

The Truth About Clark Kent

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Rated G

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Summary: Clark Kent is hiding something, and Lois is determined to figure it out.

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Author's note: This is set during the first season, shortly after 'Ides of Metropolis'. It never sat right with me that Lois — surely one of the most curious people alive- didn't dig deeper when Clark admitted he had a secret.

It was a slow news day.

Glacially slow. Even the seemingly endless follow ups to Eugene Laderman's release and Henry and Lena Harrison's arrests had finished.

Lois stifled a yawn as she put the finishing touches on a story about a new mall development that had just been approved by City Hall. Stories like this were like bread and butter — filling, but not particularly interesting. She sent the story to Perry and then looked at the clock. It was much too early to contemplate leaving.

She tapped her pencil against the edge of her desk. What she needed was something more entertaining to think about...

To fill in time she picked up her mug and went to the coffee machine, taking the opportunity to scan the newsroom for some kind of distraction.

Her gaze fell finally on her sometime partner. Clark was focussed on his computer screen, his brow furrowed a little in concentration.

Curiosity, she knew, was her besetting sin. It was one of the things that had driven her to become an investigative reporter. She liked to get to the bottom of things, and something about Clark Kent was piquing her curiosity now.

He was hiding something.

He'd even admitted it after Laderman's name had been cleared. She'd chosen not to pursue it at the time, but now she wanted to know.

As she watched, he stretched, got up and headed for the coffee maker, mug in hand. Reaching her side, he raised one quizzical eyebrow.

"What?"

"What?"

"You were looking at me like I'd grown a second head," he explained.

"Oh!" Slightly flustered at being caught staring, Lois quickly thought of an excuse. "I was just wondering... if you're doing anything after work."

"Why?" His question was frankly suspicious.

"I thought maybe we could catch up over takeout and a movie."

"Oh!" He sounded pleasantly surprised. "Sure, I'm not doing

anything."

"Don't sound so surprised, Clark."

He shot her a teasing grin. "Well, usually when you ask me if I'm doing anything, you have something much less... legal... in mind."

She slapped at his shoulder. "Not always," she pointed out. "Say your place? 7.30? I'll get the movie if you'll get the food," she offered.

"Sure."

"Good." She picked up her coffee cup and moved away.

She watched Clark surreptitiously throughout what remained of the afternoon, trying to think of what he might be hiding — and discarding every idea she came up with. It wasn't until late that afternoon that a plausible theory occurred to her.

Lately, Research had hired a new employee — Teresa. She'd created quite a stir in the Planet offices, being blonde and pretty, with a figure that even Lois had to admit was stunning. Rumour had it that she was working in the Research department while trying to make it as a model. When she entered the newsroom, late in the afternoon, most of the male eyes in the room were suddenly busy tracing her path across the bullpen to Clark's desk. He accepted the folders she handed him with a smile and a nod — and Lois was intrigued to see that he didn't watch her leave.

There were only two reasons Lois could think of why a young, unattached man wouldn't take notice of an attractive woman; one, he wasn't interested in women in general, or two, he was only interested in one woman in particular.

While Clark was a bit more subtle about it than most men she knew, Lois knew he was definitely interested in women — his reaction to Antoinette Baines, Toni Taylor and Lois herself in his first few days at the Planet proved that.

Which left the second option... Could Clark have a girlfriend?

It was possible, she conceded. After all, he was young, reasonably successful and at least moderately attractive — even despite the glasses. The idea left a hollow, sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach. Clark, with a girlfriend? Fiercely, she told herself that she was only dismayed because she'd lose his friendship if it was true — after all, what woman would condone her boyfriend spending large amounts of time with another woman? She knew she wouldn't.

By the time she arrived at Clark's apartment that evening, she was able to think of the possibility with at least the appearance of equanimity. He greeted her with his usual welcoming grin, gesturing for her to enter and inviting her to make herself at home.

He followed her down the steps into the living room.

"I got Chinese," he informed her. On the coffee table was a collection of the bamboo containers she'd seen once before. Settling on the couch, they dished up plates of food from the selection he'd bought and began to eat.

"You know, you've really got to tell me where you get this from," she commented. "I've tried just about every place in town and I still can't find it."

"I'll take you there someday," he promised.

She turned her attention to her food, steeling herself to broach the subject of his possible girlfriend.

Finally, she broke their companionable silence.

"I figured it out."

He looked up from his fortune cookie. "Figured what out?" he asked.

"What you've been hiding."

He regarded her with a mixture of suspicion and alarm.

"What do you mean?"

"Remember, after we cleared Laderman's name, you said you hadn't told me your biggest secret? Well, I figured it out."

Wielding her chopsticks expertly, she transferred her last bite of rice to her mouth. “So who is she?”

“Who is who? Lois, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he told her. Picking up the empty plates, he strode into the kitchen and started washing up. She followed him into the kitchen and leaned against the counter.

“Well, that’s your secret, isn’t it? You’ve got a girlfriend.”

“Lois, I do not have a girlfriend.”

“Oh.” She paused. “Well, there’s someone that you’re interested in, isn’t there?”

“What gives you that idea?”

She was right! He hadn’t denied it.

“Simple. You’re the only man in the newsroom not salivating over Teresa from Research.”

He laughed at her disgruntled tone.

“Maybe she’s just not my type.”

“Oh please. She’s blonde, blue eyed and at least somewhat intelligent. She is definitely your type.” She paused again. “So there is someone you’re interested in.”

His hands stilled for a moment before he admitted it.

“Yes.”

“What’s she like? Do I know her?”

“She’s... complicated.”

He smiled reminiscently, and she was surprised at the tenderness she saw in his face... and a little embarrassed. She felt like she was trespassing somehow, like she’d had a glimpse of something intensely private. This was more serious than she’d thought.

“You love her, don’t you?” she asked curiously.

“Yes.” He sighed. “And yes, you know her.” He raised a hand, covered in suds. “No, I am not telling you who it is. Even — “ He forestalled her next question. “ — even if you guess.”

She rolled her eyes. “Spoilsport. Have you told her?”

“No.” He went back to scrubbing plates, using what Lois considered unnecessary force. “And I’m not going to.”

“Why not?”

He pulled his hands out of the sink, grabbing onto the lip of it and gripping so tightly that his knuckles went white. “It wouldn’t do any good,” he said curtly. “She doesn’t... feel the same way. And —” He sighed again. “ -- she’s involved with someone else. Now can we stop talking about this?” There was a steely edge to his voice she’d never heard before.

Abruptly, he turned away from the sink to grab a towel.

Lois straightened up to touch his shoulder and apologise for upsetting him.

The words stuck in her throat.

There were indents in the sink where his hands had been moments before. Finger shaped indents.

She must have made a strangled sound, because he turned back- and spotted what she had. Guiltily, he met her shocked gaze.

Her mind racing, she finally recovered her voice.

“So I guess that was your real secret.”

Chapter 2

Lois paced up and down the length of Clark’s apartment, her head in a whirl as more and more pieces clicked into place. It explained so much! How he’d known which desk was hers after that first flight... How he’d managed to acquire the pheromone sample without detection... The earthquake that no one else had felt in her father’s office... His attack of amnesia during the Nightfall chaos...

She reached the wall and turned again, stopping when she drew level with Clark, where he stood watching her anxiously.

“You’re Superman, and you never told me?!” she burst out.

“It’s not exactly something I can bring up in casual conversation, Lois,” he commented dryly.

“This is more than just a secret, Clark. This is — this is huge!

Pulitzer Prize winning huge...” She trailed off. She’d always wanted a Pulitzer, craved it, and this was the one story that was practically guaranteed to win one — the secret identity of Superman. She could almost feel the medallion hanging around her neck... All she had to do was write the story... She looked up into Clark’s stricken, terrified face. Write the story, and destroy Clark Kent.

“Why did you do it?” she asked abruptly. “Why did you create Superman? He is your creation, isn’t he, not some kind of split personality or something?”

“To help,” he responded quietly, ignoring the question about his mental health. “So I could help and still be...me.”

That decided it. If she wrote the article, the moment it was published was the moment that Clark Kent would effectively cease to exist.

“I can’t do it. It’ll win a Pulitzer, but I can’t write it.” She saw the tension leave Clark’s frame as sheer relief flooded his face and planted her hands on her hips.

“Did you actually think I’d do it?”

“I was worried,” he confessed.

“Six months ago, I probably would have,” she admitted candidly. “But you’re my friend, Clark. Besides, it’s not like you’re a sleazy politician or some criminal.” She smiled as a thought occurred to her. “Plus, think how much easier it will be to get stories if you can use your powers! No more worrying about locked doors or-”

She caught sight of the glint of mischief in his eyes. Her own eyes narrowed. “You already do, don’t you?”

“Occasionally,” he allowed.

“Why am I not surprised?”

She went back to pacing, wondering how many times he’d used his powers in front of her as Clark that she just hadn’t noticed and feeling chagrin rise within her. Conscious of Clark watching her, she stopped in front of him again.

“What?” she demanded.

“Nothing. Just... you’re taking this differently to what I expected.”

“How so?” she asked.

“I thought you’d be mad.”

“I’m not mad. I’m embarrassed,” she informed him. “After all, I’ve been working next to you for almost a year and never noticed the resemblance or that you conveniently disappear right before Superman arrives... Okay, I am a little mad. But I’m mostly embarrassed.” Memories of things she’d said to Clark about Superman and vice versa flooded into her mind.

“*Clark is the before, Superman is the after. Make that the way, way after.*”

“*Superman put it all on the line, not just once, but twice. You-you fell into garbage cans in the dark.*”

“*You mean the Suit comes off?*”

“*We have something in common. Superman. You want to fly like him, and I want to fly with him.*”

Groaning in humiliation, she sunk down onto the couch and buried her face in her hands as another thought occurred to her.

“Oh god. I did the dance of the seven veils for Superman.”

Clark sat down next to her.

“No, actually you did that for Clark,” he pointed out.

She raised her head and looked at him.

“But they — you — are the same person.”

“You know that, and I know that. But the rest of the world doesn’t. Look, Lois, it’s important that you remember the difference. You have to treat Clark Kent and Superman as two separate people, at least in public,” he told her earnestly. “If you slip up, it could mean that someone could figure it out.”

“Like you did before?” she asked pointedly.

He nodded. “Yes.” He sighed. “This is not an easy secret, Lois. I have to be careful all the time, to make sure that I just

seem like everyone else. It means always trying to remember who I said what to and who I said it as. It means constantly lying to everyone around me and never letting anyone get too close. It means having to dash off at a moment's notice and trying to think of a reason why, and—”

She cocked her head, considering him. If he only had a moment to think of an excuse for disappearing every time he needed to be Superman, that was probably the reason why his excuses were always so terrible. He was focussed on getting to where he needed to be.

She sat up a little straighter.

“I can help you there,” she cut him off. “Face it, Clark. Your excuses stink. For someone who spends his whole life lying to everyone around them, you're actually really bad at it.”

“I don't like lying.”

“What we need is a signal, something to tell me you need to go so I can help come up with a cover...”

The movie forgotten, they spent hours on Clark's couch discussing his inadvertent revelation. It wasn't until Lois crawled into her bed in the early hours of the morning that she remembered his other secret.

Clark Superman Kent was in love. He was just as unattainable as he'd been when she'd thought they were two separate people, just now it was for a different reason.

At least she still had the memory of his pheromone-induced declaration of love...

She sat bolt upright. The pheromone. The 100% solution that he'd been sprayed with was supposedly permanent, at least on humans. She'd seen Clark barely an hour after he'd prevented Miranda from spraying the city and he'd shown no signs of being affected by the pheromone. So either it had worn off extremely quickly, or he'd never been affected in the first place...

She smiled sleepily as she slid back down in the bed and snuggled into her pillow. Life was about to become very, very interesting...

THE END