

Muddying the Waters

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Rated G:

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Summary: Perry White will never know just how close he was to the scoop of the century.

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Disclaimer: All recognisable characters, plotlines etc. are the property of DC Comics, Warner Bros and December 3rd Productions. I own nothing.

Author's note: Perry hiding in the closet during 'The Rival' has always amused me. What would've happened if he'd done something other than just quietly wait out Lois's intrusion?

This was, Perry White decided, one of the lowest points in his tenure as editor-in-chief. Hiding in the closet of an employee to escape detection by another employee was definitely not dignified.

He couldn't make out exactly what Lois was saying from his position in the closet, but the shrill tone of her voice—even muffled as it was by Kent's coats—led credence to Clark's assertion that this whole Linda King thing was sending Lois off the deep end.

Lois's voice, and the sound of Clark's vain attempts to check her, was suddenly getting louder and clearer. Unwilling to be caught, Perry burrowed between the hanging clothes, leaning against the back wall of the closet so he had clear space in which to breathe. Whoever had built this particular wardrobe had definitely not taken someone of Clark's hefty build into account. The shoulders of his suit jackets brushed both the back wall and the door. Perry shifted, trying to find a more comfortable position when his elbow hit something with a muted 'click'. He stumbled backwards as the seemingly solid wall behind him slid away. He floundered, grabbing blindly in the dark to recover his balance and ended up with a handful of slick fabric. Just as he began to puzzle over why he had a hold of what felt like Spandex, the closet door slid open, exposing him to the shocked and appalled expressions of Lois and Clark.

Lois was the first to find her voice.

"Well. This is a surprise."

Lois observed Clark as he tried to explain his way out of Perry's discovery.

His explanation—that he allowed Superman to use his washer and dryer and to store his spare suits at Clark's place because the superhero had nowhere to do it himself—was well reasoned enough. It was even plausible.

She didn't buy it for a second.

His demeanour was too panicked. Sitting at the table with the incriminating Spandex suit draped over one chair, she could see his gaze keep flickering towards it. His hair stood on end where he'd run his hand through it multiple times.

There had to be another explanation.

The other plausible explanation—that Clark *was* Superman—was far more believable. It explained so much that had been inexplicable about Clark Kent: the worker that claimed he'd been saved by Clark just after he'd started at the planet; his comment about lead lined shutters while they'd been in the honeymoon suite; even his depression when Superman had been a few seconds

too late and Lex had saved her life, as well as a multitude of strange disappearances.

It also meant that the superhero she'd been lusting after all these months was in fact her partner. This brought a new and disturbing dimension to her relationship with him. Superman had been safe, in a way; an unattainable dream. He was never going to ask her to settle down somewhere in the suburbs and have 2.5 children. Clark... Clark just might.

Admitting that she knew... While it would be satisfying to hear the whole story—even if she could never publish it—it brought its own slew of problems. Obviously, Clark already knew she was attracted to him; she'd made her feelings for Superman perfectly plain after all. But admitting that she knew meant at least tacitly acknowledging that she had feelings for Clark. And that... that scared her. She'd succeeded in discouraging him so far. Once that restraining barrier was breached...

The truth was, she didn't know how she felt about Clark. Up until the arrival of Linda King on the scene, she would've said that they were friends and nothing more. Linda's arrival, however, had brought all of her possessiveness and jealousy to the fore—something that shouldn't have happened if she really only thought of Clark as a friend—and now she wasn't so sure.

No, she wasn't ready to confess she knew of Clark's dual identity. Now she just had to muddy the waters...

"I don't buy it," Perry announced. "You're hiding something, Clark."

"No. I think he's telling the truth," Lois said slowly. "After all Perry, what's the alternative explanation? That Clark—*Clark*—is really Superman?" She scoffed. "You think that you and I could have had the story of the year—of the century—under our noses for months and not realised it?" She saw Perry waver and pressed her point home. "Besides, I've seen Clark get cut. Superman is invulnerable, remember?"

As Perry's suspicious expression cleared, she risked a sidelong glance at Clark and caught his silent sigh of relief. She knew Perry well enough to know that he still questioned Clark's explanation, but she'd thrown enough doubt on the subject that he hopefully wouldn't return to it. And for that, Clark owed her one.

He just didn't know it.

THE END