

Shattered

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Rated: G

Submitted: September 2018

Summary: The first piece of the *Shattered* trilogy. After overhearing Dan Scardino's request for a date and Lois' answer, Clark is forced to make a decision that will forever affect his future with Lois.

Story Size: 1,346 words (7Kb as text)

<< "What would you say if I asked you out sometime?"
 "Are you asking me out?"
 "I didn't say that. I said what would you say if I did?"
 "I don't know.">>
 << "I need to know if I'm yesterday's news.">>
 << "Looks like you have some choices to make.">>
 << "I don't know.">>
 << "I mean, we work together. What happens if...you know...
 it bombs?"
 "We'll always be friends.">>
 << "What would you say if I asked you out sometime?">>
 << "I don't know.">>

Clark Kent stared blankly at the screen in front of him. He was supposed to meet Lois at the theater in ten minutes and he still hadn't moved from his desk since she left. He had sent in the story on Albie Swinson an hour ago. He should have left then but he didn't. He should have gone home and changed but he didn't. He just sat there, forever thinking about what had just happened. He couldn't get his cursed photographic memory to turn off the exchange he'd witnessed.

'I don't know.'

Those were the words she chose when Scardino had asked her about a possible date. I don't know. Not *I'm seeing someone*, but *I don't know*. The three words were like a knife to his heart, cutting him in two.

<< "I have been in love with you for a long time. You had to have known.">>
 << "I'm sorry Clark. I just don't feel that way about you.">>
 << "I don't want to die."
 "Lois, I would never let that happen.">>
 << "Oh, Clark, I don't care if he used 'Crazy Glue' you're back!">>
 << "Lois, I want you to go out with me!">>
 << "To our almost first date.">>

Nine minutes. He stared at the clock on his screen, feeling a panic rise within him as the reality of what was happening began to hit him. His mind continued to play back the past two years in what felt like slow motion.

<< "Don't fall for me, Farmboy, I don't have time for it.">>
 << "But everything seemed to just... 'work.' That's why I can never see you again."
 "Lois?">>
 << "Liar! You are so attracted to me.">>
 << "You slammed the door in my face last night."
 "That was amistake.">>

Eight minutes.

He had eight minutes to make a decision. Lois was probably already looking around the theater for him. He knew no matter what he decided he'd still have to face her tonight. The question

fell on him on whether that confrontation would come from him or her.

<< "Now there you keep using that word again. There is 'you.' There is 'I.' There is no 'we.'">>
 "Not yet."
 "Not ever."
 "We'll see."
 "How long can you hold your breath?"
 "A very long time.">>
 << "Fortunately there are no doors here tonight."
 "Fortunately...">>

He could walk away. He could step back and pretend the last two months hadn't happened and try to go back to being 'just friends.' He'd done it before and he knew he could do it again, but that would mean giving up on everything. There would be no going back. If he broke Lois' trust in him now there would be no going back. It had taken him nearly two years to get to this point.

<< "I don't know.">>

He hung his head, uncertain if he could muster the strength it would take to fake it through the evening with Lois, knowing he was now competing for her affections.

<< "I don't know.">>

He felt like he'd already lost the battle with those three words being uttered from her lips. Two years of friendship on the line and every obstacle thrown in their way. Numerous heartaches and misunderstandings and fights that drove them both into a fury. Two months of waiting to finally have that long awaited date and yet she didn't know.

He glanced up at the screen.

Seven minutes.

<< "So that's what you've been hiding.">>
 << "You know if you think about it, the only time people are really honestly expressing themselves is when they're passionate...the polite veneer of society drops away...like when they're fighting..."

"...or make love,">>

<< "What is with you? What is so bad about him?"

"What is so good about him?">>

<< "Forget the date part. Maybe we could do it another time."

"Well... maybe we could say it's our 'almost first date.' Kind of like a test run?">>

<< "The last thing she said to me was 'resurrection.'">>

The raw emotion that had consumed him for the better half of the last two weeks threatened to overtake him as he watched the minutes tick away. Could he really do this? Could he really walk away from everything?

<< "You don't need a partner, Lois. You never did."

"Maybe not, but I was starting to like having one.">>

<< "Clark, that's not what attracts me. It's his intelligence and caring. He has integrity and innate goodness. I mean...he's a lot like you.">>

<< "If you had no powers, if you were just an ordinary man leading an ordinary life, I'd love you just the same. Can't you believe that?"

"I wish I could Lois but under the circumstances I don't see how I can.">>

<< "Where's Clark?"

"Right here.">>

Five minutes.

He stared at the time, contemplating his next move. He could continue to stare at the screen and lose out on everything he'd worked toward for the last two years or he could stand up and attempt to salvage what he could of his and Lois' already fragmented relationship.

'I don't know.'

The words continued to replay in his mind as he watched the minutes change once more.

<<“I want you to know that I think what you did for Clark took incredible bravery.”

“It was nothing.”

“Was it?”

“No, I guess not. I guess there isn’t anything I wouldn’t do for him.”

“I think you two are very lucky to have each other.”>>

<<“Lois, this isn’t the best time, but I’ve always wanted to tell you something—”

“I like you too, Clark. I’m sorry what I did on our date.”>>

<<“It’s been over a week since our first date...and...our first kiss. And...you haven’t said a word about it. It’s like...it never happened.”

“Lois, I’m sorry if it feels like I’ve been ignoring you lately, but...”>>

<<“Where’s Clark?”>>

Clark landed on the corner, away from the crowd, spotting Lois across the street searching the crowd. He let out a sigh, combing his hand through his hair as he approached. He felt his heart lurch in his chest as he crossed the street, preparing himself mentally for what could come at any moment.

He could walk away.

He could stop where he was and turn around, but he didn’t. He wouldn’t. Walking away meant giving up, and Superman or not, Clark Kent was not a man who gave up without a fight. His eyes squinted closed as he swallowed down the insecurities and pain that had threatened to consume him earlier. He was certain this would be his hardest fight yet, but he refused to give up.

A determined expression crossed his face as Lois waved to him. Two years of friendship was on the line, and he wasn’t going to give up without a fight. Scardino may think he had the upper hand, but one thing he didn’t know was Lois Lane. She may be uncertain about their relationship but he wasn’t, and he refused to allow himself to be cast aside without putting up a fight.

He reached the end of the crosswalk and approached Lois, allowing a smile to cross his face. Her sigh of relief and grin as she hooked her arm in with his, pulling him inside the theater made the insecurities from the last hour fade away.

He had to try. This could end with broken hearts for both of them, but he had to at least try.

THE END

Read the next story in the series, “[Fragments](#).”