

The Psychic's Tale

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Rated: PG

Submitted: June 27, 2015

Summary: Mystique, the psychic from the episode "All Shook Up," tells her story. This story is in response to Virginia R.'s "The Canterbury Tales of Metropolis" challenge.

Story Size: 2,241 words (12Kb as text)

This story is part of the Canterbury Tales Challenge, which includes these stories: "[The Nun's Tale](#)," "[The Cabbie's Tale](#)," "[The Showgirl's Tale](#)," "[The Slumlord's Tale](#)," "[The Lookalike Agent's Tale](#)" and "[The Florist's Tale](#)."

My mother always said I'd grow up to either be a psychic or a used car saleswoman. I was always good at reading people, and sometimes, I'd touch someone and I could tell what they were thinking — good traits for either job (or for politics, but she wanted me to do something honest with my life).

It was fun to be able to read people's minds when I was growing up, even though it mostly seemed to be my relatives whose minds I could see into. Great-Grandma said that trait was passed down from Great-Grandpa, who came from a country where everyone could read everyone else's minds. (Of course, Great-Grandma also claimed he could fly. Sometimes she could be a bit senile, even though her body worked just fine until she died at the age of 110.)

At any rate, I could read my family member's minds, which drove them crazy (especially my sister, who could never get away with borrowing my clothes without asking). I could read a few strangers' minds, too, though they may also have been relatives — Great-Grandpa never met a skirt he wouldn't chase.

I wound up being a psychic — it seemed like the most honest choice. I never could tell the future, except for the obvious things, like the time someone asked me if they should get new brakes or not. Well, I told them they should, but they didn't listen. The end result of that was disastrous, which pretty much anyone (except my client, apparently) could have predicted.

For the most part, my psychic powers were about as phony as a three-dollar bill, but I was good at figuring out what people wanted and what they needed to hear. I like to think I helped people with their problems, at least sometimes (and I was a lot cheaper than a therapist).

Still, sometimes I would touch someone's hand and know who they were and what they were thinking. This could be funny, scary, weird ... or allow me to tip off the police to things people thought they'd gotten away with. I had to leave a number of towns behind because someone figured out who had tipped off the police (the whole mind-reading thing went both ways sometimes).

Finally, I settled in Metropolis, a long way from Great-Grandpa's stomping grounds. I figured there wasn't much chance of meeting a relative there, even if there *were* ten million people.

I set up shop in a tourist area, and pretty soon I was doing good business. I even had some regulars, people who lived in Metropolis or who traveled there frequently. I still tipped the police off on occasion, even though I almost never read anyone's mind (it's amazing how much people will tell a psychic, especially when they're drunk).

Anyway, this went on for a couple of years. I settled in, made

friends, found a boyfriend — all the usual stuff. Life was normal and peaceful.

Then *he* showed up. Superman. A man in a colorful costume and a cape who could, of all things, fly. I only saw him in person once, but I'd see him on the news, flying all over the place and rescuing people. It made me wonder if Great-Grandma was as senile as we'd thought. Sure, Superman was an alien, but he looked like a human, and if he could get to Earth — well, maybe other Kryptonians could, too.

I didn't try to talk to him, though. I suppose I could have gotten his attention the way that Daily Planet reporter, Lois Lane, did, by yelling, "Help, Superman!" but what pretext would I use? My life was pretty quiet.

It was only a few months after Superman first arrived that Nightfall came — a huge asteroid coming straight at the Earth, close enough to cause a solar eclipse by the time it was detected (or by the time it was announced; who knows how long EPRAD actually knew about it before they made the announcement).

Superman flew off into space to destroy the asteroid — but didn't quite succeed. He hit it, and then EPRAD lost contact with him.

There was no sign of Superman and the asteroid was still coming. A few chunks of debris had already hit the Earth, including one that landed in Hobbs Bay (better known as Suicide Slum). The countdown continued.

Everyone was looking for Superman — EPRAD, the police, the media — and all without success. Finally, a couple of reporters from the Daily Planet got so desperate they came to me.

I didn't think I'd be able to help them, but my guess was as good as any, even if I'm not a real psychic.

The younger of the two reporters, who identified himself as Jimmy Olsen, said, "We think this was Superman's. It's emitting very weak cosmic rays. That means it's been in space."

They had a piece of Superman's suit with them, which they handed to me. I'd been thinking about what to say, how to let them down gently. This wasn't a time for false hope or to send people on a wild goose chase.

It was amazing. I'd never felt such a strong connection before. I was so rattled by it that I almost forgot what I had been planning to say.

"I have been feeling Superman's presence strongly," I began.

"So he's alive?" Jimmy asked.

"I don't know. I feel his confusion." It was true. I *did* feel Superman's confusion, but why he should be confused was beyond me. "Often, the recently dead are quite rattled by the experience."

It was possible that he was dead, wasn't it? No one had heard from him since he'd hit the asteroid. Still, I didn't quite believe it.

The other reporter, Clark Kent, chimed in, "We need to find Superman. Do you have any idea where we might start looking?"

I sank back into my chair, closing my eyes. It was impossible. I felt an incredibly strong connection, as though I was in the same room as Superman.

I opened my eyes and jumped from my seat. "He's here!" I looked around, expecting Superman to be in the room behind me, but no one was there. I looked back at the two reporters. There was no one else in the room.

"We know he's here," Jimmy said. "That's why *we're here*."

"His life force is incredibly powerful." I wondered if he was outside the room, looking at us with his X-ray vision, and suddenly wished I had it myself. One of my cousins had claimed to be able to see through walls, and even though everyone thought he was making it up, right then I wished he were here.

Clark whispered to Jimmy, "I think she's confused."

I'd always had really good hearing, so I picked up his words. "No! I'm feeling this very strongly." I wasn't faking now. This was real. "My senses tell me that he is definitely alive. I feel the

vibration of life in his images. Have one of you just talked to him?"

I was grasping at straws here. I'd never been able to read someone's mind because of someone else talking to them. Touching something a person had been wearing could allow me to connect with them, but never talking to someone else.

"I think you might be tuned into the wrong channel," Jimmy told me.

I bristled at this. "I know what I'm feeling. This is unmistakable." I'd never pretended to "tune into" any channels anyway, except the ones on my TV.

The two men exchanged looks, then thanked me politely for my time. Jimmy handed me my fee, shaking my hand. I thought about refusing it, since I hadn't really been able to help, then changed my mind. Superman was alive, and he was somewhere nearby. I could feel it.

Clark held out his hand, and I when I touched it, I almost gasped as the truth suddenly hit me. Superman had been in front of me the whole time, wearing business attire and calling himself Clark Kent.

The reason for the feeling of confusion was suddenly clear. Clark Kent had no idea that he was Superman. As he let go of my hand, I started, "You're —"

It was too late. They were already heading out the door. "It was a long shot anyway," Jimmy told Clark.

I rushed out the door, but they had already been swallowed up by the crowd, and another customer was approaching me, desperate to know whether Nightfall would be destroyed.

Later, I found Clark's address and went to his apartment, intending to tell him what I'd discovered. Just as I arrived, I heard a scream and saw him falling from the building into the alleyway, apparently pushed off the ledge by an older woman looking down at him in dismay.

He landed hard in a pile of trash. The woman sighed, muttering, "Back to the drawing board," to the man standing beside her.

I froze, unable to decide what to do. Did these people know that he was Superman? Were they trying to teach him to fly, or were they trying to kill him? If they knew he was Superman, they wouldn't try to kill him by pushing him off a building, because it obviously wouldn't work. If they didn't know, they might try to kill me for being a witness or for interfering — and it would help no one if my knowledge of Superman's identity died with me.

I heard heels clacking on the pavement and turned to see Lois Lane marching towards the alley.

She barely glanced at me before starting in on Clark. "Clark? What are you doing here?" she demanded.

"I live here," Clark told her, though he sounded a little uncertain about that.

"Not in the alley, you don't." Lois squinted at me, then looked away again. "Did you hear something?"

"I ... ah ... that was me. I was looking for ... for clues," he said.

I almost groaned. Did all his excuses sound this bad?

"Here?" Lois gave him a strange look. "Clark, are you feeling okay?"

"Me? Sure. Any news about Superman?" he asked, looking hopeful.

I had another flash of insight. He'd been told that he was Superman, and he believed it now that he'd survived falling off the building without injury, but he had no idea what to do with the knowledge or how to *be* Superman.

"Not yet," Lois told him.

"What if he's confused like me, and he wants to help, but he can't?" Clark was obviously looking for clues — *any* clues — that would tell him what to do.

"Clark, Superman wants to help and he will."

"How can you be so sure?" he asked.

"I know Superman."

"I want to know him, too. So I could believe that. Tell me about him."

Lois complied, a dreamy look on her face. "Superman is the kind of man who *makes* things happen. Sure, he's great-looking and he's good, but what you notice most about him is how you can count on him."

Lois went on, Clark listening intently. Slowly, the look of confusion disappeared from his face as he drew on her memories of the Man of Steel.

I knew the exact moment he remembered completely. He'd tapped into Lois's mind, using her memories to bring his own back. She didn't know he'd done it, but he had. In contrast to the usual headlines, Lois Lane had saved Superman — and the world.

He picked up on my presence in that moment. A look of alarm crossed his face as he realized that I knew who he was.

I shook my head quickly, making the gesture for zipping my lips. *I'll never tell anyone ... cousin*, I thought.

He nodded, knowing that I was thinking the truth.

"Do you remember anything, Clark?" Lois asked.

Clark looked away from me. "Yeah ... I think I do," he said slowly.

"Well, let's get back to the Planet. Everyone's going to be in the basement during impact."

"Lois, can I meet you there?" Clark asked. "I have something to do first."

Lois gave him an exasperated look. "All right, Clark. But don't take too long."

Evidently this wasn't the first time he'd run off in the middle of a conversation. Still, I knew what he was going to do — and I also knew that my help wasn't needed. Quietly, I turned and slipped out of the alley.

Superman stopped Nightfall, as I'd known he would. I seldom saw him after that, but I knew he was there, flying above Metropolis and keeping us safe.

He came to visit me once, after he'd been informed that he couldn't have children with a human woman. I knew for sure by then that my great-grandfather had been Kryptonian, so I also knew that it was possible for Kryptonians to have children with humans.

I didn't know how long it would take, but the only true vision of the future I ever had came at that moment, telling me that Lois and Clark would have children, and that their descendants would build a better world. I told Clark that, never doubting my vision for a moment.

And I was right.

THE END

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