

Moving the Body

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Summary: When a story falls into Lois' lap, she's powerless to resist going after it. But she may be in for more than she bargained for.

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Author's Note: This story was inspired by a challenge issued by Framework4 on the Lois and Clark FanFiction Message Boards. The idea was proposed that there is an old saying that "Friends help you move. Real friends help you move bodies." What if someone in Metropolis called Lois to help them move a body? Granted, I strayed a little bit from the main idea, but this is what my muse came back with, after running amok with the idea.

Ring!

Ring!

The phone woke Lois with a start. She glanced at the clock on her nightstand. A quarter after twelve. She yawned and considered just letting the machine pick it up. Normal, sane people did *not* call in the middle of the night. At least, not unless it was an emergency.

That thought perked her up a bit. What if something had happened? She hadn't heard from Lucy in a while. What if her little sister had gotten into trouble and needed her? Or what if their mother had slipped up after years of being sober? Or it could be their father. He was always concocting hair-brained schemes to "get rich quick," though they never worked out, and, on occasion, had landed the doctor in trouble with dangerous people. Then there was Clark, who was working the graveyard shift tonight to cover for Vince...

Ring!

"Okay, okay," she mumbled angrily at the phone. "You win. I'll pick up."

She fumbled in the dark for her bedside lamp and turned it on. The light was a harsh punishment to her sleep-fogged mind and her tired eyes. She squinted in the too-bright room and made a grab for the phone, bringing the entire red plastic headset and cradle to rest on the top of her nice warm comforter. She picked up the headset and brought it to her ear.

"Hello?" she asked, fighting off another yawn.

"Yeah, it's me."

The voice gave her pause. She didn't recognize the gravelly, tough sounding deep voice.

"The job's done," the man continued. "But there's blood everywhere."

Lois' eyes shot open and all traces of fatigue fled.

"Oh?" she squeaked. Her mind froze at what she was hearing – a possible murder confession being dropped literally into her lap.

"Yeah, it wasn't easy. Guy put up a real struggle, let me tell ya. But it's done."

"Who... ah... who is this?" Lois ventured to ask.

She could practically hear the ensuing eye-roll. "It's Loki. How many other guys you got out whacking people tonight?"

"Oh, right. Sorry," she said, her mind spinning. She needed to get more information out of the caller without looking suspicious.

"Look, I know. It's late. But I need a favor here. I did the job, but this guy weighs a ton. I can't move the body myself. I need you to send someone down here, ASAP."

"Oh, uh," Lois stammered as she grabbed for the notepad and pen she kept on the nightstand. "I'll send someone down to help. Where are you?"

"You don't know? Geez, what kind of crime lord are ya?" the man scornfully spat.

"Fine," Lois threatened. "Move the body yourself."

"Okay, okay. Sorry," the caller growled hastily, sounding distinctly *not* sorry. "I'm at the guy's apartment. 1492 East Garrison Street. Apartment 1D."

Lois scribbled down the address as fast as she could. "Sit tight. I'll send someone right over."

"Make it quick. I don't think anyone heard what's going on, but I've already been here longer than I care to be."

"Believe me, I'm not wasting any time," Lois promised.

The line went ominously dead. Lois realized for the first time that she was trembling. Her grip was so tight on the headset that she felt almost like the plastic might crack. Her palms were slick with sweat, and her heart was jack-hammering in her chest. A cold pit of dread rested and coiled in her stomach – she could taste the coppery tang of fear in her throat. Every nerve ending was abuzz with adrenaline.

She hung up the phone in a half-daze and returned it to its spot on the nightstand. Then, she flung her warm, soft blankets and sheets aside and climbed out of bed. On autopilot, she shed her pajamas and dressed in comfortable sweat clothes to ward off the chill of the early spring air. She stuffed her feet into her favorite battered old sneakers – stealth would be the name of the night's game. There was no room for professional business attire and heels. She quickly scooped her hair up into a loose ponytail and slapped on a minimal amount of makeup.

In less than ten minutes, she was ready.

The police! her mind screamed at her as she tugged her coat on and grabbed her purse.

For the first time since the phone call ended, Lois paused. She thought it over for a moment, then sighed and rolled her eyes.

"Not this time," Lois muttered to herself. "First, I'll grab the story. *Then*, I'll call the police."

Her mind made up, she grabbed her keys and left her apartment. As she flew down the stairs to the lobby, a portion of her mind nagged at her that she was once again throwing herself head-first into what could be a very dangerous situation. *You really should call the police first*, her brain told her. But her heart squelched the notion. She would be careful. She'd been in worse situations before and come out unscathed. And that was even *before* Superman had shown up and started rescuing her on a frequent basis. She was only hesitating now because she'd gotten so used to Clark's unwavering – and irritating – caution.

She nodded at Chuck as she exited the lobby. The man was just coming home it seemed. She paused to hold the door open for him as he juggled his mail, a bag of take out food, and his briefcase, all while apparently chatting on his phone with his estranged wife. Then, Lois was outside. Her Jeep was parked right up front, so she was quickly on her way.

Even after midnight, Metropolis wasn't at rest. She liked to think of the city as never being asleep – only slowing in the overnight hours. Plenty of cars and buses were still on the roads. Pedestrians still jaywalked. Neon lights painted the night and dispelled the darkness. Sporadic stores were still open – mostly convenience stores, delis, and pharmacies. Most restaurants still had their lights on – some still serving customers, others cleaning up and preparing for the next day. All of the bars Lois passed were open and occupied.

Still, the city was far less busy than it was during the day. Though there was traffic, the streets were relatively open. Most of the cars appeared to be cabs, and they were still in a rush to drop off their fares to pick up new ones. It took her less than twenty minutes to reach her destination.

Lois found a spot to park around the corner from East Garrison Street on Studebaker Avenue. She could have gotten closer, but she decided to use a little caution by keeping her Jeep out of sight. Then, she got out of the car and swiftly made her way to number 1492. As she walked, she couldn't help but notice the neighborhood. East Garrison was in a decent part of town. The region was not super rich, but it was not insanely poor like Hobbs Bay either. It was a solid lower middle-class area – the kind of neighborhood where single people working their first jobs might live, or perhaps where young families might start out before moving to a better school district. Nothing about the area screamed "murders and crime happen here!" to her. She wondered how someone from this neighborhood would wind up as the victim of a murder plot.

Someone was just exiting the building as Lois approached 1492. The elderly woman smiled at Lois and held the door for her. Lois thanked her softly, then slipped inside the building. She went up one flight of stairs. 1A was on her right as she left the stairwell.

Lois stopped and tried to force her pounding heart to calm down. Her destination – apartment 1D – was just down the hallway. But now that she was here, she was nervous. After all, she was about to approach the scene of a murder. Sure, she'd been to crime scenes before – but this one was different. The dead body was probably still warm, and the murderer was still there, waiting. A sane woman would turn around and call the police, *then* grab the story.

"Damn Clark," she swore under her breath. "Before him, I wouldn't even consider turning around." She huffed and tried to gather her courage. "Cautious journalists don't win awards," she scolded herself.

That did it. Her feet finally obeyed her command to proceed. She felt relieved to be moving again, even if it was slowly. *But slow was good*, she forcibly reminded herself. Slow meant she could move nearly silently. Silence could mean the difference between life and death. With that thought in mind, she crept down the hallway as quietly as a baby's sigh.

The door to 1D was open the tiniest crack. Lois tried pressing gently against it to peer inside, but the opening wasn't enough to give her a view of anything. So, with infinite care, she pushed it open a little wider. She could see part of the living room now, but the lights were off, and she couldn't see any kind of detail. The streetlights filtering through the Venetian blinds just wasn't strong enough, though she was fairly certain there was no body visible.

The guy said there was blood everywhere, she thought. *Maybe he did the job in another room?*

Making a decision, she pushed the door open again, this time wide enough for her to slip inside the apartment. She took three uncertain steps into the room when the lights flicked on, filling the space with sudden brightness. She couldn't be sure, but she could have sworn she saw a flash or two of light in that same moment. Lois threw a hand up to shield her eyes in a purely reflexive movement. She shrieked as she did so, knowing her cover was blown. A bolt of fear blitzed through her body as a thousand scenarios flashed through her mind in a microsecond – all of them bad as the murderer realized she wasn't there to help him move the body. She cringed.

But her terror melted in the next moment when nothing happened. She dropped her hand back down, though she left it raised enough to glide into a martial arts defensive stance if the situation called for it. If she was going to be attacked, she'd give the murderer the best brown-belt level butt-kicking she could. She knew from experience that she could handle her own.

But wait!

No one was in the room!

"What the hell?" she muttered to herself as the realization set in.

The living room was empty. Oh, it had furniture, as well as multiple cardboard boxes strewn about the perimeter of the room. A tidy kitchen stood off to the right side, a dim nightlight illuminating the space. But there was no body. No blood. No murderer. Just a video camera set up on a tripod, with the red recording light on, standing in the doorway that led to the rest of the apartment. Beyond that, in the darkened hallway...

"Jimmy?" Lois asked incredulously.

Jimmy smiled at her as he threaded his way around the tripod. "Hi, Lois!"

"Clark?" Lois asked, ignoring Jimmy as Clark stepped out from around the corner.

Clark gave her a mock-salute. "Hi," he cheerfully piped.

"What are you doing here?" she hissed, both angry and confused.

"What do you mean?" Jimmy asked innocently. "I live here."

"No, you don't!" Lois insisted. "You live on Quincy. There's supposed to be a murder here."

"No, I used to live on Quincy. CK helped me move to my new apartment last weekend, remember?" Jimmy said, biting back a laugh.

"A murder?" Clark asked sweetly, bringing them back to the topic at hand. Too sweetly, if Lois had been paying attention.

"I don't understand. I got a phone call that I wasn't supposed to receive," Lois quickly explained. "The guy thought I was the one to order the hit on whoever it was and gave me this address so I could send someone to help him get rid of the body."

"Oh," Clark said thoughtfully. "Was the guy's name Loki, by any chance?"

"Uh...yeah," Lois said slowly, suspicion dawning. "How did you...?"

"Hey, Lois?" Clark interrupted as her voice trailed off. "What day is it?"

"March 31st," she immediately answered.

"Guess again," Clark said, grinning.

"It hasn't been March 31st for almost forty-five minutes now," Jimmy added. "Making it..." His voice trailed in an open invitation for Lois to fill in the answer.

"April 1st," she replied, then groaned.

"Happy April Fools, Lois," Clark crowed, beaming happily.

She could have punched the smug look off his face.

"You made the call?" she asked. "You're Loki?"

"The trickster god? Yep!" Clark replied, appearing to be almost bouncing on the balls of his feet in his glee.

"But, the voice..." she wondered.

"That? Easy," Jimmy supplied, holding up a small device. "I bought a kids' voice changer at the toy store for like ten bucks." He put the box up to his lips and spoke. "Happy April Fools Day, Lois," he said, his voice resonating much deeper than usual.

"I'm gonna kill you both," she said, shaking her head. Then, after a minute, a question entered her mind. "Why'd you do it?"

"Simple," Clark said with a shrug. "Jimmy was telling me how he's been trying to prank you for the last five years, but you always see right through him. I promised him we'd get you good this year. We both knew you'd never be able to resist a potential story. It was just a matter of crafting it the right way."

"And the cameras?" she asked, nodding to the video camera which was still recording, as well as the still camera nestled in Jimmy's hand.

"Evidence," Jimmy said, his grin bigger than Clark's.

Despite herself, Lois found herself laughing. "Of course, you know, this means war!" she declared, raising a defiant finger into the air.

“Bring it,” Clark challenged her with a chuckle. “May the best man – or woman – win.”

“Oh, I will,” Lois promised with a fresh laugh.

“You sound pretty confident about that,” Clark teased.

“I am. Because you forgot one thing.”

“Oh?” he asked, his eyebrow arched playfully. “What’s that?”

“I have a whole year to plan my revenge.”

THE END