

# Second Chance

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Summary: On their sixtieth anniversary, Lois and Clark are given an unexpected offer.

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## October 6, 2056

Hand in hand, Lois and Clark walked down Clinton Street, which had recently had a resurgence of small businesses, mostly specialty shops and small cafes. After sixty years of marriage, it was still a thrill holding each other's hand. Clark's aura had slowed Lois's aging. She looked like a woman in her fifties rather than her age. And Clark, well, he still looked like he was in his thirties.

As they walked, Lois remembered that Martha, Jonathan, Perry, Jimmy, and Lucy had all gone on before them. Lois felt that soon she would also be gone, and Clark truly would be alone. After almost sixty years, it still hurt that Dr. Klein was right. There were no little Kents to carry on the family name and traditions.

Lois gripped Clark's hand tighter as the bittersweet memories assaulted her.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, Clark. Just a little tired. Isn't that a new cafe?"

"You're right. I don't remember it. Want to try it?"

"Yes. Second Chance sounds like a great name. I wonder if this is the owners' second business."

Clark smiled. "Honey, no matter how long ago you retired, you'll always be an investigative reporter."

"Well, you know it's a part of me."

"And I wouldn't have it any other way."

They reached the door of the cafe, which looked old-fashioned. The awning was green-and-gold striped; the gold matched the letters of the cafe's name. Inside it also looked like a cafe that belonged in the 1940s. There were warm wood tones with the cheery gold and green color scheme. Tables and chairs were throughout the room. As they glanced around, a dark-haired man who looked like an older version of the actor who played Bosley on *Charlie's Angels* came up to them. The antique jukebox was playing Roy Clark's "If I Had To Do It All Over Again."

"Hi, Lois and Clark."

"Mike! We haven't seen you since you married us! Do you work here?"

"You could say that. I'm the owner."

"Congratulations!"

"And congratulations to you both. This is your sixtieth anniversary, isn't it?"

"Yes! Thanks for remembering," Lois replied, then kissed Mike on his cheek.

Mike showed them to a table in the corner where they could view the whole place. "This is your first time here, so take your time. We have lots of choices on the menu. If you don't see what you want, just ask. I'll send your waitress over in a few minutes."

They perused the menu, made their choices, and then glanced around at the other tables. Each table had at least one couple, although some had young children with them. The men all wore business suits and glasses. The women were dressed for business. It was odd, though, that some of the outfits seemed to be from various decades starting in the 1930s or so. Lois wondered if

they'd wandered into a convention of some sort.

As she was about to speak their waitress came over, rendering Lois speechless with her mouth open. Clark noticed her discomfort and looked at the waitress.

"Mary Frances?"

"Hi, Clark. Hi, Lois."

Lois found her voice. "But, we went to your funeral! Are we dead?"

"No, Lois. I'm not the Mary Frances you knew. I just look and sound like her. It makes it easier for our patrons to feel comfortable if Mike and I look like people they know and like."

"Oh. What is this place?"

"It's Second Chance, where certain people get a second chance. Do you remember the TV show *Quantum Leap*?"

"I do. Dr. Sam Beckett leaped through time to make right what once went wrong."

"How do you remember that?"

"Honey, you know I have a good memory. I loved that show. I even had a crush on the actress who played Sam's wife in college."

Lois mumbled, "Eidetic memory."

Clark took her hand. "Second chance?"

"Yes. Let me take your order, and I'll have Mike come back and explain." She took their order and sent Mike to their table.

He came quickly and asked, "Mind if I sit with you?"

"Please. We want to know about this place. Mary Frances mentioned something about putting wrongs right."

"Yes. This place is... a gathering spot for different timelines and multiverses. Because of who you both are, you came into this version. All the other couples you see here are your counterparts from different Earths."

"Is the Clark we met before here? If anyone needs and deserves a second chance, it's him."

"He's not here just now, Lois. But he has been here. He got the chance to go back in time. He both prevented his parents' deaths and saved his Lois in the Congo. Both of those events were originally not in the timeline. Tempus—"

"Tempus!"

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Is Clark happy?"

"Yes. And it's a long story, but he also has his secret identity again."

"Oh, that's wonderful! If you see him again, tell him how happy we are for him."

"I will."

"Anyway, you were saying..."

"Whatever song is playing when you come in for the first time determines your second chance."

Mary Frances brought their orders, and set a cup of tea in front of Mike. With a smile and a wink, she hustled over to another table.

"Our second chance?"

"Yes. You get a second chance, if you want it, to start all over again. With your memories of this timeline intact. Understand, though, that things won't be exactly the same once you make changes."

"Oh, Clark! Think of the possibilities! We could dig up that rock around Wayne's tree before he does. We could avoid clones, take down villains easier and win the Pulitzer sooner."

Wistfully, he replied, "Maybe some good guys, like Dr. Platt, Mayson Drake and Allie Dinello, would live..."

"Those are all possibilities. Did you ever find out why you can't have children?"

"We were told it was because I was incompatible."

"That's incorrect, Clark. It was that molecular disbander of the New Kryptonians. Its scattering your molecules left some permanent... scars."

“But how can we change that by going back in time?”  
 “Lois, knowing what you know now about Clark and your life together, how would you react when you first met?”  
 “I’d propose and get him to take me to Las Vegas.”  
 Clark nearly choked on his tea. “You would?”  
 “Yes, I would. And instead of wasting time going to dinner with Lex, you and I would start investigating him.”  
 “Well, if you are married with children by the time the New Kryptonians get around to searching for you, other timelines show that they abandon any ideas of making you First Lord. They’ll recognize that you are bound to Earth through your wife and children, and find another solution to their threatened civil war.”  
 Lois and Clark looked at each other, and then Lois spoke. “What do we have to do?”

“Well, first eat your lunch. If you don’t, the chef will be hurt. After your meal, you both walk through the door together. You’ll find yourselves back soon after you first met. Live well and happy. Oh, and keep some kryptonite to make the New Kryptonians aware that Earth can and will defend itself against an invasion. Just in case.” With a smile and a wink, Mike stood and took his cup and saucer to the kitchen.

Out of earshot of Lois and Clark, Mary Frances asked how it went.

“Great! I think they’re going for it.”

“Good. They deserve it. Did they ask about other songs?”

“No. You know no one ever has. And no one has ever noticed that when a new couple enter, the same song always plays.”

Mike and Mary Frances busied themselves caring for their other patrons. It made their day to give out second chances.

After their delicious meal, Clark paid and left a generous tip. Then hand in hand, Lois and Clark walked through the door and found themselves in...

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### **Perry’s office in 1993**

Lois and Jimmy were standing by the doorway. Clark was sitting, facing Perry as he finished reading Clark’s story on the demolition of the old theater. The feeling of déjà vu swept over both Lois and Clark. While she swayed slightly, he closed his eyes momentarily before they both recovered.

Perry was reading aloud. “She came to say goodbye, as we all must, to the past, and to a life and a place that soon would exist only in a bittersweet memory.”

Jimmy spoke first. “Smooth.”

Perry looked at Lois until she responded. “Oh, Perry. That was... that was one of the best pieces of that type of article I’ve ever read—err, heard. Yes, heard. That is, um, if you like that sort of thing.”

The editor-in-chief looked at his star reporter like she had grown a second head. Softly he asked, “Are you okay?”

Clark suppressed both a chuckle and a smile at Lois’s comments. She had a different attitude than the first time they’d had this conversation. Oh, this was definitely *his Lois!* Not the young Lois of this time.

“Yeah, just a little tired.”

“As long as it doesn’t affect your work.” Perry stood and continued. “You know, Kent, there’s one attribute I value as much as experience, and that’s initiative.” He held out his hand to Clark. “Clark Kent, welcome to the *Daily Planet*.” Clark stood and reached out his hand. With a “Whoops” and an uneasy chuckle, Perry withdrew his hand before Clark fully grasped it.

A noise in the newsroom drew their attention outside. They watched in horror on the television monitors as the *Messenger* exploded. Lois pulled Perry aside and insisted she needed a task force. He gave her Jimmy and Clark. For appearances, with a show of resistance, she seemed to reluctantly accept Clark as her partner.

As she walked to her desk, Jimmy was showing Clark around.

Cat sidled up to Lois asking, “Who’s the new tight end?”

Lois glared at her, and said primly, “Keep your claws in, Cat. He’s taken.”

Cat ignored her, checked her make-up and sashayed over to Clark. As he turned, she was right next to his chest.

Clark politely spoke. “Excuse me.”

Holding out her hand to be kissed, Cat replied, “Catherine Grant, ‘Cat’s Corner.’”

He shook her hand gently. “Yes, I’ve read your column.”

“Then my reputation precedes me.”

Lois overheard. While glaring at Cat’s ample chest, she scornfully retorted, “Among other things.”

Ignoring her, Cat purred to Clark. “I know what it’s like to be new in town. I’d be happy to show you around.”

“That’s very nice of you, Ms. Grant.”

“Cat.”

“Cat. No thanks; I’ve made other arrangements.”

“Well, if you change your mind...”

“I won’t.”

“If you do—”

Lois stepped in. “Cat, what part of ‘No’ don’t you understand?”

With that, Cat slunk off to her desk.

“Lois, that was rude.”

“She deserved it.” Whispering so only Clark could hear she continued, “She thinks being polite is a ‘maybe.’ You always were too polite.” In a louder voice, she continued, “Perry assigned you to my investigation. Let’s hit it.”

As they headed for the elevators, Clark asked, “Where are we going?”

“To interview Dr. Platt and to make a list of things to do.”

“A list?”

With a whisper only he could hear, she started ticking items off her fingers. “Find both colors of that rock around Smallville, find an apartment with a secluded balcony, tell your parents about us and this new situation, get your mother to make a suit, propose to you, get married before Cat gets any ideas or Trask shows up, check out that warehouse on Bessolo Boulevard for someone’s ship and globe, investigate the city’s resident philanthropist and crook...”

The elevator arrived. Grabbing his tie, she pulled him into the empty elevator and continued her list.

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### **October 6, 2033**

Hand in hand, Lois and Clark walked down Clinton Street, which had recently had a resurgence of specialty shops and other small businesses. After another forty years of marriage, it remained a thrill holding each other’s hand. Clark’s aura had again slowed Lois’s aging. She looked like a woman in her thirties rather than her age. And Clark, well, he still looked like he was in his twenties.

Lois remembered the walk they’d taken down this same street forty years ago. With hindsight—or was it foresight?—she and Clark had been able to make a difference faster than the first time. Although she wouldn’t have changed a thing in either lifetime they’d lived. Each was unique. As Mike had predicted, the changes meant that their second lifetime was different, which pleased both Lois and Clark. They had avoided some mistakes and met new challenges. Through it all, their love and family had grown.

The first lifetime had been spent forging their bonds of love and trust and overcoming their fears. The second one allowed them to create the family they’d missed the first time. She was proud of each family member. All of their children were superheroes in their own right. And when they were old enough, they and the grandchildren had started their training under Clark. The Kent farm where Laura and her family now lived was the

training ground for the new superheroes.

The world was a safer place — and Metropolis a brighter city — than before Superman's arrival.

Lois remembered fondly how forty years ago she'd proposed the second time. They'd married on October 6, 1993, three years earlier than the first time. She hadn't wasted a moment and convinced Superman to fly their parents, Lucy, Jimmy, Perry and Alice to Las Vegas for their intimate wedding.

Superman had made sure Dr. Platt remained safe. Dr. Baines and her henchman were arrested and sent to jail. Six months after the successful launch of the colonists, Dr. Platt joined his wife and daughter on the *Prometheus*. Allie had been saved by Superman. Together, he and Dr. Lane had turned in evidence about Max Menken. This time he and many others, including Lex, had lived to face their crimes. The Smart Kids and many other innocents had benefited from Lois and Clark's return to the past.

Clark had rescued his globe and ship from Bureau 39. Lois and Clark were never captured by Trask, either in Metropolis or Smallville. With Clark's help from a distance, Jonathan, Martha and Lois found both red and green kryptonite around Smallville. Wayne Irig never found any on his farm. Superman never donated a lock of hair so there was no clone of Superman. The kryptonite cage was never built, nor was Clark ever shot by either Arianna Carlin or by Clyde Barrow.

She smiled, remembering the disappointment on Cat's face when Clark had announced their engagement. Mayson similarly had difficulty hiding her reaction when Lois and Clark informed her they were happily married and expecting their first child. Even though Mayson never liked Superman, she became a colleague who helped bring down Intergang. She had transferred to Washington after marrying Dan. A sonic boom overhead interrupted Lois's reminiscing.

Clark looked up and whispered, "Jon."

"Do you need to..." Lois asked as she made the flying motion with her hand.

He cocked his head, and Lois recognized his expression. He and Jon were communicating telepathically. After a moment, his expression cleared. "No. He has it under control."

Glancing down the street, Lois recognized the old-fashioned awning. "Oh, look, Clark! Second Chance is back!"

"Do you want to step inside?"

"Yes! Maybe we'll meet some old friends."

Clark smiled and gently placed his hand on the small of her back. Even after one hundred years of marriage if she counted both lifetimes, which she always did, his touch still made her feel safe and cherished.

They reached the door of the cafe, which appeared as timeless as the first time they'd entered it. The green-and-gold striped awning looked the same, and the gold still matched the letters of the cafe's name. The inside also hadn't changed. There were the warm wood tones with the cheery gold-and-green colors they both remembered. The tables throughout the room were filled. As they glanced around, Mike came up to them. The antique jukebox played the same song as before.

Mike greeted them warmly, and then stepped aside as they looked around the cafe. Their family was seated at the tables. All six children and their spouses, including Jon who was slipping into place, along with all their grandchildren stood and cheered. "Happy Anniversary!" And, in a corner table, Lois and Clark saw their grinning counterparts, the Clark whom Lois had convinced to be Superman and his Lois, with their grown children. Mary Frances stood smiling in the back.

With tears in her eyes, Lois turned to Mike. "Did you arrange this?"

Mike smiled and shook his head. "It was your children and grandchildren who thought of it, and they are the ones who made it happen. All I did was provide the place and ask the other Lois

and Clark if they'd like to join the celebration. Come on. You have a party to attend as the guests of honor!"

From the back of the room they heard, "Dance with her, Dad!" In a Metropolis moment, everyone in the room joined the cheer. "Dance! Dance!"

With a twinkle in his eye, Clark took Lois in his arms, and they glided around the room. After a few moments, Lois and Clark's feet never quite touched the floor. The adults noticed, and quickly distracted the children too young to know the family secret.

Lois whispered softly in his ear, "*This* is dancing."

As they had done countless times in the past, they were soon lost in each other. The room disappeared as they found themselves held in each other's gaze and embrace. With their century of practice, only Lois and Clark could in their own way, both fully aware of their K-rated audience, show their lifelong love and commitment. All in a crowded restaurant of family and friends, while dancing on an inch of air.

THE END

#### Author's Notes:

Mike is from the *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* episode "Swear to God, This Time We're Not Kidding."

The original Mary Frances is the nun in some of my other stories, including "The Nun's Tale" and the *Missions* series.

Teri Hatcher played the young Donna Eleese, Sam Beckett's future wife in the *Quantum Leap* episode "Star-Crossed."

This story was written in response to a challenge on the Lois and Clark Message Boards to write a story based on the last song you heard, which was Roy Clark's "If I Had To Do It All Over Again."