

I Won't Say 'I Told You So'

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Summary: Sometimes, it's best to hold your tongue...even if you're dying to say that you were right all along.

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Author's Note: This is a sequel to "Sisterly Advice." Please read that one first. Thank you!

It's a cool early October night; the kind that makes you want to wander the streets of the city aimlessly until all hours, just because it's so pleasant to be outdoors. It's still fairly warm out during the days, but the nights are starting to bring that crispness that makes me look forward to thick sweaters and pumpkin spice coffees, and Halloween. There's barely any wind tonight however, and the dark sky is clear, though the lights of the city blot out most of the timid stars, leaving only the boldest and brightest to cut through the eternal day-like haze of midtown. I want nothing more than to plop down on a park bench somewhere and just sit for a while, maybe with a cup of coffee from one of the shops that's still open at this late hour. I want to sit and soak up the nice weather and just people-watch for a time. But I can't. I'm too tired. After a double shift, I'm dead on my feet. If I sit down, I'll probably nod off and get mistaken for a homeless person or something. I really need to just get myself home, take the world's fastest, hottest shower and go to sleep.

The good news is, thanks to a short bus ride, I'm almost there. Just another two blocks and I'll be home. Well...not *home*. The apartment isn't mine. It's my sister's and I'm due to move out in just a couple of weeks, once the painters prep my new place and the rug installers can rip up the last tenant's stained mess and lay down fresh, clean, cream-colored carpeting. My landlord says it won't be long now and I'm excited. I love my sister but you know what they say about close quarters and all.

Reaching Lois' building, I head inside, nod at Mr. and Mrs. Lockwood who are out having a smoke, and silently head upstairs. I don't even know if Lois is home yet. She's been gone for the past several days, off on some cockamamie story about... what was it? Pesticides or something? I forget the details and they were hard enough to uncover as she ranted and raved about having to fly out to "the middle of Nowhere" – that is to say, Kansas, where her attractive, polite, and genuinely nice partner, Clark, is from. I don't know if she was madder that she had to go on what she deemed to be such a "lowly" assignment or that it was Clark's hometown she was headed to or that Clark seemed so thrilled to go back home – to a place where he, not she, would be in his element, while she, the city born-and-bred woman, would be like a fish out of water.

I can't resist a smirk as I reach the door and fish my key out of my purse. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall these past few days, watching Lois adjust to a place where she's completely out of her element. I love my sister, but she can be pretty pig-headed and stubborn sometimes, and it might be fun to see her temporarily knocked off kilter. I wonder how many times she's managed to stick her foot into her mouth by saying or doing

something...not dumb but...wrong, I guess is the word I want. I don't wish her ill, but she could use a little humbling once in a while. That's one of the reasons why I sided with Clark a few months back, when he sent her out on a wild goose chase through the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility. Boy, was she *pissed* that Clark had both tricked her *and* that he'd stolen the story she clearly would have gotten if she hadn't been warding off mosquitos and traipsing through the muck all morning. And I wasn't afraid to tell her as much either. When she complained to me about what had happened when she got home that night, I told her she deserved it...maybe not in as many words, but the sentiment was there.

Maybe my attitude was a tad dismissive of her feelings. She looked shocked that I didn't jump to defend her and take her side. And, I admit, I probably could have been a whole lot more sympathetic to her plight. Instead, I gave my opinion to her straight. I said she had a lot of nerve to complain that he'd taken her story, when she had *just* done the same thing to him. Only it was worse that she'd stolen his story, because she was a much more seasoned reporter and should have known better. I pointed out that Clark didn't seem the type to swipe a story unless he was trying to make a point – in this case, that she couldn't push him around and treat him like he was the dirt beneath her high heeled shoe. I'd met him before the incident and I guaranteed that he never would have done what he'd done if she hadn't pushed him into it by stealing his Superman story.

She wasn't thrilled with me but, eventually, she agreed. And I knew that she actually *did* feel guilty for stealing his story. She acknowledged that it has felt crummy when others had done that to her in the past. I was glad she could own up to that at least, even if I knew she'd never admit that out loud to Clark. For Lois, it was a good start, and I figured eventually she'd find a way to make it up to him, even if her "penance" in her mind was that she didn't make an issue of Clark's prank to Human Resources.

But I didn't stop my honest opinion of things with just pointing out how Lois had caused her own misery and how she needed to respect Clark as her equal. I informed her that he was a capable reporter, green as he was. She'd always complained of her partners never being able to keep pace with her. I pointed out that Clark was different. He'd stood up to her. He had good reporter's instincts. She should be *glad* to have him as a partner, not resentful. He was everything she'd always wanted in her previous partners.

I told her to stop giving Clark such a hard time and to give him a chance to befriend her.

So far, she hasn't listened and I think she's making a huge mistake. I used to tell her that all the time when she complained about him, but I've since given up. Once Lois Lane's mind is made up, it can take nothing short of a miracle to change it. In her line of work, that can sometimes be a blessing; she needs that tunnel vision, that dogged determination, to uncover the buried leads she's so skilled at finding. But in her personal life? Yikes! That's all I have to say. She's lost out on a lot of good times and possible good friends thanks to that "Mad Dog Lane" streak her coworkers branded for her.

The inside of the apartment is dark and quiet. My sister isn't home yet. Fine by me. I drop my purse on the table near the door, set the door locks, and strip on my way to the shower. I smell like sour milk, thanks to the bratty seven-year-old who threw his glass at me when he changed his mind and wanted *chocolate* milk rather than *regular* milk. That was at the start of my shift...hours and hours ago. I throw my uniform into the washing machine and start it before I head to the bathroom, where I linger under the hot spray of water just long enough to get clean and wash some of the tension from my shoulders. I'm barely dried and dressed in my pajamas before I pass out into a dreamless sleep.

The room is still dark when I awake – snug and womblike

under my heavy blankets – and I have no idea what awakened me at first. It's not my alarm. I have the day off so I didn't set one. It's not even the barest crack of light streaming through the windows either, because there is none, other than the glow of the streetlights below, which makes the night perpetually orangey and which I'm used to, having grown up in Metropolis. Glancing at the clock, dawn is at least forty-five minutes away, so it's not sunlight either.

And then I hear it: voices.
More specifically, Lois and...
Is that Clark?

I creep to the door and open it with glacial slowness so it won't creak and give me away while I eavesdrop. I know I shouldn't pry but...that's never stopped my sister before. I'm *entitled* to spy once in a while. Right? Turnabout is fair play and all. When the door is ajar just the slightest bit and I can hear better, I stop and sit down with my ear pressed to the open space. I force my breathing to slow and be as quiet as possible. And I listen.

"Thanks for seeing me home," Lois says, and I hear movement in the living room. "You didn't have to."

"I wanted to," Clark says brightly. "It's been a long, weird couple of days and I guess, after everything with Trask, I just wanted to make sure you got home safe. Did you want me to bring your luggage to your room for you?" he offers politely.

"Thanks, but no. My sister is probably sound asleep in there on the air mattress," Lois tiredly says.

"Okay," Clark says easily.

There's more movement as Lois heads into the kitchen. I hear the refrigerator door open. "Can I get you anything? A drink or something?" she offers.

I blink in surprise. That wasn't a forced nicety on her behalf. That was genuine! What the heck happened in the last few days? Because that does *not* sound like my mad-at-the-world-for-having-a-partner sister. I have to bite my lip against the laughter that wants to break free as I have a random thought of Lois being replaced by a clone or something.

"Ugh," she snorts a moment later. "Lucy drank the last of the cream soda."

"I'm fine, thanks," Clark replies.

"Are you sure? A coffee maybe?"

"Well..." he hesitates. "Okay. A quick one. I think we *both* need to get a good rest before we head into the Planet to write our article."

Lois yawns. "I'll call Perry in a bit and let him know our flight got delayed and that we'll be in late today. He won't begrudge us a few hours." She yawns again and I hear the gurgle of the coffemaker as it lurches into action. There's a clinking of mugs as Lois raids the cabinets for what she needs. "Especially once he hears about what happened to you," she adds without elaborating.

"Yeah," Clark agrees in a soft voice that seems to want to diminish whatever it is Lois is talking about. There's a heavy pause and the sound of a foot – his? – toeing the floor. "Listen, Lois? About that?"

"Yeah?" She's only half listening, I can tell by the distraction in her voice.

"Can we...not make a big deal over what happened in Smallville?" he asks and for the life of me, I'm picturing him blushing. He seems like the type who would do so easily.

The sounds of coffee being prepared comes to a crashing halt. "Not make a big deal? Clark, that lunatic tried to kill you!"

"And he failed. It's...over and done with," he says, his words slow and soft, like he's embarrassed and desperately trying to downplay things. "I know it's all relevant to the story and everything but...I kind of just wish I could forget about it. Okay?"

Wait...what? Someone tried to kill him?

Ugh, I want to run out and join the conversation *so* badly, but

that would mean I'd have to admit to eavesdropping. And I *really* don't want to do that. I bite my lip again, hug my knees to my chest, and force myself to stay still.

"That's an awfully cavalier attitude," Lois half-jokes.

"Maybe," he admits after a second or two. "I'm just...I'm not really comfortable with being...well...in the spotlight, that's all. I just want to get the article written and put it all behind us. Smallville is where I grew up. Where some of my happiest memories were made. But these past few days...it didn't really feel like home. Not really. Because of Trask it was...like a nightmare version of home."

Lois sighs noisily, like she's tired of Clark's apparently apathetic view of what seems to be a near-death experience. But then, somehow, the sounds she's making soften. "Okay, I can understand that." The sounds of a spoon clinking around in a coffee mug ring out like chimes. "Here. Just how you like it. I think."

"Thanks."

The chairs in the kitchen scrape against the floor as Lois and Clark pull them out to sit.

"Lois..." There's a hesitation in Clark's voice.

"Yeah?"

"I, uh...I'm not sure how to say this," Clark continues, clearing his throat. "You risked your life back there in Smallville. For me. For my parents. For Wayne. Thank you. I can't put into words how grateful I am."

She sighs again. "What are friends for, right?" I can hear the wry smile that must be plastered across her face.

Friends?

Didn't she leave for the assignment bound and determined to hate him for life? Or at the very least resent his continued existence in the world and as her partner?

Clark chuckles and my God, how Lois can listen to that sound day in and day out without swooning is beyond me. My sister must be made of ice.

"Friends," he repeats, as though the word were scared as a religious artifact.

"I know, I know," Lois replies. "I guess I owe you an apology."

"For what?" he asks.

"A lot of things," Lois quietly responds, her voice thoughtful and slightly bashful.

"No, you really d..." he tries to cut in, but my sister is a steamroller.

"No, *I do*," she insists, and I can picture her raising a hand in a 'stop' gesture. "I wasn't very nice to you when Perry first made us partners. You know I've been screwed over by partners before. I didn't want to believe you were different. I judged you on sight and I shouldn't have. I was mad that Perry wanted me to babysit you...only you really didn't need babysitting, did you? I was angry that you wound up being so competent and so friendly, even when I was doing everything in my power to keep a distance between us."

"I never blamed you for wanting to protect yourself," Clark says in a whisper-soft voice that I almost miss.

"That's just it! I acted horribly and you've never let it bother you! But instead of me realizing what that actually meant, I just kept being a jerk to you, even when I *knew* I should stop and give you a *real* chance." Lois is worked up now, emotional, and forgetting that I'm supposed to be asleep just a stone's throw away.

"So...what changed?" He's amused at least. Probably arching an eyebrow at her.

Lois lets out a breath that even I can hear. "These past few days. It's like...like being away from Metropolis let me see things with fresh eyes. I'm really sorry, Clark, for the way I acted before. I hope you can forgive me."

"Lois, there's nothing to forgive," he assures her, and the tone

in his voice convinces me he's not just saying that. He *means* it.

Lois yawns, the sound muffled by what must be her hand.

"Sorry," she apologizes again.

"Hey, it's okay. I'm beat too. I should really get going and let you get some sleep," he says, brushing off her apology.

"You want me to drive you home?" Lois offers.

"No, but thanks for the offer. I'll grab a cab," he gently tells her.

"It's no problem," Lois presses.

"Lois, you're exhausted. *I'm* exhausted. I'd hate for you to drive in this condition," Clark once again declines. "I'll swing by in a couple of hours and we can head into the office together, if you want. I'll bring the bagels," he offers, appeasing her.

"Okay," she relents after a second or two. Then she adds, "I'd really like that."

The chairs scrape against the floor again as they stand. There's a brief moment of clinking mugs, the kitchen sink running – just to rinse the cups, rather than wash them, I think – and the door opening.

"Night, Lois," Clark says softly.

"Night, Clark. See you in a bit," Lois replies.

I shut the door hurriedly and scoot back to bed only just in time, pulling my blankets up over my head seconds before my sister stumbles her yawning way into the room to collapse onto her bed. She must *really* be tired. She's snoring within minutes. And in the darkness, I smile to myself. Whatever happened in Kansas, my sometimes-frigid sister has thawed a little and made a friend. True, she could have opened her heart months ago and saved herself a lot of anger, resentment, and stress. But she's, apparently, learned her lesson and corrected her mistake. I can hardly wait to get all the details.

Don't worry, Lois. I won't say "I told you so."

It doesn't matter if I was right and you were wrong, although it *does* feel nice to know I was right. I'm just glad you have the one thing you need more than anything right now. A friend. And I have a gut-feeling that this friend – Clark – is going to change your life.

THE END