

Sisterly Advice

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Rated: PG

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Summary: After Clark pranks Lois with a trip to the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility, Lucy helps her sister stop being so upset about becoming the butt of the joke.

Story Size: 2,995 words (17Kb as text)

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. All characters, plot points, and recognizable dialogue belong to DC comics, Warner Bros., December 3rd Productions and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise. I don't own the lyrics to "Rockin' Robin" either. They belong to Bobby Day and whoever else is responsible for its distribution.

This story is in response to the 2020 Kerth Challenge #1, which specified that the following five words must appear in the fic: Award, Dog, Tweet, Kiss, and Lunge.

Lois closed her eyes as she stretched, trying to force all thoughts out of her mind, so she could focus entirely on her breathing. She didn't want the distraction of thinking about what a nightmare the day had been; all of it because of her so-called "partner," Clark Kent. Oooh, just thinking about that smug hack from Nowheresville burned her up. She bit back the scream that was building in her throat. The last time she'd screamed in frustration, she'd been loud enough to spook old Mrs. Lansing next door. Fifteen minutes after her outburst, the landlord had been at her door asking if everything was okay.

Still, thinking about what Clark had done had her boiling with barely contained rage. How *dare* he make a fool out of her! How *dare* he *humiliate* her in front of the *entire* newsroom! *She* was the senior member of their forced partnership. Just who the hell did Kent think he was?

Everyone had laughed at her expense today. Everyone. As much as she was loathe to admit it, she'd been knocked down more than a few pegs. The awkward, naïve farm boy she'd been paired up with had managed to pull the wool over her eyes and make her look like an idiot in front of all of their co-workers *and* their boss. She growled lowly as the sound of the laughs and mocking words people had sent her way burned in her memory. Even Jimmy had found Clark's little prank amusing, and he, out of all of the Daily Planet's staff, she could count as her friend. That traitor! How could he side with Clark, after all he and Lois had gone through together over the years? Did he *enjoy* seeing her made to look stupid?

Lois took a deep breath in through her nose and slowly exhaled it through her mouth, in an effort to cool down her temper. At least Jimmy hadn't burst into side-splitting laughter or fallen to the floor in hysterics. He'd snickered a little and thrown a hand over his mouth in an effort to hide his grin, and had had the decency to excuse himself fairly quickly when it had become apparent that he was about to laugh in Lois' face. Lois wasn't sure whether to be upset that Jimmy had been amused at her expense or to be grateful that he'd at least hidden his merriment as well as he had.

Clark though...

Lois clenched her jaw as her fist tightened. She made a lunge forward, as though attacking an opponent in her Tae Kwon Do classes. Her fisted hand struck thin air right around where she

judged Clark's solar plexus would be, even if she wasn't totally visualizing punching him per se. The movement was soothing though, and Lois spent the next few minutes attacking phantom enemies as she kicked, punched, spun, blocked, dodged, and lunged in a tight circle in her cramped living room, until she'd worked up a sweat and felt marginally better as some of her ire cooled.

Calling it quits, she marched off for a quick shower – her third one of the day. The first had been hastily taken in the Planet's locker room; she was silently thankful she'd become smart enough over the years to bring a change of clothing and a bag of essential toiletries to keep in her locker in case of emergencies. The second had been long, hot, luxurious, and taken just as soon as she'd gotten home from work. This third shower was swift and on the cooler side, meant only to wash off the thin sheen of sweat from her exhausted body.

She stepped out of the shower again, toweled off, and changed into her pajamas after blow drying her hair. Then she made her way to the kitchen, on the hunt for the half-empty carton of chocolate ice cream she had stashed in the freezer. She frowned as she dug around, finding plenty of frozen pizzas, frozen pancakes, and meat so caked with freezer burn that it was nearly impossible to tell what was beef and what was chicken. She could have *sworn* the ice cream was on the upper right side, next to the frozen bagels. But the spot was disappointingly empty.

"Lucy," she muttered with minor disgust.

Ever since her sister had moved in with her – *temporarily*, Lois reminded herself – Lucy had helped herself to whatever she wanted. Including, apparently, Lois' emergency stash of ice cream. "It figures," Lois said with sigh, closing the freezer door with just enough force to vent out a little of her new-found frustration.

As if on cue, Lois heard the lock on the apartment door release and the doorknob turn. Lois put her back to her refrigerator and padded into the living room as a jovial voice rang out in the hallway.

"He rocks in the treetops, all day long. Hoppin' and boppin' and singing his song. All the little birdies on Jaybird Street, love to hear the robin go tweet-tweet-tweet," Lucy sang in a slightly off-key, but very enthusiastic way.

Lois crossed her arms and waited as the door swung slowly open and Lucy practically danced her way into the apartment.

"Rockin' Robin tweet-tweet-tweet," Lucy continued, a smile on her face, her eyes closed as she belted out the lyrics.

"Ahem," Lois said quietly, raising one eyebrow at her sister.

Lucy stopped dead in her tracks, the song dying on her lips in the same moment. She kicked the door closed behind her as she spread her arms wide, like she was embracing the entirety of the apartment.

"Oh, hiiiiiiiiii, sis!" she chirped cheerily. "What's up?"

"Oh, nothing. Just wondering if you were coming back from the store...maybe with, oh, I don't know, more chocolate ice cream, to replace the carton you finished off on me," Lois replied evenly, letting only a hint of sarcasm seep into her words. She leaned in closer and sniffed a few times. "How much did you have to drink tonight?" she asked.

"Just enough to make me forget about Roy...Rick...Roger...Ricardo...whatever his name was," Lucy slurred slightly. "Two beers...no...three," she added, thinking about it and ticking the drinks off on her fingers as she remembered.

"I think you mean Ryan," Lois said, shaking her head. "And you've only been dating him a week. Your break up couldn't have been *that* painful."

"It wasn't. But Allison was at the bar and we got to talking and one thing led to another and the next thing I knew, it was four hours and three beers later," Lucy said with a carefree shrug.

"Luce, you need to pace yourself. You've been out at bars every night this week," Lois warned with concern.

Lucy waved a dismissive hand. “I’m fine. Now, what’s this about ice cream? I didn’t eat any ice cream,” she chirped, effectively changing the subject.

“So, you’re saying it... what? Mysteriously disappeared out of the freezer?” Lois asked as patiently as she could, putting her hands on her hips in just the same way as their mother always did when confronting them with something.

“Noooooo,” Lucy retorted with the same patina of forced patience. “I’m saying *you* ate the last of it. Three or four nights ago, if I’m remembering correctly. After you stole your partner’s story,” she added pointedly.

Lois’ answer died in her throat as she was suddenly reminded of that night. Feeling weirdly guilty over stealing the Superman story from right under Clark’s nose – but still trying to rationalize to herself that she’d done him a favor somehow – she’d wallowed in her misery, sitting on the couch, eating ice cream, and sobbing over old Ivory Tower reruns.

“Oh,” she contritely said instead. “Right. Sorry.” Her hands dropped limply to her sides again.

Lucy shrugged as she turned and locked the apartment door. “Don’t worry about it.” She crossed the room and flopped onto the couch after toeing off her shoes. “So... what’s wrong?” she asked, sitting cross-legged and slightly forward as she paid close attention to her sister.

“Wrong?” Lois parroted, feigning ignorance.

“Um, yeah,” Lucy shot back with a wry grin, her tone of voice suggesting she was talking to a child caught red-handed doing something they shouldn’t be doing. She patted the couch cushion next to her. “Sit. Spill,” she commanded gently.

Lois sat with a huff. “Fine. It’s Clark.”

Lucy’s eyes lit up with interest. “Yeah? What did tall, dark, and handsome do to get under your skin this time? Hold a door open for you? Bring you coffee and a Danish? Try to kill you with his Nebraskan charm?”

Lois frowned. “Lucy, be serious! And it’s Kansas,” she reflexively corrected her.

“Whatever. And I *am* being serious. Everything about him seems to tick you off. For no reason. Whatsoever. You forget, sis, I’ve met him. He’s a *nice* guy.”

“Oh yeah, sure,” Lois replied acidly, rolling her eyes hard. “So *nice* that he sent me on a wild goose chase this morning to the Metropolis Sewage Reclamation Facility. So *nice* that I wallowed through the filth and muck and mosquitoes for *hours*.” She violently whipped a hand out to one side, as though showing Lucy how disgusting her morning had been. “So *nice* that I got very, very lost, even with the stupid map he made. So *nice* that my ‘prize’ for suffering through all of that was a Godzilla doll with Superman’s S painted on it. So *nice*,” she growled like a dog ready to tear out Clark’s larynx, “that he *stole my story* while I was on the verge of breaking down thinking I would never find my way out of that hellhole ever again.” She was so angry now that she was on the verge of tears. Stubbornly, she blinked them away before they could fall. She would not allow Clark Kent to make her cry.

“And?” Lucy prompted sweetly, absurdly, as though all Clark had done was swipe a pencil from her desk without asking.

“And? There is *no* ‘and!’ Didn’t you just *hear* me? He *tricked me and stole my story!*” Lois raged, her eyes flashing dangerously.

Lucy shrugged and Lois had to resist the urge to tear out *her* larynx too. “So? Didn’t you *just* do the *same* thing to him?”

The retort in Lois’ throat died as the hot shame of her actions washed over her again. “Well, yeah, but that was different,” she fumbled, trying to justify her own actions.

“Oh yeah? How?” Lucy pressed, raising an eyebrow, daring her to respond.

“Well... he... that is... Superman’s mine and...” Lois stammered before Lucy burst out laughing.

“Superman’s *yours*?” Lucy inquired between peals of laughter. “Oh, sis, I knew you were crazy but this just confirms it!” She slapped her knee as she continued to snicker. “Superman found *you*, not the other way around. And even if you *had* found *him*, he doesn’t belong to anyone. Every reporter in the *world* has a right to cover him.”

“But Clark...” Lois weakly tried to interject.

Lucy steamrolled right over her; a trait she’d inherited from their mother. “Is your *partner*,” she reminded her sister, “whether you like it or not. You should be *helping* each other, not stealing from each other.”

Lois shook her head, fighting down – and mostly losing – the blush that was threatening to redden her face. “Okay, I admit, maybe I took it a *little* far when I stole his story. But if I’m going to be forced to work with him, he’s got to learn to keep up. He can’t be the naïve little farm boy he is.”

“He’s not,” Lucy said pointedly, sobering up from her earlier mirth. “His trick today? Do you *really* think he would have done that if you hadn’t done it to him first?” She didn’t wait for an answer. “No. That was a *message*, Lois. He’s not going to let you bully him around like you’ve done to all the other partners Perry had tried with you.”

Lois opened her mouth to speak, but no words were forthcoming. Lucy nodded once at her sister’s speechlessness.

“And really,” she continued, barely pausing for a breath, “you should be *thankful* for that message. You always complain about the *same* things. ‘My partner has no backbone. My partner is too easy to push around. My partner needs to be able to stand on their own two feet because they are *not* going to ride my coattails. I’m a Kerth Award winner!’ Right?” Lucy challenged.

“Well... okay, sure, I might have said one or two of those things in the past,” Lois allowed hesitantly.

“One or two? Try all of them. In one sitting. Every. Single. Partner,” Lucy said flatly, hammering home each word. “Clark called you out on what you did. He stood up for himself. He didn’t let you get away with it. Sounds like he’s actually the *perfect* partner for you, sis.”

“But I didn’t *humiliate* him!” Lois gasped, in disbelief that her sister was defending that no-good son of a pig that had sent her to a *waste* facility. “I had to throw out my suit! There was *no way* I was *ever* getting that stench out!”

“Look, Lois,” Lucy said sympathetically. “I know he hurt your pride today but... you forget. I’ve met him. He seems like he’s a really decent guy. I don’t think he’s the type that would ever do something like this unless pushed... and, let’s face it, you *definitely* pushed him.”

Lois sighed noisily. “Maybe...” she allowed, letting the word out slowly, like air escaping a deflating balloon. She pinched the bridge of his nose. “I hate to admit it, but... you might be right, Luce. But I can’t just pretend like he didn’t make me look like an idiot in front of everyone.”

“So what?” Lucy asked, throwing her hands up in the air. “He made you look foolish for a fraction of a day. Remember when Claude stole your story? And won an award for it?”

“Yes,” Lois replied cautiously. “You’d better be going somewhere with this,” she added, feeling the old flames of hatred and shame over Claude’s deception flaring back into life.

Lucy didn’t respond to the unvoiced threat in Lois’ voice. “You got him fired and blacklisted so no other paper would hire him,” she reminded her Lois.

Lois looked at her little sister askance. “Are you saying I should get Clark fired?”

Lucy growled in frustration. “No, you numbskull! God, you really can be *dense* sometimes, you know that?” She rolled her eyes at Lois. “I’m *saying* Clark let you off easy by not taking his – very legitimate – grievance with you to Perry and by *not* getting *you* fired.”

Lois' ire turned icy cold as the words hit home. Of course, Lucy was right. Clark *could* have lodged a formal complaint against her with Perry. He could have gone to the HR department. He could have destroyed the reputation she'd laboriously built for herself over the last few years working for the Planet.

But he *hadn't*.

He'd gotten his petty revenge, true. But he hadn't taken it any further than that. When Perry had asked about what had gone on between Lois and Clark that morning, Clark had shrugged it off and had said only that he'd paid back "a prank" that Lois had pulled on him. He hadn't mentioned his stolen story. And Lois had been too embarrassed to mention that he'd stolen hers.

"I guess so," Lois said, slumping her shoulders a little in defeat.

"Look, I'm not saying you need to kiss and make up with him," Lucy offered soothingly, "but you can make an effort get along with him." She paused for a moment, thinking. "Did he laugh at you?"

"Who? Clark? Not outright, but he might have smirked and chuckled," Lois replied warily.

"Did he mock you?"

"He might have thrown my own words back in my face, about this being a lesson," Lois growled through gritted teeth.

"Did he rub it in your face? Remind you of it all day long?" Lucy prodded.

Lois sighed. "No. Once it was over, he dropped the subject."

"Did he apologize?" Lucy asked sweetly, batting her eyelashes in a comical way that made Lois almost lose her hard edge.

"He tried to," she admitted.

"Tried to?" Lucy repeated, looking for clarification.

"I might have walked away from him before he could finish," she confided sheepishly. "But, in my defense, I just wanted to get to the locker room to shower and change. I was smelling...and feeling...a bit ripe."

"So...no harm, no foul," Lucy declared, throwing her hands up in the air like she'd just achieved world peace. She grinned at her older sister.

"Easy for you to say," Lois replied.

"I know what I'm talking about," Lucy lightly defended herself. "Okay, I know I don't have the best track record with men. But take some sisterly advice, Lois. Clark...he's a rare man. Handsome, decent, and he can take whatever you dish out. I'm not saying you have to marry the guy but...give him a chance...a *real* chance...to prove himself as your partner. Stop giving him a hard time. Who knows? Working together, you might just become an unstoppable team."

THE END