

Love Without End, Amen

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Rated: PG-13

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Summary: This story features three fathers who influenced and changed Clark's early life and later his life with Lois. It's in response to the 2019 Father's Day Challenge. It also explains the baby's origins from the series' final episode, "The Family Hour." This story is third in the *Rubber Ducky* series, and is a companion piece to "We're All Alone."

Story Size: 4,183 words (23Kb as text)

Author's Notes: This story is dedicated to the memory of Eddie Jones and his wonderful portrayal of Jonathan Kent. To me his was the definitive Jonathan. He will be missed.

The song this story is based on is George Strait's "[Love Without End, Amen](#)."

Song lyrics or Clark's version are in bold italics.

Thanks to Marcelle who was GE for this story.

Tissue Alert: There are some very emotional scenes in this story.

Let me tell you a secret about a father's love Krypton, Earth Date Spring 1966

Jor-El held his wife Lara as little Kal-El's ship left Krypton's atmosphere. "Beloved, I know it's hard. We agreed, this is his only chance for life. Our love for him will be with him, always."

As the final explosion of the planet's core rocked their world, they clung to each other and knew no more.

Kal-El's ship safely escaped the explosion as it sped towards its destination, although it carried debris in its wake. His ship landed safely in Shuster's Field, near Smallville, Kansas, U.S.A., Earth.

Father's Day 1966

Martha Kent awakened slowly. Jonathan's side of their bed was empty. She reached over; still warm. So, he probably was checking on Clark. She hurriedly dressed and went in search of him. She smiled as she figured he was once again just looking at their miracle child, who had literally dropped out of the sky almost a month ago.

As his son stirred, Jonathan had walked into the room and picked him up before the boy could cry. Softly, Jonathan spoke.

"Son, I love you and always will. We may not always agree, and there are going to be times when I may not be happy with your choices. That's part of growing up. We both have some things to learn, you to be a good man and me how to be the father you need. I want you to know... *nothing* will ever cause me to stop loving you. Your mother's and my love is forever."

After kissing Clark's hair, Jonathan smiled as he patted his son's wet diaper. "That I can take care of. And then, we'll go down and rustle up some breakfast. Later, we'll go to church. It won't mean much to you, but this is the first Father's Day your mama and I can celebrate as parents. And we will."

Martha smiled as she watched Jonathan talk softly to Clark, and then expertly change his diaper. "Honey, I totally forgot today is Father's Day. I didn't get you anything."

Jonathan finished and handed Clark to her. Then, he held both of them in his arms. "Martha, this is all I need for Father's Day,

for my birthday and for Christmas. Of course, I won't refuse a piece of your apple pie if there's any left from last night."

They both laughed as they headed downstairs to the kitchen.

***Daddies don't just love their children
Every now and then,
It's a love without end, amen***

October 1973

Eight year-old Clark sat nervously outside the principal's office. He had followed his parents' advice not to fight. George and Tommy had held his arms while Butch tried to punch him. He had no idea how Butch had ended up with a broken hand. The nurse said it was probably a boxer's break. Whatever that was.

And now he was in trouble for fighting. But he hadn't fought at all. All he knew was that everyone involved was suspended. He hung his head, afraid Mom and Dad would be mad.

He heard them speaking to the school secretary before he could see them. Clark knew he had really good hearing and wasn't supposed to let anyone know. So he studied his shoes while he waited. A moment later, which seemed like forever, Dad sat next to him while Mom rapped briskly on the principal's private door.

"You all right, son?"

Clark nodded. He had been going over what he wanted to say, but just didn't know where to start. His dad's arm gently cradled him. "Just tell me what happened."

And the whole sordid story spilled out. How Butch, George and Tommy had pulled him out of the teacher's vision at recess. They had heard from their parents that Clark's adoption was from a distant relative of Martha Kent. And everyone in town knew that meant that his birth mother was a fallen woman. Clark said he didn't know what that was. The boys called him a bas-something, which he also didn't know why they thought he was a fish. He hadn't said anything, and the next thing he knew the two boys were holding him and Butch punched him. But Butch started screaming, which brought the teacher over. And here Clark was, not knowing what he'd done to cause such hatred.

Jonathan took a deep breath. "You didn't do anything, son."

"But Mom looked mad."

"Oh, yes, she's angry. Angry at Butch, Tommy, George, their parents, your teacher, the principal and I suspect the whole school board." He added in a whisper, "Maybe even the whole town."

"Not me?"

"Not if you're telling the truth."

"I am. I was afraid you'd be mad."

"Oh, I'm as angry as your mother. But not at you. And let me tell you, son, there is nothing you've done or that you will ever do that will cause your mother and me to stop loving you."

And there, outside the principal's office, Clark let loose the pain he'd held inside. In the safety of his father's arms, he cried.

By the time Martha emerged from the principal's office, Jonathan had dried Clark's tears with his handkerchief. They sat with Jonathan's arm protectively around his son. And by the time she was done, Clark's suspension had been cancelled. Eventually everyone involved—from the boys, their parents, the teacher, principal, up to the school board—knew exactly what Martha and Jonathan Kent thought of people who would hurt an innocent child because of a false rumor about his parentage. And they'd better fix that zero-tolerance policy that equally punished bullies and their victims. If they didn't, they would hear from Jonathan's cousin who was a hot-shot Kansas City lawyer.

Martha and Jonathan decided that the gossips needed to be taught a lesson. His cousin made several high-profile visits to the farm over the next few months. He met with the school administration, school board president and the local judge. He and the judge, who hated gossip, made it appear that Martha and Jonathan were talked out of immediately going to court since the

gossip had stopped. But if it returned or there were any other problems, the entire town could be named as co-defendants. Butch, Tommy and George were sent to military schools instead of being charged as juvenile delinquents. Only the Kents knew that Smallville's real draw was not an impending lawsuit, but Martha's desserts.

Father's Day 1974

Jonathan recalled how the past school year had led to Clark winning a state-wide essay contest for his age group. Martha teased him that the buttons on his shirts were likely to pop, due to his chest expanding with pride in his son.

When Clark showed his father his essay, Jonathan's vision blurred. It was about how being an adopted child made him sometimes feel different. But the last lines were what Jonathan and Martha treasured.

My parents adopted me. Some people think they're not my real parents. That my birth parents are my real parents. They're not. I don't remember them. My real dad is Jonathan Kent. He's the one who plays catch with me. He teaches me to do chores on the farm. My real mom is Martha Kent. She sews my clothes and cooks. And they both give the best hugs in the world.

June 1980

Jonathan parked his truck next to the house. As he grabbed his package, he noticed the yard was quiet.

Too quiet.

Clark usually came running out to meet the truck. Since he was eight or so he could hear the truck as it pulled into the long driveway, and he knew the truck by the sound of its motor. That boy's abilities continued to amaze his father.

No, he corrected himself. My boy is soon a young man. How I want to hold him and make him feel safe in my arms just a bit longer. The past fourteen years have sped by. Our baby is on the verge of adulthood. And he's burdened with both the changes a boy goes through to become a man and also those strange powers of his that keep manifesting. I wonder if he saw something he shouldn't and is upset. Hopefully my trip to Wichita was a success.

He headed for the back door, deciding he'd talk to Martha before looking for Clark. If his son was upset, he'd be in his tree house... his *Fortress of Solitude*.

Quietly he opened the door. Martha was sitting at the table. She looked at him with red-rimmed eyes. Obviously she'd been crying.

"What happened, Martha?"

"Oh, Jonathan. I don't know how to help Clark. This is something we never expected."

Jonathan crossed the kitchen and gathered his wife in his arms. She shuddered, then sobbed quietly. As her tears slowed, he fished out his handkerchief and handed it to her. She dried her eyes.

"Was anyone hurt?"

Martha shook her head.

"Were any animals?"

"No," she whispered.

"Did anyone else see what happened?"

"No, we were alone."

"Well, the barn looks intact. Any property damage?"

Martha smiled through her tears. "No." Swallowing, she spoke hoarsely. "Clark did his chores. He said he was thinking about how much fun we had roasting marshmallows over the coals from the barbecue the other day. He'd put some charcoal in the grill for later. No, he didn't add any lighter fluid. Nor did he have any matches. He stared at the grill, lost in thought. Next thing he knew, there were flames coming from the charcoal. Jonathan, while he was watching the grill, I was watching him. Red light like a laser or something out of *Star Trek* came out of his eyes just before the flames started. He's so upset. He shut his eyes immediately and won't look at me. He says he's afraid he'll hurt me. He ran to his tree house and has been there for hours."

Jonathan nodded. "Okay. I'll go talk to him. Hank did as I asked."

"You got them?"

"Yeah. I hope they work."

"They have to. Otherwise, I'm afraid we're going to lose our son."

"Martha, that will never happen. He's our son, and no one will ever change that. You and I will fight to our dying breaths to keep him. You know that."

"I do."

"Together, honey, we are stronger than either of us alone. And if our son can lift the freezer at his age, the three of us are no match for anyone... not even the army."

Martha smiled a watery smile and hugged him. "You always know just what I need to hear."

"Not always. But this was something you needed to hear." He paused, swallowing before continuing. "And I needed to say it. If you're okay, I'll go talk to Clark."

"I am." Martha stepped away from him and grabbed a small paper bag. She put some of her raisin-filled cookies in the bag. "My two men need to keep up their strength after this trying day."

"And you, honey, always know exactly what we need."

Jonathan took the bag and tapped his pocket where his package safely rested and headed into the backyard to find his only son.

He purposefully strode to the tree housing Clark's fortress. Climbing the wooden rungs nailed to the tree trunk, he stopped when he could see into the open door. He looked inside. Clark sat, shoulders hunched, the picture of dejection. His eyelids were screwed tightly shut. Jonathan's heart lurched at his son's pain. Suspecting that Clark knew he was there, he still knocked courteously and softly on the door frame.

"Can I come in, son?"

Clark nodded yes, apparently speechless. As Jonathan climbed inside, he noticed Clark's body was trembling. Jonathan pulled himself up and slid next to but not touching Clark.

"Son, are you okay?"

Clark shook his head no. "What am I, Dad?"

"Not what, but *who*. You are and always will be Clark Kent, son of Martha and Jonathan Kent. You are a person. Never forget that." Jonathan calmly put his arm around Clark's shoulders and gently hugged him.

"I made fire with my eyes today."

After a few moments of silence, Clark sneaked a peek at his father. Jonathan was calmly looking at him.

"Were you hurt?"

"No."

"Did you hurt anyone else?"

"No."

"Was anything seriously damaged?"

"I'm not sure. The grill, maybe."

"You want to tell me what happened?"

Hesitantly at first, Clark told essentially the same story as Martha. However, he took all the responsibility and blame for the mishap. It was obvious to Jonathan that Clark was feeling guilty... and scared. He chose his words carefully.

"Do you remember when you first rode a two-wheeler?"

"Yeah."

"What happened?"

"Well, you wouldn't let me ride without training wheels. You ran beside me to help as I learned how to ride my bike. And you kept adjusting the wheels until one day you took them off."

"Why?"

"Because... because at first I couldn't balance and might have hurt myself."

"Or someone else. Clark, you have some unique abilities. You have to choose whether to think of them as problems or

challenges. You can think of them as problems, and they will probably get bigger the more you think about them. If you think of them as gifts that are challenges—like learning to ride a bike or drive the truck—then we can practice and you can learn how to handle them.”

“We?”

“Of course, we. I worked beside you every step until you mastered riding your bike, didn’t I?” After Clark’s nod, he continued. “Well, I plan to do the same when you’re ready to learn to drive. I see this is a bigger challenge only because it’s new to us, but one we can solve together.”

They sat in companionable silence for a few minutes as Clark thought about what his dad had said. “How do I get training wheels for my eyes?”

“Well, son, I have an idea. You know what the scientific method is?”

“Come up with an idea or theory and try to prove it with experiments.”

“Exactly.”

“You have a theory, Dad?”

“Yes. You remember what you can’t see through?”

“Lead.”

“Yes. And you know my cousin in Wichita is an optician.”

“He makes glasses.”

“That’s right.” Jonathan pulled out a wrapped package from his pocket and handed it to Clark. “I had an idea that if you can’t see through lead, maybe leaded glass works the same.”

“You got me a pair of glasses?”

“Yes. We’ll have to try them. I’ll bet they’ll keep you from seeing through things. And maybe they’ll either help you remember to not use your fire vision or stop it, too.”

Clark opened the package carefully and gently held the glasses. After scrutinizing them, he placed them on his face. “They fit!”

Jonathan smiled. “How about we test you seeing through things before we tackle your new gift?”

Clark nodded.

“But first, your mom sent us a snack.” He handed the bag of cookies to Clark who opened it, took a cookie then handed it back to his father.

Jonathan knew that even if the glasses didn’t work, seeing Clark’s whole face light up and hearing the hope in his voice was worth the trip and expense of the glasses. And if they didn’t work, he was determined as a family they’d find what did.

Together:

Father’s Day 1994

Jonathan was amazed when he thought about all Clark had accomplished in less than a year. As a reporter, he had reached success quickly. And if that weren’t enough, he had also become Superman. He’d found a way to safely use his powers to help others publicly. His most recent accomplishment was taking down Lex Luthor, the crime boss masquerading as a philanthropist. The man who’d fooled all of Metropolis hadn’t fooled Clark Kent. The *Daily Planet* was being rebuilt, so his son’s job was secure.

All the time he had spent with Clark learning to control his powers seemed insignificant compared to what his son, as both Clark and Superman, had accomplished in only a few months. Martha was going to tease him again about his shirt buttons popping. And Jonathan didn’t care.

It’s a love without end, amen

May 1997

Sam and Ellen had volunteered to make a late-night shopping trip for baby supplies. Lois and Clark finding a baby in their dining room had thrown everyone for a loop. The note in his basket said simply,

Lois and Clark,

This child belongs to you.

After the Lanes had gone, Martha spoke. “Clark, are you sure there’s nothing else in that basket? Maybe under the blanket?”

Lowering his glasses, Clark scanned the basket. His eyebrows rose nearly to his hairline. “A false bottom?”

“Clark, what—” Before Lois could finish her question, Clark had darted into the dining room and was returning with a sheaf of papers in one hand and a globe in the other.

“What’s that?”

“It looks like a globe, similar to mine. And the papers appear to be everything we need to adopt the baby.”

“Who are they from?”

“I don’t know.”

Just then the globe began to glow and a hologram appeared. All four adults were stunned to see an image of Clark—or his twin—wearing white robes with the El family crest on the chest.

The hologram spoke.

“Greetings. My name is Kal-El of Krypton. I understand from your friend H.G. Wells that you are also Kal-El and Clark Kent of Earth.” The hologram paused as if for confirmation.

Clark replied, “Yes, I am.”

Nodding, the hologram continued. “As you may have guessed, I am from a different universe than yours. One in which my father, Jor-El, did not send me to Earth. He had planned to, but was able to slow the destruction of Krypton. So, I have grown up here. Which in itself has produced problems...”

The man in the hologram paused before taking a deep breath and continuing.

“My birth wife, Zara, was killed as an infant when the transport she and the other New Krypton colonists were on exploded.” Sighing, he continued. “I married for love, as I understand you also have done. My wife died shortly after the birth of our son.” There was a collective gasp as the four Kents all sat down, stunned. Lois held the baby more closely.

“There was a plague on Krypton that infected us about ten years ago. It was eradicated, but unfortunately caused some problems we could not fix. My son has lived his whole life in a sterile environment. He cannot survive here on Krypton outside that protected environment, although I assure you he does not carry the plague. If he stays here, he will never be able to be outside, to run and play like other children used to on Krypton. And...”

Another pause as the man in the hologram closed his eyes and took another deep breath. A moment later, he opened his eyes and continued.

“I don’t know how to gently say this. I will soon join my wife, and my son will be an orphan. According to your friend, you are in a position to care for him. At his suggestion, I am giving you my only son, Lor-El.

“You may be wondering why I am not sending my son to our Earth. Sadly, it was destroyed by an asteroid the people there called Nightfall. They were unable to stop it. I am asking, begging if needed, for you to love and care for my son. Your friend wanted me to show you a hologram of my wife, Lor’s mother.”

With that, the hologram added a woman with long brown hair who was dressed in a white robe with the El family crest on her chest. As she lifted her head, they could see she was the spitting image of Lois.

“He showed me a picture of you, Kal-El and your wife. I believe this is the best option my son has to survive. According to your friend, a genetic test will reveal that he is indeed a close relative, as close as your son. For doing this, please know you are granting his parents’ last wish, that he be given a chance for life and love. The globe contains additional messages for him when he is old enough. It is my hope that the love of his birth parents will be with him always.”

The hologram paused. Clark spoke. “Yes, of course it will.

We'll tell him how much you both loved him. He's now our son, too."

The man in the hologram's voice broke before continuing. "Thank you is inadequate... I have no other words." With that he bowed deeply and was silent.

There was a flash and H.G. Wells appeared instead of Kal-El. "Lois and Clark, I will drop the baby off and come see you as soon as I finish an errand. See you soon."

Lois and Martha were openly weeping, while Clark and Jonathan held them close with tears in their eyes. Jonathan broke the mood by pulling out his handkerchief and commenting, "Darn allergies."

I took my daddy's secret and passed it on to him...

Father's Day 1997

Lois awakened slowly. Clark's side of their bed was empty. She reached over; still warm. Lifting her head, she saw no note on the bedside table so he hadn't left as Superman. Reaching for the baby monitor, she turned it on and heard Clark quietly soothing their son.

She smiled as she remembered how Clark had refused to make their son a junior. They decided on Clark Jordan, shortened to CJ, to honor both his birth father and grandfather. Kal or Cal could be too closely associated with Superman, but no one would question them naming their firstborn after his father, Clark. They never elaborated if someone asked, only explained that Jordan was a family name, too.

Mr. Wells had indeed come and confirmed everything. Apparently his "errand" was planting evidence of CJ's birth and parents in official records. It was a necessary deception to protect the baby. And to keep Ms. Constance Bailey from Social Services away. Constance Hunter was handling all the private adoption paperwork. Her fee had been more than paid by her first act: an injunction against social services citing Ms. Bailey's unprofessional and possibly unethical behavior towards Lois and Clark in the past. Lois smiled. Ms. Bailey was on administrative leave as her actions towards *all* potential adoptive parents was reviewed.

She stretched and got out of bed. Quickly putting on her robe, she stepped into the hallway and heard Clark softly speaking while he changed CJ's diaper. Quietly, she drew closer to listen.

"Son, I love you and always will. We may not always agree, and there are going to be times when I may not be happy with your choices. That's part of growing up. We both have some things to learn, you to be a good man and me how to be the father you need. I want you to know... *nothing* will ever cause me or your mother to stop loving you. Some children have two parents, some have one. You, my son, have four real parents. Two, your birth parents, who loved you enough to send you to us. And your mama and me. Son, all of our love for you is forever."

As Lois listened, Clark began to softly speak his version of the chorus of a country music song.

"Son, let me tell you a story about your parents' love,

A secret my daddy said was just between us

He said, 'Parents don't just love their children

Every now and then

It's a love without end, amen."

He might be the Man of Steel and think he couldn't sing. In that moment, Lois saw his tender heart more clearly than ever. She felt more love and emotion from the words to a song than anyone she'd ever heard sing. With tears in her eyes, Lois went to them and was rewarded when Clark gave her CJ, and then lovingly embraced them both.

THE END