to fold it up and slide it back into the envelope. Now, all that was visible was his neatly scripted name, Superman.

And that's all he was.

This letter was for someone named Clark. Someone who had died over sixty years ago.

In another sixty years would the pain be still so strong? Would he be able to read that letter without crying? He didn't think so.

Tucking it into the hidden pouch under his cape he then drew himself up tall and walked towards the window. This time he didn't look back. He allowed himself to float up, but kept his gaze on the world outside. As he drifted, slowly, through the window, he said his final goodbye.

*"You'll always be in my heart, Lois. Always."*

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#### **Alt ending 1**

This letter was for someone named Clark. Someone who had died over sixty years ago.

He stared at the letter and in moments it turned to ash. As he left through the window he realised that Clark Kent was truly

dead now. Although the body was alive ... the soul was gone.

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#### **Alt ending 2**

Clark suddenly awoke to the sound of chickens in the yard. Confused at suddenly being awakened in this way he looked around and realized that he was in his room at the farm.

His dream came back to him and fuelled him with new resolve to somehow resurrect Clark Kent from the dead. Somehow Clyde Barrow's bullets had to be made ineffective. Clark Kent must live. He decided to talk it over with his parents. They might have an idea. His mother had a habit of thinking outside of the box and that was what he needed right now.

After dressing, he went downstairs.

THE END