

Mission of Friendship

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Rated: G

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Summary: Lois not following up on Clark's comment at the end of the episode "The Ides of Metropolis" by Deborah Joy LeVine seemed out of character. What if she decided she needed to know his secret now? This story starts after "Ides" and occurs a couple of weeks after the author's story "[Mission on Fifth Street](#)." This is a WHAM-free story, has no A-plot and advances the canon B-plot a little... maybe.

Story Size: 3,252 words (18Kb as text)

Lois was getting frustrated in her mission to find out Clark's secret. And it was really starting to bug her. *What could Clark of all people possibly have to keep secret?*

As far as she could tell, he was an open book. Oh, he did occasionally leave suddenly, forgetting an important errand. But she figured that if he was scatterbrained about his personal errands, he more than made up for it with being her partner. He was the only one who'd ever lasted more than a couple of days with her.

Still, there was something gnawing at the back of her mind. This secret of Clark's could be big. And she hated being kept out of the loop. That's how she found herself following him. She'd convinced herself that she was doing him a service. After all, if he had a secret big enough that he couldn't even share it with her, then she needed to help him with it. It conveniently never occurred to her that Clark didn't know everything about her.

She ignored the voice that said maybe it was an embarrassing secret, and he didn't want her to know. Or that maybe he was just teasing her and really didn't have any secrets. And, she insisted to herself, following him was not the same as stalking him. Her motives were to help him, not hurt him. After all, he was the *junior* partner and grew up in Kansas. If he were in real trouble in this city, it wouldn't take much to be in over his head.

Clark lowered his glasses and looked through the walls of his apartment. He'd heard Lois's heartbeat, and sure enough, she was parked down the street in one of the unmarked Daily Planet cars. There she was, staking out his apartment.

Again.

He knew it was a mistake to tease her last week. But she seemed to think she knew everything about him and that he couldn't possibly have any big secrets. So he just spoke before really considering what he said. And to Lois of all people! She made discovering other people's secrets her mission!

Well, he had plans for tonight. And he had to find a way to stop her from following him. So far, he'd been lucky that Superman hadn't been needed when Lois was nearby. But if she

continued, he worried she would discover his secret. And he wasn't ready yet for her to know. Tonight he was scheduled to volunteer at the mission. Well, if she wanted to discover a secret about him, he'd just give her one. He could make it look like he was hiding something. He smiled as he thought about how that would get Lois's investigative juices going, and maybe she'd learn not to stalk him.

Lois was getting frustrated. She'd followed Clark now for almost a week, and so far she hadn't found anything that would qualify even remotely as a big secret. She shifted uncomfortably in the car. It was not made for long stakeouts every night. She was mulling over her options of what to do next when she noticed a cab pull in front of Clark's apartment at the same time the lights in his apartment went out.

Adrenaline surged through her body as the familiar feelings of being on the cusp of something big flowed through her. It always heightened her senses and made her feel more alive to realize she was going to discover a secret. *Finally!* Now maybe she'd learn just what Clark had to hide.

She lowered herself so she could just see over the dashboard in the car. She'd deliberately parked in the shadows so no one would see her staking out her partner's apartment. She watched in fascination as Clark tentatively stepped out of his building. He looked around as if to see into the shadows. As his gaze swept near her hiding place, Lois froze. She didn't even dare to breathe as he looked in her direction. When he turned his head, she let out a small sigh of relief and resumed breathing. He appeared satisfied with his inspection of the area, and stepped into the cab.

As he slid into his seat, she noticed he carried a backpack and was dressed in dark colors. She didn't recognize the dark long-sleeved polo shirt he wore. She noticed he seemed furtive, as if he was hiding something or from someone. Or that he was ready to change plans and take off at a run.

Yes! She realized tonight was the night she'd discover the secret Clark thought he could keep from her. She wasn't the best investigative reporter in Metropolis due to her wardrobe!

Lois started the car cautiously, and followed Clark's cab at a discreet distance.

Inside the cab, Clark gave the driver the address of the Fifth Street Mission. He did a double take as he recognized the cabbie. "Mike?"

"Hello, Clark. Nice night, isn't it?" Mike smiled benignly at Clark, who immediately relaxed.

"Yes. I didn't know you drive a cab."

"It's something new. How are you?"

"I'm fine, thanks."

"That's great!"

After a few minutes, Mike spoke again. "Just so you know we're being followed."

"A dark gray sedan?"

"Yes."

Clark chuckled. "That's Lois, my partner at the *Planet*. She's determined to learn my biggest secret."

"And you're going to tell her?"

“No! I’m going to give her another secret I hope is big enough to satisfy her.”

“Ah. Think it will work?”

“No idea, but I have to try.”

The rest of the ride was made in companionable silence. Mike made sure that it wasn’t too easy for Lois to follow the cab, while also assuring she didn’t fall too far behind. At the mission, Mike stopped his cab in front. Clark paid him with a generous tip.

“Thanks, Clark. Hope this works out.”

“I do too.” As Clark stepped out of the cab, he focused on entering the mission and promptly forgot Mike was his cabbie.

Lois found a parking space that looked safe down the street from where the cab had stopped. She was confused as to why Clark would be going into the Fifth Street Mission. Well, this was one secret he wouldn’t have for long.

She got out of the car and carefully locked it. She purposely walked to the mission. Just as she reached the front door, it opened.

Startled, Lois stepped back. A middle-aged nun stood in front of her and smiled.

“Hello. May I help you?”

Lois hadn’t expected anyone to greet her. “I was, um, looking for my friend.”

The nun’s demeanor changed. She stood taller and narrowed her eyes. She crossed her arms in front of her chest and in a cold, no-nonsense voice spoke. “I’m Sister Mary Frances. A few weeks ago, we had an incident here. Two men were harassing our patrons, claiming to be looking for their so-called friend. We found out later he didn’t know them, and they wanted to harm him. Since then we’ve changed our rules and have increased both security and confidentiality rules. If you tell me your friend’s name, I’ll check and see if he or she is here and wants to speak to you. If not, I’ll ask you to leave unless you can give me a good explanation of your intentions. And unless your friend is in danger and incompetent to make decisions, I may still ask you to leave.”

“No, he’s naïve, but I don’t think he’s incompetent. And I’m trying to decide if he’s in danger or not. Look, I’m Lois Lane of the *Daily Planet*. My junior partner, Clark Kent, came here a little while ago, and I wanted to make sure he’s okay. A few weeks ago, I think he was here when he was injured. Head injuries can be tricky, and well, I don’t want him to know, but I’m concerned.”

“I’ll check and see if he’s here and wants to speak to you.”

Mary Frances turned to the man behind her. “Bruno, would you watch the door for me?”

“Yeah, I’m happy to do it.” With that he crossed his arms and filled the doorway with his considerable bulk. He was built like a professional linebacker, and he scowled at her.

Lois refused to be cowed. She lifted her head and gave him her best “Don’t mess with me” stare. They glared at each other in silence.

A few minutes later, Mary Frances returned. She spoke with authority. “Clark is here, and he’ll see you. He’s busy though, and you’ll need to wait until he’s available to speak to him. You can have a seat while you wait.”

Lois nodded and followed Mary Frances into the main room. There she saw tables of people. She assumed they were homeless or close to it. Each had a tray with a meal on it. Most wore clothes that had seen better days. Some looked scruffy, yet more of them than she expected wore clean clothes. She scanned the crowd but didn’t see Clark.

She found a table in the corner where she could see the entire room. More carefully, she looked at the crowd. After a more thorough search, she confirmed Clark wasn’t among them. Then, she heard his voice.

“Henry! It’s great to see you!”

Clark was talking to an elderly man who had multiple pairs of glasses around his neck. His clothes were torn and dirty, but he carried himself with confidence. Clark was behind the counter, serving food.

Serving food? Lois wondered if Clark was having trouble making ends meet, and this was a part-time job. *Surely not!* If so, she’d need to talk to Perry about giving him a raise, or having Clark talk with someone about budgeting and his finances.

The man called Henry moved on, and Lois watched in fascination as Clark greeted each patron as a long-lost friend.

Just who was Clark Kent? That thought kept running through her mind over and over. He had more friends at the *Planet* in the few months he’d been there than she’d made over several years. And he was branching out, making new friends, at of all places, a mission on the edge of Suicide Slum? She shook her head to clear it. Yes, she was right when she first met him. Clark Kent was a strange one.

Her thoughts were interrupted when Sister Mary Frances stood by her table. She had a cup of tea in one hand and a cream soda in the other.

“Clark said you might like a soda.”

“Thanks.” After accepting the drink, Lois realized the sister was still waiting. Sheepishly she asked, “Would you care to sit down?”

Mary Frances beamed, sat down and then continued. “I’d be delighted. So, you found Clark?”

“Yes, I see he’s serving food. Actually I had no idea he worked here.”

“What do you mean?”

“He’s working isn’t he? I assume this is a part-time job.”

Mary Frances nearly choked on her tea. “No, Lois. May I call you Lois?” When Lois nodded, she continued. “Clark is one of our volunteers. All the people in the serving line and the others you see, like Bruno at the door, are volunteers. Well, I mean they’re not paid. A few are doing community service instead of jail time. And before you ask, I won’t tell you which ones they are.”

“Actually, I wasn’t going to ask. I might if I were writing a story, but as I said I was following Clark.”

“Why?”

“I told you—”

“Lois, before you say anything more, I should give you full disclosure. I’m a nun who has taught fifth graders for years. I can spot a lie and a half-truth across the room. I nearly refused you entrance because I saw through that story. The only reason I contacted Clark was because I knew you worked together. And

with your reputation, I thought you might try to get in through another entrance. I'd rather have you where I can see you. Now, tell me the real reason you're here."

Lois stared at the tabletop and gathered her thoughts. She looked at Mary Frances's face and realized she was caught without an option except the truth. "Okay. The truth is... I've been following Clark for about a week." Mary Frances's eyebrows rose but she remained silent. "I, um, he told me last week that he has a secret. And it's been bugging me. I'm trying to find out what it is."

When Lois remained silent, Mary Frances gently asked, "Why?"

"Well, I've been telling myself that it's because he's from Kansas and not used to the city. That if he won't tell me his secret, it may place him in danger. But the truth is, I just don't like to have secrets kept from me."

"I see. And have you told Clark everything about you?"

"No! Of course not!"

"Then why do you think he would tell you everything about himself?"

"He's from Kansas."

"That's it? Is this a rule that people from outside Metropolis aren't allowed to have secrets?"

"No, when you say it like that, it sounds kind of silly."

"Maybe because it is? I've only known Clark a short time, but he seems honest and trustworthy."

"Oh, he is!"

"And if—and that's a BIG IF—he does have a secret, doesn't he also have the right to privacy? To decide who if anyone learns his secret and when?"

Lois felt as if she were standing as a child in front of Sister Mary Frances. Chagrined, she acknowledged grudgingly, "When you put it that way, yeah, I guess he does."

Mary Frances nodded thoughtfully. "You know Lois, as a nun, I've had to keep my share of secrets. And I've found out a couple of things about them. The best way to learn big ones is to be trustworthy and keep the small ones. And going behind his back to investigate your friend or your work partner is not a very good way to earn his trust."

"Why do I suddenly feel like a child?"

"Maybe because you've been acting like one?"

Lois looked at Mary Frances and saw her eyes twinkling with humor. Lois tentatively smiled, and together they laughed.

"I have a question, and it's okay not to answer. I don't want you to break any secrets."

"Okay. What's your question?"

"How did you meet Clark?"

"Ah, we met during Nightfall. Henry O, that's him sitting at that far table, found Clark."

"The man with all the glasses around his neck?"

"Yes. He brought him here, I think after giving Clark some clothes. Clark didn't remember what had happened, and Henry said he'd been mugged. He was initially terrified, but relaxed after he had something to eat and saw we only wanted to help him. And I recognized him."

"You did? How?"

Mary Frances told Lois how she'd learned who Clark was when Lois had called his name in front of the Daily Planet building. And she continued to tell Lois about seeing Clark in the mission and getting him to Inspector Henderson. After she finished, Mary Frances wanted to know how Lois met Clark, and how they became partners. They continued to talk for another forty-five minutes until Clark took a break.

He approached their table. "Lois."

"Clark."

Mary Frances stood and excused herself. Clark sat in her seat and asked, "What are you doing here?" Then he waited patiently for Lois's answer.

In a small voice, she began. "I followed you."

"You followed me. Why?"

"I, um, wanted to find out your secret."

He leaned back and studied her face. "I see. And did you find it?"

"I don't know. I did get a big helping of humble pie, courtesy of Sister Mary Frances."

"What happened?"

"Well, basically she showed me how immature I was being and that everyone is entitled to privacy. Just because I'm curious doesn't give me the right to investigate my partner and friend."

"You were investigating me?"

"Just following you to discover your secret."

"And now, are you going to continue to investigate me?"

"No! I realize I was, I was wro-wrong."

"I see."

"Clark, I should have trusted you instead of following you."

"Well, that would have been nice. Why did you feel it necessary to follow me?"

"I guess it seems stupid now. Clark, I've told you my deepest secrets, and I guess I just felt like you owed me."

"Lois, you know more about me than I've ever shared with anyone except my parents. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have teased you last week."

"Is that what it was?"

"Well, I was tired of you putting down my concerns about my parents getting a divorce. Lois, it might not be a big deal to you, but my parents have been happily married for over thirty years. When Dad told me his fears, I thought my world was shattering. This is a big deal to me, and it was to my dad. He thought my mom was having an affair."

"Martha?"

"She wasn't. She was just doing some things without him. And he felt abandoned, I guess. Or maybe lonely is more accurate, with me here while she was spending time with her art teacher. He also was somewhat jealous. Not only of her art teacher, but that Mom was out meeting new people without him. They worked it out."

"I'm glad, Clark. They make such a great couple."

"Yeah, I think so, too."

"Are you done here?"

"For this month, yes."

"Come on, I'll give you a lift home. And next time, I promise to ask instead of sneaking around behind you."

"Lois, don't make promises you can't keep."

With that, Lois glared at him, and saw the gleam in his eyes. She began to laugh, and he joined her. She took his arm as they walked out of the mission together.

After dropping Clark off at his apartment, Lois realized that he never answered her question about what he meant last week. Did that mean he did have a secret? And was he better at misdirection and changing the subject than she'd ever realized? Maybe there was more to Clark than she thought.

Lois considered what Mary Frances had told her. Well, both following him and asking Clark directly didn't get him to reveal his secret, if he really had one. And she did want to keep him as a friend and work partner. Her secret mission could be becoming his friend. And maybe she'd learn some just by being close to him, or maybe he'd eventually trust her enough to share them. It would take patience. That was something Lois knew wasn't her strength.

But, she was Lois Lane! A little thing like patience wouldn't stop her! This was something she could do. Just a few weeks ago she'd told Henderson she could do patience when Clark lost his memory.

She could do patience again, this time to keep Clark's friendship.

THE END