

Remembering to Fly

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Summary: An amnesiac Clark Kent is found by Lois Lane during Nightfall. With the Kents unable to make it to Metropolis, it's up to Lois Lane to help him remember who he is. (Set during Season 1)

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Smothering a yawn, Lois rotated her shoulders to get some of the kinks out as she boarded the elevator. It had been a very long and strange day, but she didn't have time to stop now. A jolt of the newsroom's thick and bitter coffee would help keep her awake.

Exiting the elevator, she made a beeline for the coffee machine, adding real sugar instead of her usual sweetener, reasoning that it, along with the caffeine, might provide the energy she needed. Coffee made, she wandered over to where Perry White leant against the edge of Jimmy's desk. Jimmy was talking rapidly, obviously trying to convince the Chief about something, but a splash of bright primary colours distracted Lois from their conversation.

Snatching up the scrap of what had obviously once been part of Superman's Suit, Lois broke into their discussion.

"Where did you get this?"

"Suicide Slum," Jimmy answered nonchalantly.

"He made it back?"

Perry nodded.

"Alive?" She steeled herself for the answer.

Jimmy shrugged. "No sign of a body."

They turned their attention back to the conversation she'd interrupted. Lois ignored them.

Superman had made it back. So why hadn't he made contact with someone? With so much riding on his expedition to destroy the Nightfall asteroid, it seemed impossible that he'd remain silent.

What if he'd contacted Clark? As much as she hated to admit it, Clark was closer to the superhero than anyone else on the planet, including her. It would make sense, she decided. If he'd made it back — if he was hurt, or unable to contact anyone else — he would reach out to Clark first. The only problem was, if it happened before Clark's attack of amnesia, he wouldn't remember it!

What if he was out there in Suicide Slum, needing help? What if he was expecting Clark to come and find him, only Clark couldn't remember what he had to do?

She turned to Jimmy. "Where exactly in Suicide Slum?"

This area of Suicide Slum was like a rabbit warren. The narrow streets twisted and turned with seemingly no pattern, and the few street signs that remained were more often than not obscured with graffiti. Lois slowed the *Planet's* battered old clunker to a crawl, watching for the landmarks Jimmy had described.

She pulled the car up with a jerk when she saw the damaged Metroliner billboard and the hole behind it, restraining the urge to

rush to the edge of the pit. Instead, she took a moment to make sure no one else was moving around the area; this was possibly the single roughest part of Metropolis, and the last thing she wanted was to be mugged — or worse. Cautiously, she got out of the car and walked towards the hole Jimmy had described.

In the dim light, it was practically impossible to see into the gaping pit in front of her. She rummaged through her bag and found her flashlight; turning it on, she could see a place where she could make her way down.

Lois climbed down into the crater and looked around. As Perry and Jimmy had said, there was no sign of a body. There wasn't much to be seen at all, as a matter of fact; just the odd sliver of red or blue cloth amongst the rubble. She scabbled her way back up the slope and stood on the edge of the crater, brushing the dust off her hands and skirt. A bright patch of light, unusual in this part of the city, caught her eye and she paused. What building in Suicide Slum would be brightly lit?

Mindful that this was a dangerous area, she slid back into the driver's seat of the *Planet's* old runabout rather than walking the few hundred feet to the lit area. Pulling the car over to the kerb, she looked up at the sign on the front of the building.

"Fifth Street Mission."

She sat back in her seat in surprise. This was where the police had found Clark! Was it possible that Clark had been on his way to rescue Superman? Had he been going for help when he became confused?

But...

The police psychiatrist had put Clark's amnesia down to the accident in the street three days ago. But as Lois recalled it, Clark hadn't hurt himself — not badly, anyway. She was no doctor, but she well remembered the concussion she'd received in a taekwondo tournament a couple of years ago. She'd had a huge lump where her opponent's foot had made contact, followed by a nauseating headache, ringing in her ears, dizziness... Clark had complained of none of those. Was it possible that his amnesia had been triggered by something else entirely?

Killing the engine, she got out of the car and headed into the mission. Maybe she'd be able to find someone that had seen Clark there.

The mission proved to be one huge hall with long trestle tables set up down one side. It was crowded with people, most of them still asleep on the table-less side of the room. Here and there, a few people were eating something that looked like oatmeal.

Lois stopped at the front of the hall where a young man stood behind a makeshift bench, tending a giant coffee urn.

"Can I help you, miss?"

"A friend of mine was picked up by the police here yesterday. Tall, dark hair, glasses? He was pretty confused when he came in. I was hoping someone might have seen him?"

A look of recognition crossed the man's face. "Oh yeah, I seen him. Henry!" He called back over his shoulder into the crowded hall. Getting no response, he shook his head. "He came in with Henry. I'll take you to him."

Henry proved to be a middle-aged man with a multitude of glasses and sunglasses slung around his neck. He had his head bowed, his hands wrapped around a steaming mug.

"Henry?"

"Mornin', Sam," Henry responded in an unexpectedly gravelly voice without turning his head.

"This lady— what did you say your name was?"

"Lois," she supplied.

"Right, Lois here was looking for that guy you brought in yesterday."

Henry turned and looked up at her.

"You a friend of his, miss?"

Lois nodded. "His name is Clark. He works at the *Daily*

Planet.”

“Thought he wasn’t right in the head. Didn’t know his own name or nothin’.”

“Where did you find him?” Lois asked.

“He was sleepin’ in a hole in the ground, down that way.” He gestured in the general direction of the crater. “There was this big bang, and then there he was, in the bottom of a hole. No clothes on or nothin’. Had to be freezin’. Shelter was the best place for him.” He nodded once as if that settled the matter, and went back to his coffee.

Lois thanked him and made her way out of the mission, deep in thought.

Henry had found Clark in the same hole where scraps of Superman’s Suit had been found. Was the big bang that Henry had described the impact that had formed the crater? If it was, there was only one explanation for how Clark had gotten there.

Clark was Superman.

A shaft of exultation shot through her. He had made it back alive!

It faded quickly. Yes, he’d made it back alive — but not unhurt. Clark was Superman, she was convinced of that, but he didn’t remember that he was Superman. The amnesia was no act, she knew that for sure. She’d seen the look of confusion and helplessness in his eyes, it was one of the reasons she’d been so patient with him. Doctor McCorkle had told her it would take time — time that Lois wasn’t sure they had.

How did you help an amnesiac superhero remember how to fly?

The streets of Metropolis were an absolute nightmare. Every major intersection Lois approached appeared gridlocked, forcing her to find alternate routes time and time again. Everywhere she looked, the streets were littered with people holding placards announcing the end of the world.

She checked the time and grimaced. She’d gone home to shower and change and had wound up falling asleep. Now she’d lost six valuable hours, hours she might need to get Clark into the sky.

Finally, she gave up trying to get through the overcrowded streets, pulling the car into a barely-legal space a mile away from Clark’s apartment building. She walked the rest of the way, mentally rehearsing ways to try and convince Clark of the truth.

Clark answered the door at her knock. Lois blinked as she took in his lack of glasses, realising that in all the time she’d known him, she’d never seen him without them. Even in casual clothes with his hair brushed forward, the resemblance to Superman was startling.

“Lois? What is it?”

“Can I come in?”

He stood aside and gestured her into the apartment, closing the door behind her and following her down the few steps into his living room.

“What’s going on?” His expression sharpened with interest. “Did you find Superman?”

She nodded slowly. “Yes,” she replied, knowing that her voice sounded odd. “I found him.”

He heaved a sigh of relief. “Good. To tell you the truth, I wasn’t too keen on relying on this rocket they keep talking about.” He dropped onto the couch and put his bare feet up on the coffee table. “So where is he?”

Lois sank down onto the couch next to him. “Right here. Clark, you are Superman.”

Clark gave her a disbelieving look, then broke into laughter.

“Lois, I am not Superman.”

His laughter faded as he gradually realised she wasn’t joking. “You’re crazy.” He stood up abruptly. “There’s no way I could be Superman. I can’t fly, or-or burn things by looking at them. I

know I can’t remember much, but I’d remember that!”

“Not necessarily,” Lois responded calmly. “The police psychiatrist said your amnesia could be caused by some kind of physical trauma.” She stood up. “You flew into space and collided with a giant asteroid, Clark. It’s my guess that you pushed your powers to the limit to do so, and then it still wasn’t enough. It makes sense that you’d want to subconsciously blank that out.” She could see from his face that he still didn’t believe her. He needed a demonstration.

Thinking rapidly, she went into the kitchen, Clark following behind, and grabbed the largest knife from the block on the counter.

“Lois? What are you doing?”

She spun towards him. At the last second, she turned the knife aside and aimed for his hand instead of his chest.

“Lois!”

The knife made impact and bounced out of her hand, skidding away to land on the floor. She bent and picked it up; the blade had snapped off at the handle. Clark looked at his hand in surprise, turning it over to check for blood.

“Believe me now?”

They started small, Lois reasoning that attempting to use things like heat vision could be done out of the public eye. She raided Clark’s stack of recyclables for newspapers to practise on, making sure to keep a bowl of water handy.

“I still have no idea how to do this,” Clark warned as they screwed up balls of newsprint.

“I know. There.” She stood up and moved out of the way. “Maybe if you just try concentrating on it and willing it to catch fire?”

He raised an eyebrow.

“Okay, so I don’t know how you do this. Give it a try.”

“That makes two of us,” he muttered just loud enough for her to hear before he turned his attention to the little pile of screwed up paper.

Hours passed.

The pile of newspaper balls remained intact. So did the cup full of water he’d tried to turn to ice, and the cast iron saucepan he’d tried to bend.

“So. We’ve tried heat vision, freezing things, super speed, super strength, the visual thing and flying. That’s everything that we can test for.”

“And none of them work,” Clark observed. He sighed. “Maybe we can try something else.”

“Like what?”

“Maybe if I knew a bit more about them. One of the articles I read said they developed over time.” He gestured to the stack of newspapers they’d been using for fuel. “What power did I get first?”

“I don’t know.”

“Okay. Then... when did I start getting my powers?”

“I don’t know.”

He let out an exasperated sound. “So let me get this straight. You know I’m Superman, and you know my powers developed over time... but you don’t know any more than that? Didn’t I tell you any of this stuff?”

“No. Look, Clark, I’ve known about this for about...”—she checked her watch—“twelve hours now, so forgive me if I don’t have all the answers!”

His shoulders sagged. “I’m sorry, Lois. It’s just... frustrating, you know.”

“I’m sorry too, Clark. I wish I knew how to help you more.”

She took a deep breath, willing herself to calm down. Getting angry and impatient with him wasn’t going to help the situation. “Look, the Asgard rocket is supposed to make impact in a few

minutes. Why don't we turn on the TV and see if it hits anything?" She gave him a thin smile. "You never know, you might be off the hook."

They both watched in silence as the rocket and its payload flew straight past the asteroid.

Clark took a deep breath and looked over at Lois, strain written all over his face even as he tried to smile.

"Well. Ready to make another attempt?"

They redoubled their efforts, each uneasily aware that they were running out of time. As each endeavour failed, Lois could see the little furrow of Clark's brow getting deeper.

Finally, she called a halt.

"It's frustrating you, isn't it?" she asked quietly.

"Yes." He sighed. "I just wish I could remember something — anything — about Superman. Everything I've read... it feels like it was someone else doing those things. Not me."

"Well, why don't I describe some of the things you've done? I mean, I've been there for a lot of them." Catching his odd look, she explained. "I have a knack for getting into trouble."

"Like what?"

"Well, there was the time that Trask threw me out of an aeroplane... he was trying to get Superman's attention. I'll admit it worked. Though when I think about it... you must have jumped out of the plane after me. Then there was the bomb on the colonist's transport. I tried ripping out some cables to get someone's attention, and you came out of nowhere and *ate* it. That was the first time I ever saw Superman..."

She saw his expression change.

"And I burped... you asked me what I was..." he said slowly. "And a little girl in a wheelchair told me she liked my costume..."

"And you told her your mother made it! Yes!"

"I remembered!" He let out a whoop, grabbing Lois and spinning her around. "I remembered." He hugged her tightly before setting her on her feet. "There's something I've gotta do."

She followed him into his bedroom at a jog, pausing in the entrance to the balcony as he strode to the edge, purpose and determination in his bearing. He stepped up onto the ledge, stripping his glasses off before ripping his shirt open to expose the bright uniform underneath. Then in the blink of an eye he was gone.

The scene in the streets of Metropolis a short time later reminded Lois of the footage she'd seen of VE Day celebrations. Tickertape was raining down, people were dancing and openly weeping; in the newsroom, Perry had organised cases of champagne. She'd accepted a glass so as not to stand out, but she was worried. While the Nightfall asteroid had changed course, there was still no sign of Clark. Lois was forcing herself to try to believe he was debriefing at EPRAD, but she couldn't help dreading the worst.

Only when he walked into Perry's office, champagne glass in his hand, did she breathe easier.

"Did I miss something?"

"Only Superman saving the world," she told him wryly.

"A real day to remember — if you'll pardon the expression," Perry put in.

Clark waited until Perry and Jimmy had moved away before he turned to Lois.

"I just wanted to say... thank you. If it hadn't been for you, I don't know that I would've remembered in time."

"I do." She laid one hand on his arm. "That's just the kind of person you are, Clark. You wanted to help; you would've found a way." She smiled at him, moving away to put down her now-empty glass. Once the euphoria of literally saving the world wore off, he had a lot of explaining to do. She had a lot to deal with too, trying come to grips with the fact that the man she'd disdained,

ignored and on occasion, bullied, was the same man she'd drooled over. And along the way, they would have to figure out what this would do to their relationship, both personally and professionally.

But all that could wait for another day.

THE END