

# Mamihlapinatapei

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Rating: PG

Summary: A missing scene provides context for Lois' varying emotional states during the episode "The Green, Green Glow of Home."

Story Size: 4,342 words (24Kb as text)

Historian's Note: The script for "The Green, Green Glow of Home" is clearly wrong. Despite the fact that the bulk of the episode (scenes 17-49) appears to take place all on the same day, ample evidence exists to conclude that, in fact, it happened over the course of two days. Lois and Clark speaking on the phone with Perry and their return visit to the EPA clean-up site (scenes 29/30 and 31) must happen on two separate days (how else could Jimmy get to Smallville so quickly?). This story is set during the missing night.

Thanks, Lady Loisetete, for your story prompts (which appear at the end). Thanks to my wonderful beta reader Laura.

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"Who are you..."  
"...talking to?"

Lois looked at Clark, who looked right back at her as they both hung up their phones. It was evident from his expression that they had both finished briefing Perry on their EPA investigation in Smallville, but with oddly contradictory conclusions. Lois found it strange that Clark, who had suggested this story in the first place, seemed so ready to give up on it.

"Something's clearly going on at the Irig farm. We need to get back out there and do some more digging," Lois said.

Clark's mouth formed into a slight frown, and then he shifted his eyes to look out the kitchen window. "Yeah, okay," he said with a distinct lack of enthusiasm. He paused for a moment before adding, "It's going to start getting dark soon. I don't think there's anything more we can do tonight."

Lois sighed. "You're probably right." She straightened taller as she said with determination, "First thing tomorrow."

Clark turned to face her and blinked as if he was dismissing a thought. Then he grinned widely with a shake of his head. "Second thing tomorrow. No way I'm missing Mom's breakfast."

Lois felt a ribbon of happiness swirl through her. Again. She had lost count of how many times that had happened today. A smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. "Sure. But I think I'm going to gain five pounds for every day I stay here."

She saw his eyes dip and felt a giddy bashfulness at the idea of her partner caressing her body with his eyes.

He looked away as he said, "I don't think a few days in Smallville would do any harm."

She heard it, as she had heard it all day: the tone hiding behind his words, flavoring his voice with emotion. The comfortable familiarity of friendship tinted with something more — something tempting and tantalizing. Something she had denied for months. Something she had begun to feel herself this very afternoon at the Smallville Corn Festival.

Lois tipped her head in acknowledgement, and then wandered out of the kitchen, hoping she hadn't unwittingly let herself telegraph her feelings. She and Clark were partners, and that partnership meant something to her, much more than she could

possibly have guessed when they had met a few short months ago.

Lois sat down on the living room couch, taking in the mementos of the Kents' lives, evidence of the amazing parents Clark had, and the wonderful life that had been afforded to him as a result of growing up in this laid-back small town. Photos of Clark as a teenager; he was hopelessly adorable even at that young age. Family portraits that had a light in each eye gleaming with love. She had to divert her attention before her thoughts inevitably turned to negative comparisons to her own childhood.

This trip certainly hadn't gone according to plan, though why she had ever convinced herself that this would be just another typical business trip, she couldn't quite say. No-nonsense Lois Lane had been on countless assignments with colleagues of both genders, following the news wherever it took her. She had always had notepads and pens, daily agendas, clear goals, her own hotel room, and absolutely no downtime, no diversions, no fun. Business and pleasure should never mix — that only led to trouble.

But Smallville corrupted her; Clark derailed her carefully laid plans. There was no sterile hotel room; she had spent last night in her partner's bedroom, in his parents' house, surrounded by old toys and trophies, objects that seemed to whisper sweet memories as she slept between his sheets. She had spent the day immersed in his hometown, as old friends embraced her into the community, welcoming her into their world with open arms. And Clark had been there every step of the way, expertly playing the part of perfect host, perfect partner, perfect boyfriend.

Lois admonished herself for letting the word lock into place, for allowing herself to believe even for a minute, or an hour, or half a day that Clark could fit so comfortably there. It was her own fault — she knew that. Why had she disarmed herself of her boxy, uptight pant suit and slipped into the red calico dress that called to her so loudly from the festival vendor's hanger? Why did that garment exist only in her size, highlighting every curve as if it had been waiting patiently for her to walk by? Why was it so inexpensive, refusing to allow Lois to deem it a frivolous expense and reject it on the basis of cost alone? Why had she looked at herself in the dressing area mirror and asked herself if Clark would like it, then reflexively pulled out her wallet when she instantly knew he would?

Lois caught Clark's movement out of the corner of her eye as he walked out of the kitchen holding an empty Mason jar. He cleared his throat. "So, it's a nice evening, and I haven't had a chance to show you around the farm. Care to join me for a walk?" He held the jar securely in both hands, as if it was a receptacle for his nervous energy.

Mad Dog Lane would say no. She would arch a skeptical eyebrow at her colleague, silently reproaching him for daring to ask. She would excuse herself to her room, locking the door securely, reaffirming the sanctity of her rules, assuring herself of their necessity.

Lois Lane smoothed her left hand down the skirt of her dress, stood up from the sofa, and quietly said, "Sure." And she nearly swooned in the heat of Clark's resulting smile.

Fresh air would do her good, would allow her to gain some perspective. Lois crossed the room, squeezing past Clark to exit the front door, willfully suppressing any desire to brush her fingertips along his sculpted chest as she passed. Lust was a deadly sin, and succumbing to it led to heartbreak and stolen stories and ruined reputations. Lust could be managed, subsumed, squelched.

As she stepped out onto the front porch, Lois let her eyes wander over the property. The sun was setting in the west, casting a beautiful red-orange hue of light along the rows of corn. Land as far as she could see, and somehow, that didn't seem like a bad thing. Everything her city-girl heart should loathe — the absence of movement, the low background humming of insects, the

eartheness of the air — suddenly felt perilously right. It would be too easy to fall in love with this place, too easy to envision coming here for summer vacations and winter holidays, far too easy to imagine a dark-haired boy running happily through the fields.

“Animal or vegetable?” Clark asked as he came up beside her. “Hmm?” Lois asked.

“Where to?” Clark spread his arms out, pointing left and right. “The barn or the garden?”

“Oh,” she said with a light laugh. “The garden. I doubt I’m up for the smell of whatever’s in that barn.”

“You get surprisingly used to it after a while,” Clark said. He dropped his right hand, and gestured with his left. “After you.”

Lois descended the staircase, gently guided by Clark’s hand at the base of her spine. It was quaint how he did that, gentlemanly in an anti-feminist way, and she should absolutely hate it. Why had she never objected? Why did it bring the briefest of smiles to her face instead of a frown?

Lois slowly walked on, around the corner of the house, refusing to answer her own questions. Like everything else about him, about what could be them, it was far easier to deny that anything was there.

Clark stopped when he reached a short white picket fence that surrounded a small plot of land. “It’s too bad you’re not here in the summer. There’s nothing better than fresh picked strawberries.”

Lois shrugged. “I’ve never really cared for them. They look so plump and juicy at the store, but when you bite into them, they inevitably taste like nothing.”

“Well, you’ve never had them straight from the garden.” Clark closed his eyes as if savoring a memory. “Every bite is bursting with flavor. Sweet and sugary; juice just dribbles down the corner of your mouth.”

Lois felt herself staring at him, her tongue aching to lick the imaginary juice from his chin. She tore her eyes away and gripped the edge of the fence instead, pretending to be mesmerized by the growing plants.

Clark seemed to take in a heaving breath before noting, “Mom always plants a small pumpkin patch so we can have homemade pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving. And I see there are still a few beans ready to be picked.”

Lois’ eyes slanted sideways. “Is that what the jar is for?”

Clark looked down at the Mason jar in his left hand and laughed. “No. You’ll see. Come on.” He led Lois away from the garden of temptation, past the back of the farmhouse. They walked next to each other in companionable silence toward the barn.

Lois wrinkled her nose. “What did I tell you about that smell?”

Clark laughed again. The sound drove her insane — he really needed to stop doing that before she acted on the impulse that urged her to drown out the sound by clamping her lips securely over his. “I’ll protect you, mi’ lady,” he said before stretching his right hand toward her.

Lois automatically folded her hand into his. She did it without thought; it just happened the way it was supposed to happen. She didn’t want to analyze why it felt so right.

Clark tugged her into a light jog; she kept up with him as they dashed past the entrance to the barn. They slowed down and walked hand in hand a few paces until they came to the edge of a pond. Clark released his clasp and tucked his right hand shyly into his pocket. Lois laced hers behind her back, as if to stop herself from touching anything else.

“I didn’t know this was over here,” Lois said, desperate to distract her thoughts with meaningless conversation.

“Yeah, it’s hard to see when you’re driving up. It’ll freeze over during the winter, but it’s too small to really skate on.

There’s a bigger pond a few miles away where all the kids go ice skating together in the winter.” Clark bent down, taking his hand from his pocket and trailing it through the water. “It’s a bit too cold right now, but in the summer, it’s perfect for jumping in and cooling off on a hot day.”

Lois leered playfully. “Now that would be a sight to see.”

Clark’s eyes sparkled with amusement. “I’m definitely bringing you back here in June.”

She suggestively taunted, “What if I forget my bathing suit?”

He wagged his eyebrows. “I’m counting on it.”

“Ha!” Lois slapped him lightly on the arm. “Pervert!”

“I don’t know, Lois. It was your suggestion. Besides, you’ve already seen me half naked. Turnabout is fair play.”

“Mmmm,” Lois muttered under her breath. “Don’t remind me.” She wasn’t sure she was in the right frame of mind to remember that glorious morning in the Apollo Hotel; she was far too tempted to unbutton his jean shirt and snatch it from his body this instant.

“It gets hot here in Kansas. Farm work really builds up a sweat. I’m constantly walking around shirtless.” Clark arched a playfully questioning eyebrow. “Shall I book your plane ticket right now?”

Lois felt herself blush; she quickly turned away. “In your dreams, Kent.”

Clark brushed past her, hooking his arm into hers, leading her away from the pond. “Oh, you have no idea,” he said wistfully.

Lois made no move to break their contact, content to stay in step by his side. They wandered past the corn fields for a few minutes as the sun set and dusk settled over the farm. As they turned down a row of corn, she saw twinkling lights in a small clearing. “Fireflies,” she said with wide eyes.

Clark shook the Mason jar, bringing her attention to it.

Lois laughed. “I’m not five!”

“You know you want to,” Clark taunted with amusement.

“We have them in Centennial Park, you know,” Lois said as if to dismiss the idea.

Clark scoffed. “Urban fireflies? Pfft. They’re probably radioactive. Kansas fireflies are the real thing.” He unscrewed the top and handed both jar and lid to Lois. “Go catch one,” he said with an adorable smile.

Lois resisted for another moment before saying, “Oh, what the hell.” She snatched the items and ran toward the clearing with a childlike glee.

Clark laughed behind her. “You’ll never catch them like that!”

“You do your method, I’ll do mine.” Lois waved the jar through the air in a knowingly useless effort, joyfully engaging in the endeavor.

Clark came up behind her, daring to wrap his left arm around her waist. Lois stilled as she felt him press himself against her back and whisper into her ear. “You have to be sneaky. Quiet and still. Let the fireflies come to you. Live in their world; let them surround you. Then you can scoop one up and it will be yours forever.”

Lois’ eyelids fluttered as she felt a rush of heat warm her body. Catching fireflies had never been this sensual of an experience as a child.

They stood silently in the increasingly intimate embrace, but Lois made no move to step away. Even as he rested his chin on her shoulder, even as she felt his shallow breath caressing her neck, even as his arm tightened possessively across her abdomen, she remained still. Time was fragile, capable of shattering any second, and something she refused to acknowledge, refused to name, compelled her to keep the moment alive. It could never exist in Metropolis, so she needed to cement the feeling in her mind here, storing it away for the lonely nights to come, because she knew that Smallville was a fantasy land, but that she lived in the real world.

The fireflies came closer, oblivious to the frozen couple. Lois held the Mason jar in her left hand, and then placed the lid at her right side, bumping the edge against Clark's fingertips. "Clark," she whispered. "I'll go left, you go right."

She could feel him smile against her cheek as he released her body and pulled the lid into his hand. He slid off to her side, and they slowly reached out in tandem, lining up a group of fireflies between them. Lois dipped quickly and Clark snapped down the lid. Her eyes glowed as he screwed down the lid, capturing a pair of lightning bugs.

The remaining fireflies scattered away, leaving the couple's faces lit only by the pair left in the jar. Light seemed to blink off Clark's glasses, highlighting the chocolate depth of his eyes. "We make a good team," he said in a whispered hush.

Lois gulped, tamping down her racing heartbeat. "The best," she managed to say. Then she took a step away from him, concentrating her vision on the Mason jar, choosing to break the moment.

Clark stood straighter and took in a deep breath. "Come on," he said. "I'll show you where I used to take those when I was a kid." He headed back toward the barn, and Lois followed a step behind. He retrieved a ladder, and then guided her to a grove of trees located near the edge of the fields.

Lois looked up into the branches as Clark rested the ladder against a tree trunk. "A treehouse. Of course you have a treehouse."

Clark took the jar from her and bowed gallantly. "After you," he said with a flourish of his hand.

She rolled her eyes. "Such a gentleman," Lois said as she began her climb. She paused after the first few rungs and added, "Don't you dare look up my dress." The tone of her voice sounded less stern and far more playful than she expected.

Clark's eyes slowly traveled up her leg, and then sought out her own with a wink. "I wouldn't dream of it," he said coyly. He rolled his eyes up and away, shrugged his shoulders, and amended the sentence with the word, "much."

The word pleased Lois far too much. She crawled onto the treehouse's landing and reached back down for the jar. Clark handed it up to her, and she turned to use the fluorescent glow like a lantern. Her breath caught as she read the sign attached to the small door.

Lois turned her head back to Clark as he finished ascending the ladder. "Clark..." His name rushed from her lips, caught in an air of sadness. Three words had transformed her idyllic caricature of his childhood, and his downcast eyes failed to hide his history of pain.

"It's okay," Clark said. "It was a long time ago."

She shook her head. "It's not okay."

"Everyone feels that way sometimes."

"I know. I sure did." Lois looked back at the sign, running her fingers over the words, "Fortress of Solitude." Then she said, "I still do."

Clark laid a comforting hand on her arm, which caused Lois to lock her gaze with his. Time froze again, solid and crystal clear, and she again felt a passionate urge to shatter the tension between them. But she resisted for the good of her sanity, for the safety of their partnership.

He smiled warmly as if he understood. "Go on," he said with a nudge of his head toward the door.

Lois pushed the entrance open, then crawled inside. She set the Mason jar on a small shelf next to assorted odds and ends that had been stashed away over the years. She carefully unfolded a blanket, placing the dirty side onto the layer of dust that covered the floor, and sat down onto the slightly cleaner side.

Clark crawled in behind her, ducking his head through the doorway. "This place is a lot smaller than I remember it," he said with a light laugh.

"No kidding." Lois pulled her knees to her chest, leaving room for Clark to lie down beside her. He rolled onto his side, propping his head up with his hand. His feet dangled out the doorway, which somehow seemed comically adorable. Lois laid back, stretching out beside him, folding her hands over her stomach.

"Comfy?" Clark asked with barely contained amusement.

"Not really," she deadpanned without hiding her grin.

"Well, if you're coming down for the summer, I'll be sure to buy an air mattress."

"I'm sure you'd appreciate that. After all, you'd be the one lying on your back."

Clark threw his head back in laughter. "I knew you liked to be on top!"

Lois giggled. "You wish you knew."

"Mmm mmm mmm," Clark hummed. "I sure do."

Lois rolled her eyes, unable to wipe the broad grin off her face. Teasing Clark was fun, and seemingly second nature. For some reason, his sexual interest didn't feel threatening; it felt comfortable, natural. Bantering with him didn't feel like an obligation or invitation; it just felt right.

It would be so easy to make a huge mistake. To pretend that they could be more than what they were. To succumb to her hidden desires now and suffer the inevitable consequences later. She had learned that lesson before; it didn't bear repeating.

Lois sighed, then tried to steer their conversation to a safer topic. "Why is there a giant hole in the roof?"

Clark rolled onto his back and followed her gaze. "It was for my telescope. So I could observe the night sky."

"But you could do that anywhere outside."

"Yeah, but it felt more like a real observatory this way."

"You're such a nerd."

"I'll take that as a compliment."

Lois rolled her head to the side and watched him. Clark lifted an eyebrow in question. Lois nodded thoughtfully. "I think it was." That earned her a delightful smile, one she thought she could bask in for days.

"On a clear night, it seems like you can see the whole universe from here. Mars and Venus, sometimes even Mercury, Jupiter, and Saturn. Stars like Antares and Vega, and the constellations of Aquarius and Pegasus at this time of year. The Hunter's Moon, which is even more amazing though the telescope. The Orionid meteor shower will be on the 21<sup>st</sup>." Clark's eyes seemed to stare up into the distance with fascinated reverence.

"Sun. Moon. Stars. That's about the extent of my astronomical knowledge," Lois said, suddenly wishing she knew more.

"I could show you the world," Clark said in a hauntingly beautiful hush. His emotion filled the treehouse, surrounding Lois in a magical way. It was hard to breathe lying next to him with moonlight shining down from above and the glow of the lightning bugs casting a romantic light around them. She felt it; she knew he felt it, too.

He cleared his throat, and affected a playful leer. "Clothing optional, of course," he said cheekily.

Lois snorted, but said nothing, grateful to him for easing the growing tension between them, allowing her to shy away gracefully. She sat upright and skimmed her hand along his arm before intertwining her fingers with his. The connection felt warm, pure, real. Innocent and pastoral — it felt like Smallville. Which is why it could never last.

Lois tore her gaze away from their joined hands and looked into his eyes. She whispered sadly, "Don't fall for me, farmboy."

Clark squeezed her hand gently, tilted his head in an apologetic shrug, and simply declared, "Too late."

Lois nodded slowly, holding his hand for a few more

affirming seconds, before letting go. She began to scoot toward the treehouse's doorway, but something compelled her to pause. Mad Dog Lane lived in Metropolis; she wore boxy pant suits and guarded emotional armor. But right now, she was Lois Lane, in a calico dress, with her emotional walls toppled to the ground.

She flipped over onto her hands and knees, carefully crawling beside him. She saw his eyes widen with surprise as she hovered her face over his, allowing her hair to gently brush against his skin. She paused, just for a moment, to ensure the action wasn't impulsive, so he would know that she had made an active choice.

And then Lois Lane kissed Clark Kent.

Soft and brief, a press of her lips against his. It was the Corn Festival and a calico dress, strawberries and skinny dipping on a warm summer day, the glittering light of fireflies and stars in the night sky, and it absolutely shattered their fortresses of solitude.

She pulled fractionally away from him, opening eyelids that had fluttered shut. He inhaled and opened his eyes, and she savored every word she couldn't let him say. Then she crawled away, scurrying out of the treehouse, down the ladder, and toward the safety of the farmhouse.

She had nearly reached the porch when she heard him call out her name. She froze, terrified by what might come next. She turned to face him with her eyes cast toward the ground.

Clark stopped in front of her and offered the Mason jar with his outstretched hands. Lois dared to look up into his eyes, relieved to find only friendship, as if he had known not to push for more.

Lois released a breath and took hold of the jar, allowing her fingertips to lightly stroke his during the exchange.

"Good night," he whispered.

She spoke without words, letting him see her silent promise in the light bouncing off her eyes: not now, but not never.

Clark took a step back and placed his hands safely in his pockets. Lois offered him one last peek into her soul before rebuilding her emotional walls. "Good night, Clark," she said, before retreating into the house and escaping to the relative security of her room.

But it wasn't her room — it was his, and the mementos stored there whispered sweet words about him as she readied herself for bed. Lois set the Mason jar on the window sill, letting the light reflect softly off the glass. After a moment, she opened the window, unscrewed the lid, and allowed the pair of fireflies to escape, because they belonged to Smallville, and she could only bring the memory of their light back with her to Metropolis.

Even if she'd rather not make the journey alone.

THE END

Author's Note: Lady Loisetta earned the most overall points in the 2016 Kerth quizzes, and her prize was a story written just for her. These were her requests:

Want:

1. Smallville
2. The night sky/stars
3. Fireflies/Lightning bugs

Don't Want: Not specified

Preferred Season: Not specified

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From <http://bigthink.com/harpys-review/the-top-10-relationship-words-that-arent-translatable-into-english>:

*Mamihlapinatapei* (Yagan, an indigenous language of Tierra del Fuego): The wordless yet meaningful look shared by two people who desire to initiate something, but are both reluctant to start.