

That Night in the Car

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Rated: PG

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Summary: Lois makes a surprising discovery during a stakeout one night.

Story Size: 1,440 words (8Kb as text)

A/N: This is the first L&C fic that I've written on my own (or at least the first one that's finished lol). It was posted at the enthusiastic encouragement of NostalgiaKick, who also looked over it for me prior to posting.

All the windows in the Jeep were rolled up due to the rain outside, making it stuffy and causing problems for Clark Kent. Normally sleeping was similar to eating — he didn't need to, but he liked to. He actually did need *some* sleep, but not nearly as much as most humans. Tonight, though... Between fires and major accidents and natural disasters in other time zones he'd gone three days on about twenty minutes of shut-eye and he was starting to feel it.

The fact that he was penned up in the warm humid space with Lois Lane, or that he was breathing in more of her with every breath, didn't seem to be helping. Normally, being so close to her kept him alert with tingling nerve endings; but the thundering of the rain on the vehicle's roof, compounded with the boredom of waiting for their suspect to do something suspicious and the sense of quiet peace to make him positively drowsy.

He struggled to pay attention to what she was saying, but after a few more moments her babbling blended with the rain into a comforting haze of white noise and he drifted off, helpless to his body's needs.

"I can't believe we've waited here all this time with nothing to show for it," Lois went on, quietly for her, "and Bobby owes me — us — for that Peking Duck dinner! He swore up and down that Councilman 'Family Values' McDonald was making regular visits to this... *cathouse*, but we've been here for hours and *nothing!*" She waited for a reaction from her partner, but heard nothing other than slow, deep breathing from his seat. Her eyes widened in outrage.

"Oh my God, are you even listening to me?" She whipped her head around and reached over to thump him on the arm. Her hand was halfway to his bicep when he suddenly and inexplicably floated up out of his seat like thistledown on a warm spring breeze. Her jaw dropped and she froze. What was happening? Had she lost her mind? Was someone spraying hallucinogens into her beloved Jeep? She'd kill them!

Her eyes darted down to the several inches of clear air between his butt and the seat, then back up to his hair, lightly brushing the roof. She reached down and put her hand between his body and the seat — nope, definitely not hallucinating. Or if she was, it was a particularly vivid one. Her brow wrinkled in confused thought. How was he doing that? She only knew of one man who floated, and he wasn't a hack from Kansas. *Or was he?* Her eyes narrowed dangerously as she thought about how to handle this revelation. She stared at his face in the glow of the street lights and the backscatter of lighting from her dashboard and tried to picture it without glasses. *That lying rat!* She suddenly realized how close to his butt her hand was and jerked it back. Her other elbow struck the horn and she squeaked in surprise at the noise.

Clark awoke with a start, slamming back into the seat in a squeal of protesting suspension. "Huh? What? Lois, are you okay?" He sleepily but rapidly fired questions at her. "What happened? Why's the car shaking?" He reached up to wipe tired hands over his face.

"Am I... why's the... you..." she sputtered helplessly. All thoughts of keeping her new knowledge to herself evaporated in the holy heat of her outrage. "You. Were. Floating! In your sleep! In *my* Jeep! Got anything to say for yourself, *Smallville?*" She all but sneered the last word.

He blanched. Even in the poor lighting, she could see the color leach out of his face like water from a sieve. "Lois, I, um..."

"Yes?" She all but dared him to finish the sentence.

"Well..." He squirmed.

"Go on!" she demanded.

"I didn't really want you to find out like this—"

"Oh, so you did intend to tell me *someday?*" She cut in disbelievingly.

"Well yeah, of course I did, you're my best friend, and I love you. Of course I wanted to tell you." He pled with her from the passenger seat.

"You... I..." All the air leaked out of her lungs.

Clark rambled on, not seeming to have heard her. "I mean, I've never told anyone else — except Trask, and he was threatening to kill my parents — but of course I wanted *you* to know." He paused for a moment to gauge her reaction, but she seemed frozen behind the wheel. "I just couldn't think of a way to bring it up without making you mad." Clark trailed off helplessly and held his breath, waiting for her to respond to any part of what he'd said.

After a few more moments of silence Clark started to wonder if he was actually awake. Exhaustion still rippled through him in warm waves; maybe he was dreaming this whole exchange. He'd been dreaming about flying with Lois anyway, and it wasn't terribly uncommon for those dreams to shift just as things became interesting, much to his endless frustration. "Lois?" he ventured. "I understand if you're mad, but... do you hate me? Should I leave?" He curled his hand around the door handle just in case. Better to make a quick exit if she wanted him gone. His heart felt heavy in his chest when she didn't answer right away.

Lois sat for a few more moments, all her thoughts swirling around her head in an endless loop. She turned to look at him when she heard the door start to creak open. "No!" she snapped. Clark flinched and pulled the door closed again. "No, I don't want you to leave... and I don't hate you." She heard all the breath whoosh out of him as he slumped in relief, and for a moment she idly wondered why everything in her Jeep wasn't tossed around in a whirlwind. *Later, brain, that's not important.* "I'm not the happiest with you that I've ever been, but I don't hate you." She reached out and turned the key, throwing in the towel on their stakeout as she shifted the Jeep into gear.

"Where are we going? What about Councilman McDonald?" Clark asked in confusion as he reached for the seatbelt and fastened it around himself.

"Councilman McDonald could have a farm and be boinking every living thing on it, and I wouldn't care tonight. Do you even need that thing?" she asked, arching a brow at his seatbelt.

Clark looked away. "No." She waited for him to elaborate, suspicious that she already knew the answer. "No, I don't need it, but I've been pretending to be human for a long time, and some things just get to be a habit," he said in a low, pain-filled voice.

Lois winced. "Don't be silly Clark, you're the most human person I've ever known."

He beamed at her like she'd just invented the cure for cancer right there in the car. "So where are we going?" he asked again as she pulled away from the curb.

"We're going to your place."

"My place?" He sounded a little befuddled.

“Yes, your place. You’re going to make me some coffee, and feed me, and then we’re going to have a talk. A *long* talk.”

He nodded tiredly, and Lois thought back over their friendship. When she thought about it, she could count the number of times she’d actually seen him look tired on one hand and still have fingers left over. “Actually, first you’re going to make me coffee, then you’re going to take a nap, *then* you’re going to feed me and we’ll have a talk.”

“I don’t need a *nap*, Lois! I’m a grown man!” Clark protested her plan crankily.

“You’re a grown *exhausted* man, and I say you need a nap! After everything you’ve put me through tonight, are you going to argue with me over *sleeping*?”

It was silent in the Jeep for a full minute.

“No, Lois,” he muttered sheepishly. “I’ll make you some coffee and take a nap.”

She reached over and patted his knee. “There’s a good boy.” Lois grinned to herself as she ignored the waves of sulk washing in her direction.

THE END