

# Just a Ruse

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Summary: Set after Over My Head, Lois and Clark find themselves faced with their feelings for one another in a stakeout at the Lexor Hotel undercover as husband and wife.

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Lois Lane leaned down to adjust the tripod, twisting the knob as she let out a groan, continuing to argue her point with Clark, "It's a game, Clark. Are you telling me when you play a game you don't play to win?"

It was their second night of staking out Apocalypse Consulting's office through undercover surveillance. She had had misgivings in the beginning of just how good of an idea being in close quarters with Clark so soon after the embarrassing circumstances that had arisen during the pheromone fiasco with Miranda. She had her doubts, but as with everything, Clark had surprised her.

Clark had remained professional with the undercover assignment, helping keep up the pretense of being two honeymooners in the honeymoon suite when staff was present, requiring an arm around the shoulder or hand intertwining with another.

For the most part, the stakeout had been productive, and pretending to be married to Clark was much more fun than she would have ever anticipated. Their recent round of board games spurred a disagreement on the point of playing games, but with it Clark surprised her with his response.

"I play to play."

"Oh, boy, here it comes..." Lois rolled her eyes, shaking her head.

"But winning and losing is not the sole object, Lois..." Clark argued with her as he held the camera in place while she twisted it onto the stand.

Lois grinned back at him impishly, "Well, this is just perfect. I win, you lose. We're both happy."

Clark's hand brushed against hers and he opened his mouth as if he was going to retort but quickly clamped it shut, grabbing the tripod they had just spent twenty minutes setting up and tossing it onto the bed behind them. He looked toward the bedroom door then threw the comforter back, covering the camera and tripod up with the white linens.

"Are you insane?!" Lois barely had a chance to object before she found herself tossed on the bed with the flick of his wrist. She let out a sharp gasp as he followed her onto the bed and she let out a confused protest, "Clark, this isn't funny!"

Her lips were silenced with the warmth of his mouth covering hers in a soul-shattering kiss and an inaudible moan vibrated across her voice box, forgetting momentarily her complaint as his hands smoothed their way across her ribcage. Pushing him off of her and demanding an explanation crossed her mind briefly in a fleeting thought before her lips parted and she felt the tip of his tongue graze against the edge of her teeth.

<<"You said a lot of things over the last few days that made me wonder ... Well, I guess it made me wonder how much of it was really the love potion and how much of it was possibly how you really felt?"

"I don't know.">>

"Extra towels, yah?"

Her mind registered the sound of the intruding maid's voice as the passion behind the caress of his lips grew to the point that she felt as if she would melt right here in his arms. It was a ruse. She finally seemed to register the realization as her arm slinked around his neck, holding him to her and intensifying the embrace to keep up the pretense.

"Oops, sorry."

<<"Lois, please. Get a grip."

"Believe me, I'd love to.">>

A heavy breath escaped his lips as she felt him depart from her, tearing his mouth from hers and leaving her numbly searching for a way to satisfy the aching longing he'd unwittingly ignited within her. A tingle ran through Lois' spine as she stared up at the ceiling, feeling the heat against her lips as she searched for a coherent thought to ignite her brain. She opened her mouth, searching for a sound as her eyelashes fluttered against her face and she carefully sat up.

She should probably say something.

Anything.

Her gaze drifted to the door that was now closed where the maid had barged inside and nearly caught her and Clark setting up the surveillance equipment. She reached her hand over, clamping it around the lever that controlled the height of the tripod, looking anywhere but across the room where Clark was doing an incredibly accurate impression of a lamp, standing in the corner and staring at the floor as if it were going to save him from something.

<<"I guess, we've gotten closer over the last few months.">>

Her cheeks flushed as she bit her lower-lip, glancing to the window they had been setting up for surveillance. "I, um... Roarke and Harrington will probably be here any minute. We should..." Her voice trailed off as she lifted the tripod up and carried it over to the window where she had been moments ago. Her focus on the lever of the tripod amplified as she felt Clark's hand brush against hers, helping to hold the camera in place as she tightened it into the slots that held it into place.

<<"Look, if you tell me it was just the love drug I'll drop it and won't bring it up again. But if there is something more to it then maybe we should talk about it.">>

"All set," Lois pointed to the window where the camera was pointed directly into the office building of Apocalypse Consulting. She caught Clark's gaze briefly and quickly looked away, "I guess we just wait."

"Lois?"

"Great, it's getting cloudy. Knowing our luck, that'll keep Roarke and Harrington from showing up." Her gaze shifted to the dark clouds rumbling above them, searching for anywhere to focus but on her partner.

"I'm sorry if I startled you earlier. I was just trying to..."

No, anything but that. Couldn't he just let it go?

"Yep, there's the thunder." Lois bit her lower-lip, trying to hold back her frustration as he continued his attempt to talk about what had just happened. She didn't want to talk about it. Wasn't it enough that she would have to bury down her feelings and try to forget how his lips felt pressed against hers and ...

"Lois?" Clark reached his hand over to squeeze her shoulder, turning her attention toward him.

"What?" Lois barked back with a sharper tone than she intended. He withdrew his hand, taking a step back. She let out a heavy breath, glancing at him apologetically. "Sorry. I ... I didn't mean to snap."

His eyes shifted, seeming to be contemplating ... something as his lips smoothed into a thin line. A curl teased the top of his mouth and he let out a heavy breath, "You want to talk about it?"

<<"If I did want to 'talk' about what may or may not have

*fueled this...whatever it is...?"*

*"Then we'd talk." >>*

*<< "I guess, we've gotten closer over the last few months." >>*

She crossed her arms over her chest, leaning her shoulders against the corner of the wall. "Talk about what?"

As soon as the question was out of her mouth she felt his eyes on her, piercing her with his questioning gaze. Though they'd only worked with one another for six months, they had quickly found a rhythm with one another that caught her by surprise. Friendships were few and far between with the competitive edge she had to keep against her competition. It was hard enough to make it as a journalist but making it as a woman in a career that was primarily led by her male counterparts amidst the strongest naysayers telling her she would never be able to make it came with its challenges.

Primarily knowing who to trust.

*<< "Lois, I would never take advantage of you..." >>*

*<< "I've lost an entire day...well, two. I have no idea what has happened and I'm basically having to rely on you to tell me what I should know. I don't like feeling out of control and I don't like relying on anyone else."*

*"What do you want to know?" >>*

*<< "I'm not ready to talk about it...whatever it is."*

*"Then, we won't talk about it." >>*

She had been burned far too many times before by putting her trust in someone and having that trust shattered. Her friendship and overall relationship with Clark felt different though. Especially after what had happened last month with the pheromones. He could have taken advantage of the situation. He could have even used the knowledge of her newly exposed feelings to his advantage, but he didn't. He didn't try to hold any of it over her or tease her about what had happened. He hadn't said a word about it since that morning.

He had given her every opportunity to talk through what they both knew to be true. Her feelings – though she never could have admitted it before – had been there for a few months. A fleeting attraction that she'd dismissed and shrugged off as nothing more than a passing infatuation. She had gone out of her way to deny it in every possible way she could. Emphasizing every flaw in her mind so as not to allow herself to be tempted to go down the path that had led her to a broken heart and crushed dreams.

Despite all of that she found herself unable to deny the irresistible pull that drew her to him and made her long for time to rewind and allow her a chance to indulge just a moment longer in the pretense they had to act on earlier. It was one thing to wonder through the world of "if" in the dark, far away from any prying eyes that could read her like a book. It was another to succumb to her own inner musings and lose the tight hold she held on the barriers she had built up around her.

"Lois?"

Her voice box pulsed against her throat and she swallowed a hard lump in her throat, looking back at him with a weak smile.

"It's just a ruse, right?"

*<< "If I did want to 'talk' about what may or may not have fueled this...whatever it is...?"*

*"Then we'd talk." >>*

A torn expression crossed his face and he relented, nodding his agreement, "Yeah, just a ruse."

THE END