

Any Minute

By [Mouserocks <mouserocksnerd@gmail.com>](mailto:mouserocksnerd@gmail.com)

Rated: PG

Submitted: September 2018

Summary: Time moves differently when you're waiting to meet your daughter. Clark's POV. (Dedicated to my new baby nephew, the Mouselet.)

Story Size: 2,392 words (13Kb as text)

Any minute now.

Any minute now, and she'll be here. Any minute now, and she'll be in my arms. I'm nervous, and excited, and a little bit anxious, because oh, God, it'll be any minute now, and I'm not sure. I don't know how to do this. I don't know anything about anything when it comes to her, and I just know I'll be playing catch up for the rest of my life.

There's so much at stake.

My hands are shaking, and my forehead is damp with sweat. I'm sweating! And yet, in spite of my nerves, in spite of my worst nightmares and my biggest fears, my cheeks hurt from smiling.

Because any minute now...

I turn at the scream that wrenches itself from my wife's throat, and I brush her hair back, and whisper soft nothings into her ear. She's an angel. A vision. She's the goddess of beauty and fire and life, and I send up another silent prayer at the sight of her tears and her pain. It's a marvel that anyone does this, that this process is survivable. I wince sympathetically as she digs her nails into the flesh of my arm, and yet I'm still smiling. I don't think I can stop.

A daughter.

Any minute now.

She stops pushing, collapses back against the throne of pillows we'd made for her, her dark chocolate eyes panicked and frightful. I sober a moment, suddenly aware of her swirling emotions.

"Hey," I murmur, leaning over her gently. Her eyes aren't quite seeing, just darting around the room. "Hey, look at me." I guide her chin softly so that her eyes meet mine, and purposefully slow down my breathing so that she can try to match it. "It's going to be okay. Right? You've got this. If anyone can do it, it's you."

She shakes her head frantically. "I don't think I can. I don't think I can do it."

I want to smile—I'd been wandering the same mental path—but I know she needs to hear my words. "You can do it, Lois, you can."

"What if I'm no good at this? What if... what if she hates me?"

I can't help but laugh at that and shake my head. "She's not going to hate you."

"What if she thinks I'm mean?"

"I'll be the bad cop."

She snorts. "You would not, you lying sack of—"

Another contraction cut off the insult I knew was to come, but I still only can smile. She didn't mean her words. She could say anything she wanted, and I couldn't care less. Any minute now, none of it will matter. The nurse flits around, the doctor between her legs with words of encouragement, and I glance down, hoping for a peek with no such luck. I understand Lois' reaction to the offer of a mirror—miracle or no, it's not the prettiest sight and watching yourself give birth might be breaking a fourth wall that God intended to be there. But I've birthed enough babies into this world that I am curious, not disturbed. I'm so anxious to meet her and I want to see her the first second I can.

Any minute now I will.

And she didn't want me to see her before her for whatever reason. Unfair advantage I suppose. But darn it, I want to see my girl and I want to see her now.

I'll live. I'll see her any minute now, we'll see her any minute now, and everything will be perfect.

"Okay, Lois! We're almost there! She's crowning! Let's push again. Ready?"

My shoulders tense and I feel my grin get even wider.

"Pushing time, Lois! One big push, come on! One, two—"

She clenches my arm and I can see the pressure building in every vein in her forehead. She's beautiful, and I remember that I'm supposed to be encouraging her to push, but she's just so amazing. She's tearing herself apart, literally, fighting for our little girl to come into the world. Fighting for her first breath. I don't know how she's doing it, but the love in my chest soars for her. "Come on, Lois. You can do this."

Suddenly, there's a noise I can't quite identify, and the doctor looks up with a smile. "The head is out! One more push, and you're home free."

My stomach somersaults, and any minute now has suddenly become any second now, and I'm torn between sheer happiness and abject terror. Oh God, I'm not ready. Why would I be ready? I was an only child, in a family of only children—I might be Superman, but I've never been around a lot of kids. What makes me think I'd be able to be a good father? And to a baby girl? She's not going to hate Lois, she's going to hate me. What am I supposed to do with a baby?

Lois' scream abates, her grip on my hand slackens, and a tiny little cry makes itself known in the room.

I swear my heart just stopped beating.

I stare, sitting up at full attention as the doctor grins widely. There it is again, the cry, this time longer and louder, as she stretches her lungs for the first time.

"It's a girl," Dr. Riley cooed and held her up.

A half laugh-half sob tears from my throat at the sight of her, and my heart starts beating again triple time. A girl! We have a daughter. I brush my hand over Lois' brow, glance quickly at her eyes to find her proudly smiling, gaze riveted as well.

"You want to cut the cord, Daddy?"

Daddy. I'm a father. I never thought this day would come. I nod rapidly, blinking back the tears as I extricate myself from Lois' side, and the doctor hands me a pair of odd scissors and shows me where to place the clamp. It's almost a blur, but I manage to do it successfully, and then without preamble the baby is suddenly in my arms.

All time stops, and she's so tiny. She's so tiny and beautiful and wonderful and she's just stolen my breath away. Her cry is small, smaller than I expected. I've known babies that scream and wail, and I'm sure that'll come later, but right now she's screaming with all her might and it's so... Small. How can something so precious and so important make such a noise?

I chance a look up at my wife finally, and she's looking on eagerly with love in her eyes, and I immediately take the baby to her, set the girl down on her bare chest. Her eyes are wet with unshed tears, and I smile.

"Hey, baby girl. Hey. Oh, oh you're so precious." The girl settled a little, hearing her mother's voice and feeling the vibrations against her small body. My heart thrums in my chest, and I've never felt so much instant love. Not even for Lois. This was something new, something entirely different.

"Okay, Momma, we gotta get her cleaned up, but she's just going to be right there, all right? Just gotta do some tests."

Lois looks at me pleadingly as the doctor takes the girl off her chest, and I know what she wants, even though I promised I'd be by her side throughout the entire delivery, placenta and all. I press a kiss to her forehead and stand to hover over Dr. Riley as she checks out our girl, which I'm not sure the doctor appreciates, but

I'm sure she's used to. There's that little cry again, not at all happy with being taken from her mother, and I smother a laugh as she runs through the tests, unable to contain my joy.

Six pounds, eight ounces.

Nineteen and a half inches long.

Eight-slash-nine points on the Apgar test—worry clenches my heart like a fist, but I know that's good. I'll ask for details later, but nine or even eight out of ten is still excellent.

Oh, those feet. Those little feet are the most precious thing in the world. I've never thought that a pair of feet could kill me with utter adoration, but these could do it.

And that hair! She has so much hair already, a shock of soft, dark locks rests on top of her head, matted down a little, but boy is that hair going to just make her pictures. She's going to need a baby hair stylist. She's going to be a baby model.

In a flash, she's diapered and cleaned up and back in my arms, and once again I find that time stops. She squirms and frets against me, and I instinctively start to shush her. I hold her in the crook of my elbow and bring her in close to my chest and whisper. "Hi there."

She startles at the sound of my voice, but seemingly snuggles in close against me, and my heart leaps at the realization that she recognizes my voice. I grin past the burning tears. "Hi, baby. Oh my goodness, you're so cute. You're beautiful. Yes you are. Yes you are."

She makes a soft coo, and I laugh, the rumble of the sound drawing her close again. I don't realize I'm crying until the tears start to pool in the frames of my glasses, but I don't particularly care. She's so amazing.

I suddenly remember my wife, my champion, and I quickly—and yet somehow still slower than I think I've ever moved in my life—cross to her side with the girl in my arms. My grin is aching, and I can't believe it. I can barely process thought. I pass her carefully, making sure to support her head the whole time and set her gently in Lois' arms. "Oh, thank you, Daddy. Oh, look at you. Hi, baby." She cried a little, the sound clenching my heart again, and Lois shushed her with a watery smile. "Oh my God, she's perfect. Look at those fingers! They're so tiny!"

I'm speechless. I'm breathless. I'm awestruck.

One tiny thing nags at the back of my mind.

"She's not a Lara."

Lois doesn't even look up at me, only inclines her head slightly to take a look at our baby. "Mmm. Lara? Lara?" she speaks softly, as though the girl will hear the name and respond miraculously. I suppress my grin at her methods. "Hmm. I don't think she's a Lara either."

I'm stumped. We had the name all picked out and ready to go. So determined that we told everyone our plans for the name. But she looks around, shock in her eyes, searching out our voices, and she's just... *not*.

"Okay," I stall, trying to remember any of our girl's names we'd had picked out before we'd settled on Lara. I brush a hand gently over her back, the softest touch I think I've ever given, and notice the slight tremble to my fingers. I take a deep breath and try and still my shaking limbs, but she's here and she's so fragile and I'm so happy and I can't—

"What about Martha?"

I huff a small laugh. "No. I love my mother, but she wouldn't want her saddled with that. Besides, you want her going into the twenty-first century with a name like Martha?"

A laugh twists Lois' lips, and she bites back her grin. "No, I suppose not. That means Ellen's out of the mix, too. That's another one of those names."

I weigh the option of Ellen. "It's not that bad. A little formal, but not *bad*."

"What about something completely off the wall? Like... like Xena, or Zelda, or Leia?"

"Now you're just naming pop culture princesses," I chide

teasingly, looking down on her tousled dark locks.

"Well, look at her! She is a princess!" I huff a laugh at that, and Lois drops her voice an octave. "Plus, I mean, she is technically Kryptonian royalty..." Her hand comes down to brush at a lock of her dark brown hair carefully, and a gasp flies from her mouth as her eyes shoot to mine. "Oh, her hair is so soft, Clark! It's like the softest thing in the world! Feel!"

I laugh and cry, nodding enthusiastically. "I did," I murmur softly, leaning in to kiss my wife's head. Still my hand drifts over to our daughter, to feel those smooth locks again, to touch her, just to make sure she's real.

This is all so surreal. Two years ago, we thought we'd gotten the worst news, and now? To be here, in this moment... it's like a dream come true.

A dream come true. My lips curl up, and my heart beats faster as I look on our baby girl with her name on the tip of my tongue.

"Ella."

"Hmm?"

"Like, Cinderella? She's a princess, right? Plus it's like a modernized version of your mom's name so... Ella?"

She looks back down at our little girl, so small and precious and only fussing a little, and my heart swells with love in my chest. "Ella," she tries on the name, and our baby's eyes open. My breath catches at the same moment that Lois gasps. "Ella?" she repeats, more resolved this time. The girl doesn't react anything beyond that, but I can already feel it in my bones that the first reaction was enough. I look down at Lois with a blinding grin, and she shoots me one right back. This feels right. This feels good. It's absolute perfection.

"Welcome to the world, little Ella."

I lean down and press a kiss to her head, so gentle I don't even think I've touched her. Tears well up in my eyes again, and I can't stop them this time as I look at her. My sweet little Ella.

"She's going to be one hell of a princess."

Lois' tone is reverential, peaceful, but somehow the sentence still makes me dissolve into a pile of giggles. Lois isn't long to follow. And this, I marvel, this moment right here is what I think life's all about.

THE END