

Summer

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Rated: G

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Summary: This is set during the first season six months after Clark arrived in Metropolis, which considering the clothes Clark wore might have been late winter or early spring. Now it is summer, during a quiet evening spent with Martha and Jonathan on the farm; no villains, deadlines or sadly Lois. Clark wants to have a serious conversation with his parents. He has an important decision to make.

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Legal Disclaimer: Not mine!

It was a warm summer Kansas evening on the farm of Jonathan and Martha Kent. After a long exhausting day of working in the wheat and corn fields, the couple was relaxing on the lighted porch. This was their favorite time of day, watching the fading lights of dusk as gentle fireflies were lazily moving to and fro over the lovingly cared for blue violets and lavender on the front lawn. Off in the distances, frogs and crickets could be heard making their evening song at the creek. On opposite ends of the porch, citronella candles burned, warding off the pesky mosquitoes with their unique smell. The faintest hint of a breeze tousled the uppermost leaves of a majestic oak tree. On the east side of the old farmhouse, the slightly cooler air felt delicious against the Kents' skin.

Martha, looked up from knitting a peach-colored, lacy, shawl, and said, "That juicy watermelon Maisie gave us yesterday ought to be good and cool by now."

Her husband's mouth began to water at the thought and he replied, "You might be right. A piece of watermelon should be real tasty with a tall glass of lemon iced tea with a sprig or two of fresh mint."

"It'll only take me a minute to cut a few slices and pour a couple of glasses." Carefully, she put the needles and delicate yarn into a tightly woven square lidded basket decorated with splashes of red and brown that Clark had brought her from Peru. She stood up from the rocker and went into the house. The old, wooden, screen door closed with its usual resonating bang behind her.

Jonathan leaned back and looked up into the mélange of serene purples and blues of the darkening sky as vivid pinpoints of stars began peeking out of hiding one by one. He noted a shooting star make its way across the horizon. He remembered similar nights as a boy spent on this same porch looking at the stars with his father. He could still hear Edwin Kent's calm voice telling him about the positions of Jupiter, Mars and Saturn at different times of the year. The vivid show of planets he and Martha had been enjoying over the past few months were a fine sight on these warm July evenings. One hour after sunset, all three planets would reach their peak performance in the sky and start to set. Fortunately for them the lengthening nights helped slow their departure.

He looked over the porch and thought about the many important decisions and conversations which had taken place here. On such an evening as this he had excitedly told his parents of meeting a pretty, outgoing blonde with sparkling, blue eyes, named Martha Clark at an ice cream social. She was from Kansas

City visiting her family for a few weeks and had taken a liking to the shy farmer. Over the summer they had spent a great deal of time together. By the time September rolled around he spoke with his parents about Martha and his desire to marry her someday.

Sadly there was strong opposition from her mother. Lavinia Clark, of the Kansas City Clarks, had spent time and money educating and grooming Martha so that she would marry a man of wealth and position. After all her years of hard work, it was inconceivable that her daughter would waste herself on a mere small time farmer grubbing in the dirt. Mrs. Clark had very plainly expressed her feelings on the matter to Jonathan. The ugly words had stung his pride and so he reacted in an uncharacteristic manner; he told the inflexible woman to stuff it.

It might not have been the proper way to address his future mother-in-law, but Lavinia treated Jonathan and the rest of his family with a grudging respect after that day.

Suddenly, his thoughts were interrupted when an all too familiar figure; moving against those twinkling stars and planets caught his eye. A deep chuckle rumbled in his chest.

"Martha! Set out another plate! Company's coming."

A merry laugh echoed out of the kitchen. "He's right on time."

He called back, "You knew he would be here tonight?"

Over the clatter of plates and glasses, she answered. "Of course not, Jonathan, but according to the national news, a heat wave was making evenings in Metropolis simply miserable. Wouldn't it make sense that our boy comes here rather than the Antarctic to escape all that oppressive city heat and humidity?"

As Martha's quick and energetic steps came towards the porch, Jonathan got up and opened the screen door. She was carrying a large tray laden with three plates. On top of each plate was a generous slice of watermelon. Also on the tray were three tall glasses of lemon iced tea, topped with a jaunty, bright green sprig of mint, plucked fresh from the garden.

Jonathan chuckled, "Our boy may not feel heat and cold the way we do, but he never could resist spending time on the porch with us on nights like this."

"Especially when there's a light, refreshing dessert like this just waiting to be eaten! Look, that's him landing now." Martha said this as she placed the tray on a sturdy, wooden coffee table Jonathan had built right after she had finally accepted his third proposal of marriage.

In the gathering darkness, they could barely make out that Clark had touched down at the far end of the dry, gravelly road near a patch of stiffly erect, plains muhly grass. Wearing blue jeans and a white t-shirt, he walked up the long driveway to the house with a carelessly easy stride, exactly as he had done as a boy after playing softball with his friends.

"Hi, Mom! Dad!" He called out waving his arm in greeting.

"Come for a little dessert son? Your mother just brought some cold watermelon out." Jonathan responded.

Clark took the wooden steps two at a time and set foot on the porch with his parents. He hugged his mother and father. "Dad, nothing beats a chunk of sweet watermelon on a summer's evening, especially after a game of basketball with Pete and the guys. Normally I don't sweat but with this recent heat ... that long, cold shower felt great when I got home."

"Yeah, but does your apartment get decent air-conditioning? That landlord was more interested in making a fast buck than seeing to your comfort. How you and Pete live in the big city is beyond me." Jonathan shook his head in bewilderment.

Deciding to set his father's mind at rest, Clark sat down and said, "My place is fine. The A/C works great and don't forget I have a balcony which gets a pretty decent breeze at night. Pete's place is better situated than my own. He lives on the fifth floor and has large windows on either side so the cross breeze keeps that apartment comfortable. Please Dad, don't worry about us. Pete's lived in Metropolis longer than me; he knows how things work

there.”

Martha handed him his plate and said, “Speaking of work, did you know Phil Irig landed a job with EPRAD?”

“No kidding? When did that happen?” Clark asked.

“Oh, Wayne told us this about a week ago. Phil might be contacting you and Pete very soon to ask advice about where to live.”

Jonathan shook his head, “Martha, remember that Memorial Day when he left his science experiment unattended in the back shed and it blew up? Wayne wasn’t too happy with the boy.”

“Yeah, it took the better part of a day to help them clean up the mess — and the smell!” Clark shuddered from the memory. His powers had just begun to really strengthen and for some reason his sense of smell had been quite — sensitive. To this day, the odor of swamp grass, no matter how light, made him queasy.

Martha sat back in her rocker, took a quick sip of iced tea and asked, “So, you’ve been living in Metropolis nearly six months, are you planning on staying?”

A thoughtful expression crossed Clark’s face as he considered her words. “I’ve lived in so many cities; London, Sydney and Paris just to name a few. But Metropolis is like no place else. The rhythm of the city’s streets just hum with life and the energetic pace suits me. I can see myself living there for quite awhile. It is home.”

An impish grin tugged at his mother’s lips when she asked, “How is Lois?”

Without hesitation he said with a lopsided grin, “Frustrating. Difficult. Demanding. Brilliant. Beautiful, and the most talented reporter I have ever had the privilege to work with.”

“Careful, Clark, the lady sounds like someone I know,”

Jonathan quipped as he looked at his wife fondly.

“Honey ... what does she think of you?” Martha asked gently.

Now their son was silent he picked up the glass of ice tea, took a long swallow before saying, “Mom, I think ... or at least I hope Lois likes me a little more than she’s willing to let on. We are more than friendly co-workers. She’s my closest friend and I’ve fallen in love with her. Not now, but soon I want to tell her I’m Superman. She deserves to know the truth.”

The elder Kents were silent for a heartbeat, than looked intently at each other. They had always known Clark might find someone he would wish to spend the rest of his life with. From the first time Lois Lane’s name was mentioned they had known she was someone special.

“Son, this is a life altering decision. Are you certain Lois can be trusted?”

Clark rubbed the back of his neck and said, “Dad I trust her with my life. We have shared some pretty hair-raising adventures in pursuit of a story.”

A small amount of worry colored the words Martha spoke. “Honey, what your father is getting at is ... Lois is ambitious. She has netted just about all the prestigious awards for journalism except the Pulitzer. This time you wouldn’t be her partner helping to uncover the story. You would be the story. Revealing Superman’s secret identity would make her a shoo-in to win.”

Shaking his head as if to push such an ugly thought away he responded crisply. “No, Lois is not about destroying me or us as a family. I know in my heart that keeping this secret from her is wrong. Superman has been around for five months. The longer I wait to tell her, the madder she’ll be when I do.”

For a long time the only sounds heard were the happy cacophony of crickets and the occasional tinkle of ice cubes as they rapidly melted in the tall glasses. All three Kents were seriously considering the effects Clark’s decision would have their family.

Jonathan was the first one to speak. “All right, son, you’ve obviously given this matter a great deal of thought. I won’t offer any objections.” He turned and gazed lovingly at Martha.

“Remember how your mother reacted when I told her my feelings for you?”

Clark watched in admiration and joy as his parents clasped hands and looked at each other with the kind of emotion and respect only many years of being a strong married couple produces. The candle-light had softened their features in such a way that he could almost see them as they once were; a young couple determined to wed regardless of all the barriers his grandmother had erected.

Martha turned to him and said, “Your father was a tower of strength. Oh, I had my misgivings and the poor man proposed more than once, but eventually we did get married and here we are.”

“Marriage? Mom, it’s a little early for that, don’t you think?”

She gave her husband a sly wink and said, “Of course, dear.”

“Now, Clark, I don’t want to be a nosy parker, but may I make a suggestion ... or two?”

The young man shrugged his shoulders and said, “Sure, Dad.”

Jonathan was silent for a moment and spoke carefully. “After a difficult rescue, like that earthquake in Japan, it’s natural to want to talk about it with someone. Your mother and I are always here to listen.”

His son swallowed a bite of watermelon and said softly, “I know that, Dad.”

“I say that because there have been times when you, as Superman, talk about such rescues with Lois outside of the *Daily Planet*. This may be easier said than done, but visits to her apartment as Superman should end. By visiting in her home the setting is more — personal. The poor woman is getting emotionally confused, attaching herself to the superhero and not the man beneath the uniform. Maybe distance your relationship with her as the “Superman” reporter. How about granting in-depth interviews to other newspapers such as the *Washington Post* or *New York Times* or our own *Kansas City Star*? She, and by extension the *Daily Planet*, will be less of a target for crooks.”

Having finished her dessert, Martha turned on the lamp next to her and began working on the diaphanous lace shawl from the knitting basket again. Her nimble fingers moving swiftly as she spoke. “I often hear young women complain that men don’t spoil them on dates, but treat them like one-of-the-guys. Take her out to dinner at a fancy restaurant with candles and linen napkins. Show her a good time by doing something else other than eating cold pizza and flat cream soda on a stakeout.”

The young man before them sat motionless as he contemplated their words. “It means a lot to me that you guys support this decision. The secret of who I am can sometimes be a tremendous burden. When I do talk with Lois about some of the things I experience during a rescue, her words have given me a great deal of comfort. It will be tough to give that up.”

Patting her son’s hand, Martha responded, “All the more reason to take her someplace nice.”

“Hmm, dinner at a fancy restaurant will have to wait. Lois is, after all, my work partner. Encouraging her to move forward with our relationship is going to take a little time. I need to start with something simple, yet fun.”

“I know! What about a trip to the beach?” Martha asked.

“Nope, too crowded.”

“The Metropolis Zoo?” Jonathan suggested

“Too hot.”

Martha grumbled, “Clark, you’re not helping.”

Suddenly, a smile lit up Jonathan’s face and his blue eyes twinkled happily. “Hmm, I might have the perfect solution. Before air conditioning, folks did other things to keep cool. We used to get together for Ice Cream Socials ... it’s where I met your mother. As you pointed out, Metropolis can be uncomfortable in the heat. Why not invite your friends over for ice cream and play board games?”

Martha chimed in, “That’s a wonderful idea Jonathan! All you need is: an ice cream scoop, delicate glasses filled with toppings, waffle cones, and a great sense of humor!”

Clark face brightened. “This is a really good idea. I can invite Jimmy and some of the guys at work ...”

“No. No one from the *Daily Planet* should be there. That will only put Lois on her guard. Ask Pete Ross and your other basketball buddies to come over. They are doctors and could use a little relaxation. The last time we were there you introduced us that couple who just moved to Metropolis from North Dakota, Victor and Alma Sandusky. Why not include them? They are a nice young couple who might enjoy being invited up for an informal party.” Jonathan said.

Martha, who was now getting into the spirit of things added, “Ask Lois if her friends, Molly Flynn and Detective Reed might want to come. Didn’t you mention the balcony gets a nice breeze? It’s summertime Clark, the perfect time to get to know people and make friends — even if it is in the big city.”

“I’m so glad I came to talk with you guys. By distancing Lois from Superman she can see Clark clearly, so when I do tell her the truth it won’t be so painful.”

“Clark Jerome Kent, stop talking about yourself in the third person!” Martha said in a gentle reproving tone.

“Yes, Ma’am!”

Jonathan chuckled. His son was growing into a man that his father would have loved to have known. He was grateful that his memories of years past spent on this porch were helping Clark to build his future. Perhaps that future would be with a certain fiery brunette? Maybe in the future, he could sit and talk with his grandchildren and share much of the wisdom his father had imparted to him. Content to wait and see, Jonathan watched his son excitedly discuss his latest investigative adventure with Lois. Time went by as they sat in the soft coolness of the Kansas evening, each taking a turn talking about the events of the day.

The moon hung like a large silvery disc when Clark stood and prepared to leave. “Dad, thanks again for suggesting these ideas.”

Dismissing it, Jonathan said, “It’s just an old-fashioned pastime. Your mother and I used to enjoy doing it. I just thought that something like that would never go out of style.”

“I think you’re right. Something like that would be just the thing. It has just the right mix of informal and fun. I think I’ll make it a little more ‘formal’ by handing out invitations to an Ice Cream Social. It might perk up interest.”

Martha nodded, “That sounds like a good idea, honey. That puts a city twist on an old country pastime.”

Clark stood up and gave both parents a generous hug. Then he walked down the lane, spun into the suit and lifted off into the night sky.

“Martha, didn’t you mention something about knitting a new blanket for Clark’s bed?”

“Yes, the last one I made when he was in college. He took it with him to Metropolis; but honestly it is time for a new one. Why?”

“With the way our boy is talking make sure it’s a King size, not a Queen.”

Even in the glow of candlelight, Jonathan could sense his wife’s blue eyes sparkling with merriment.

Later that evening the phone ring as Martha and Jonathan were climbing the stairs to go to bed.

“Who could it be at this hour?” Jonathan asked gruffly.

Martha went downstairs to pick up the phone. “Hello?”

On the other end is Clark, she can hear the huge grin in his voice as he announced, “I asked Lois to come to the ice-cream social! I’ve already arranged it for next Saturday. She said yes.”

“Goodness Clark, taking the time difference into consideration it must have been very late when you called her.”

“Oh I didn’t! As soon as I got home, Lois called and asked me to come with her while she met with a source; No-Knees Nolan, about an investigation we’ve been working on. It was in a really seedy part of town and she didn’t want to go alone. So we talked about lots of things while we waited for Nolan and it led to an informal invitation to the ‘First Annual Kent Ice Cream Social’ to be held next Saturday.”

“That’s wonderful, Honey!”

“Yeah, I still plan on giving everybody else invitations. But I couldn’t help asking her on the spur of the moment.” The happiness in his voice was bubbling over and spilling into his mother’s heart. They chatted a little longer and then said their good-nights.

Upstairs while getting ready for bed, Martha and Jonathan enthusiastically talked about this latest joyful turn in their son’s life.

“Jonathan, isn’t this exciting? I can hardly wait to hear about what happens! This little gathering could be the start of something special. Lois is a nice young woman; she’s good for Clark.” said Martha as she turned out the lights and slipped under the bedcovers. She lay there for a moment and then started to giggle.

“Martha,” Jonathan said from the depths of the covers, “What are you giggling about?”

“I wonder if he will kiss her or will they just smile at each other during the whole party?”

Once more memories from Jonathan’s past came rushing in. He drew his wife of over thirty years close to him and said. “If he is half as in love with her as he sounded this evening, it’s going to be impossible for him *not* to kiss her.

“Oh Jonathan, you are such a romantic!” Giggling once more, she kissed him.

THE END