

# Who Are You? (Kerth Challenge #2)

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Rated: PG

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Summary: Lois ponders who Superman really is after his debut.

Story Size: 2,187 words (12Kb as text)

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Author's Note: This fic is in response to the Kerth Challenge #2, which asked that the title of the last song you heard becomes the title of your story and relate to the fic in some way. Full disclosure, I didn't actually hear the song on the radio, but it popped right into my head, clear as day.

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Who are you?

Who?

Who?

*Who?*

Not *what*.

Damn it, Lois! What is *wrong* with you? You could have insulted the man! You're lucky he brushed off the comment with such grace. He could have flown off without another word after *swallowing* that bomb. Swallowing! Like it was a cookie or a potato chip! Then what? You'd be stuck without the story of the century, that's what!

Ugh.

I'm an idiot.

But enough beating myself up over that – admittedly painful – slip of the tongue.

I have to find you, somehow.

But how?

You could be *anywhere*. You can fly to any place on Earth. You flew into outer space! Maybe you aren't even *on* Earth right now! Maybe you make your home on the moon or Jupiter or something. Perhaps you call the Andes mountains your home or have some kind of igloo in the Antarctic. I mean, you don't exactly strike me as the Metropolis native type. You're certainly a lot more special than any city-bred loser I've ever come across. I'm not likely to find a street address for you by looking you up in the phone book. I can't expect to be invited to your apartment and be given a glimpse into what your life is like when you aren't eating explosives and salvaging crippled rockets.

And even if I *could* run a search and find where you live, I have nothing to go on. You never even told me your name. "A friend" you said. That's all I have to go on. "A friend." It's about as useless as snow boots in the Sahara. I can't plug "a friend" into a database and expect to get a hit. "A friend!" Ha! You said it so casually, expecting us all to believe you and trust you. And the crazy thing is...we did. Under any other circumstance, I would have backed away and been suspicious. But you're different, somehow. I could see a softness in your eyes. An earnestness. A certain transparency. You weren't trying to win us over or dupe us. You truly believed yourself to be our friend in that moment. And

you were.

But...the question remains.

Who are you?

Who did I allow to pick me up and *fly* me back to work?

You were the perfect gentleman. I was helpless in your arms and yet you never tried to make a pass at me or take advantage of the situation. I could feel the strength coursing through your body. I could feel how fast we were flying, even if I couldn't really see the landscape beneath us rushing by in the dark. If you'd decided to try something, there's no way I could have resisted and gotten away. But you held me only as tightly as you needed to. You didn't touch anywhere near anything inappropriate. You didn't try to steal a breathless kiss as my pulse raced in the unexpected thrill of flying with a stranger. In fact, you barely even spoke a word to me, though I sensed an uncertainty in your silence, rather than any kind of arrogance that made it beneath you to speak with someone as mundane as myself.

You brought me back to the Planet, safe and sound, and no worse for my adventure. You delivered me straight to my desk in the bullpen and I finally felt like I got my first good look at you. Of course, I'd seen you in the rocket, but my mind was spinning back then and I didn't stop to appreciate all the little details about you. But for those brief moments in the bullpen? I made the most of them and imprinted every little thing about you into my brain. Not only for accuracy for the article I was already writing in my head, but for my own, private reasons too.

The silken black locks.

The kind, soft, friendly eyes, like two shining jewels the color of warm chocolate.

The quirk of a smile tugging at the corners of your lips – lips that, one day, I may find a way to taste.

The way you tried to appear stern, the way any authority figure strives to be. The way I could see something else simmering just beneath the surface. *Many* somethings. A hint of amusement, perhaps, that a celebrated reporter like myself had snuck aboard a shuttle headed for space. A wondering look that asked what I was planning to do once the shuttle reached space and I had no way of getting home again. A hesitancy that may have kept you more silent than you otherwise might have been. When you spoke, you seemed to carefully choose your words, perhaps in an effort to keep yourself more mysterious than you need to be. A confidence I've never seen before. You took one look at that bomb and immediately swallowed it, like you knew it wouldn't harm you. And yet, I also saw a fleeting look of surprise cross your face for just a heartbeat after the bomb detonated and all it did was make you belch rather than rip you apart like any other mere mortal would have been.

So who are you, really?

Are you a god?

You certainly seem to have the abilities one might expect from the mythological overlords of ancient civilizations. The flying alone distances you from us lesser mortals. No one else in the world can fly. And then there's all the rest. I think even the hero Hercules would pale and feel inadequate if he could see the strength you possess. I've heard of adrenaline rushes that can help a woman lift a vehicle off her baby, but a two-ton car is *nothing* next to a space shuttle. I can't even imagine how many tons that must have weighed. And yet you lifted it like it was no heavier than a sack of feathers.

And that bomb.

I can't stop thinking about the way you oh-so-casually ingested it and the way it didn't kill you. I just can't figure out *how* you're still alive. You must be made out of steel, rather than flesh and blood like the rest of us. And yet, I could *feel* your body when you held me in your arms. You were warm to the touch and your skin felt as soft and pliable as anyone else's. You're not a being of metal. You're as human to the touch as I am.

So then, are you a man?

I mean, clearly, you're an adult male. You seem to possess all the right parts of a man, at any rate. Under that suit of yours, you probably look no different from any other man, even if your physique is more Adonis than average Joe.

But are you actually one of us? Do you bleed? Do you have scars? Do you eat and drink like the rest of us? Do you sleep? Do you have hopes and dreams and...desires? Were you ever a little boy, playing in the mud, climbing trees, running through the local park with a fistful of green army men figures? Do you age? Can you die? Do you...date? Would you ever consider being with someone who isn't as...unique and special as yourself?

Would someone like me ever stand a chance at capturing your attention? Not as a damsel in distress who needs rescuing from a bad situation, but as something *more*? An actual, true friend? A girlfriend?

But...I'm getting ahead of myself.

There's still so much I don't know.

It's driving me crazy, even if I know in my heart that I won't be left in the dark forever.

I'm Lois Lane! Reporter or not, I *always* get my answers.

Yet you remain as mysterious now, three days after you flew me back to my desk, as you did on the night of the shuttle launch. I still know nothing about you. I'm still agonizing over the same basic question.

Who are you?

What's your name? Your *real* name? Not the feeble description of "a friend." Not the moniker I gave you – Superman. Although, you haven't challenged that nickname at all. All the world is calling you Superman because of *my* article. I should be ecstatic that *I'm* the one who coined the world's newest buzzword. I should feel proud that I got to name Earth's newest hero. And I am, in my own way. I guess you must like the name of Superman, since you haven't returned and demanded a retraction of the name. So I guess that's a good sign. But what do your friends and family call you? I doubt very much that your mother or father or brother or sister calls you for dinner with "Superman! The porkchops are ready!"

So...what name were you given at birth? Are you an Adam? A Kevin? A Thomas or an Anthony? Michael or Christopher? Evan? Scott? Or is it something more exotic? Some other-worldly name no mere human tongue can pronounce?

Are you *always* Superman? Do you ever have moments where you slip into a normal life? Do things normal people do, like walk down to the corner deli and order a coffee and bagel? Do you lounge around at home watching sports and drinking beer and eating chips straight out of the bag? You've been around the world in the last few days, making quick rescues here and there, but never stopping to talk to the press. So, clearly, you're still around. You didn't just vanish into thin air, just as quickly as you appeared that night.

Who are you?

I'll find out, I promise you that. Even if Perry *wasn't* breathing down our necks about getting the exclusive interview with you, I'll find some way of uncovering the truth. I'll get to know you, one way or another, even if I have to scream your name from the rooftops, hoping to get your attention. It won't be Cat or Jimmy or Ralph or even Clark, as weirdly disinterested in you as he seems to be. Which, if you ask me, *has* to be born out of some kind of bizarre jealousy. I mean, sure, a farmer from Nowheresville could *never* hope to compete with someone like you, but, when the most impressive thing you've seen growing up is a large cow, someone like Superman should render you mute with awe, not turn you completely dismissive of him. But, Clark's loss is *my* gain. *I'll* be the one to snag the coveted interview with you. *I'll* win all the awards for my expose.

Why?

It's simple.

I care the most.

You could have made your debut with, literally, *any* kind of rescue.

But you saved *me*.

Well...okay, you saved everyone on board the rocket. But you and I seemed to have...a connection. More than just rescuer and rescuee. It felt soul-deep. You trusted me not to scream or make a scene when you air-lifted me back to the bullpen. And I trusted you not to hurt me. No, more than that, I *knew* you wouldn't. I felt like I knew you, though you're still not much more than a handsome stranger in the night. And maybe you felt the same about me. You seemed...comfortable, talking to me, whereas I sensed a reserved warmth in you when you spoke to the colonists, though you seemed at ease talking to Amy Platt when she rolled up to you, unafraid in her wheelchair. You even told her that your mother made your costume for you.

Your mother.

That throw-away comment made you seem so *normal* in that moment. Like you aren't this incredible, god-like entity with powers most of us couldn't dream of having ourselves. Maybe you just said it to put her – all of us – at ease. Maybe it wasn't really the truth. But...I think it *was*. You so freely offered that tiny insight into your life, into who you are, that it felt natural, not pre-scripted or made up on the spot. And it struck me, later, after I really had a chance to think over all you said and did that night, how you might not be *too* different from the rest of us after all.

Who are you?

I'll find out. And I'll make it my mission to befriend you and protect you. Just you wait and see.

THE END