

# It's a Super Life

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Summary: A troubling day leads Clark to question just what good he is able to bring into the world.

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Lois felt a cool breeze rustle against her cheek and stirred from what she could only assume was a peaceful night's sleep. Her eyes fluttered open, and her gaze drifted to the side table where the digital clock read '2:45 a.m.'

Her attention moved to the other side of the king size bed, where she felt the cool bedsheets untouched. A heavy sigh escaped her throat, and she swung her legs over the edge of the bed, reaching for her robe, preparing to make her way to the kitchen for a glass of water. She padded her way down the hall and footed down each step until she reached the end of the staircase. She made it as far as the living room when she stopped, spotting Clark sitting hunched over on the edge of the couch.

A frown crossed her face when she saw the ghost-white expression on his face as he stared off into the distance in a daze. She cleared her throat, crossing the distance to claim a seat next to him, unsure what to make of his uncharacteristic behavior.

"Clark? What happened?"

He gave a noncommittal shrug as she placed her hands across his shoulders. "Fine. Just...another rescue."

Her frown turned to worry as she watched him run a weary hand through his hair and sink down on the couch with just enough force to burst one of the pillows behind him. He shook his head, reaching over to toss the pillow on the floor.

"Clark?"

Clark shook his head, running his two weary hands up and down his face, unable to respond as he sat there blankly staring off into the distance. She reached her hand over, placing it on his knee and squeezing it in an attempt to draw his attention away from whatever had consumed him.

He shook his head in despair. "I... didn't get there in time."

She bit her lower lip, trying to process his incoherent rambling, "Didn't get where?"

A hard frown covered his face as he leaned back against the couch, and numbly responded. "There was a ... bomb. They didn't make it."

The words hung in the air, cutting her like a knife as she leaned her head back against his shoulder, trying to make sense of what he was trying to tell her. She quietly reached over to take his hand in hers. The torturous expression on Clark's face hit her like a tidal wave, reminding her once more just how vulnerable the Man of Steel could be.

"It's okay," she reassured him, craning her neck to look up at him.

"No, it's not."

"If I'd just...."

"You can't be everywhere at once." She reminded him.

"It feels like all I'm doing is delivering bad news. What good am I if I can't stop disasters like this?"

Her hands reached up, cupping the sides of his face, smoothing her lips over his with a velvet touch. A shudder escaped the back of her throat as his lips moved across her jaw. A low rumble escaped the back of his throat, and the moisture from his

tears continued to trickle down. Feeling the vibration against her as his head hung down, resting in the crook between her shoulder and neck. Her right hand moved up the back of his head, holding him as the shocking vulnerability and despair continued to shake her to the core.

"Clark..." she ran her hands against his face, holding him to her.

"I'm serious. I spend day in and day out trying to save people and never being able to do enough." He gestured to the window, looking out on the city. "For what? What good is it? It's never enough. I wish I'd never invented Superman. Metropolis would be better off."

"You don't mean that..." Lois urged, trying to talk some sense into him.

"Don't I?" Clark cocked an eyebrow at her. "Ever since he showed up, this city has seen nothing but destruction from people trying to destroy Superman. Just like tonight... Innocent lives destroyed by another attempt to draw Superman out."

"You can't control what other people do." Lois argued, shaking her head. "With all the good you do..."

"At what cost? What good is anything I'm able to do if it continues to cost the people of this city their safety? I just... wish Superman didn't exist."

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Mike listened to the conversation, shaking his head as he looked toward the heavenly skies above him, wondering if his intervention would be requested from up above. Tonight had been painful and torturous; watching so many lives be wiped from the great book of life in an instant weighed heavily on any angel. The discouragement was to be expected, but the disheartened plea to wish his greatest gift to be nullified worried him.

If Superman didn't continue the work he'd been destined to do, then mayhem and chaos would continue to wreak havoc upon the world. The stars above him blinked, signaling silently to take on the mission of restoring hope to Superman.

*'I'll get right on it,'* he nodded to the powers that be. *'How hard can it be to restore a little faith around the holidays?'*

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The cool evening air tickled Clark's skin as he looked across the cityscape, making himself comfortable on the ledge of Metro Towers. He let out a heavy sigh, hoping to escape from the unbearably heavy weight he carried with him from the chaos and destruction Metropolis had been subjected to during the driveby bombing. He went over each decision from the rescue, trying to go over the what-ifs in his mind to discern how he might have been able to save at least one from the fiery destruction. All that was left was the solemn gratitude more lives hadn't been lost.

It had been a holiday.

The buildings were less crowded.

That had been the saving grace to spare more lives from the fiery deaths many had been subjected to.

It had been out of nowhere.

A shriek for help.

A deathly blast.

An explosion that was powerful enough to shake the foundation of the city and break him to the core. His mind drifted to the never-ending river of what-ifs. How different would things have been if the bomb had gone off with the building full of innocent people coming in and out? What would have happened if he had heard the bomb go off just a second before...or later?

He pushed the overflowing anxiety back down and swallowed the hard lump in his throat, choosing instead to focus on the task at hand. A nightly patrol to watch over the city and ensure nothing like this ever happened again. He needed to do something. He had failed the city tonight but was tasked with the torture of continuing this façade as hero to a city that was burdened with him.

The least he could do was keep watch.

"Cold night tonight," a voice remarked.

His ears perked up, looking over his shoulder and spotting a man sitting on the ledge next to him. Clark's jaw tightened, looking around for any sign of how this man could have possibly scaled the tower he was on. No ladder. No climbing gear. No windows leading to the ledge to explain the man's presence.

"How did you...?"

"I show up where I'm needed, Clark, certainly you of all people should understand that." The man responded with a twinkle in his eyes.

Clark stared at the man, feeling a familiarity wash over him as he stared back at him. "Mike?"

"It's certainly been a while since that hilltop, hasn't it?" Mike responded with a wink.

Clark shook his head, recalling the hilltop a few years ago where he and Lois had exchanged their vows with both their parents and friends. It seemed like such a long time ago. So many things had changed since then.

A weak smile crossed Clark's face, and he let out a heavy sigh, hoping the heavy weight of loss that pressed down on him would subside and give him just a glimpse of relief amidst the chaos and turmoil he'd been suffering through. "That feels like a lifetime ago."

"It's hard to see the light when you keep looking down," Mike advised cautiously.

"I just don't know if I can do it anymore." Clark shook his head in disgust. "I put on this cape to try and help people, and all I seem to do is make things worse."

"Clark, everyone gets discouraged..." Mike attempted to reason with him but was quickly dismissed with a wave of Clark's hand.

"Everyone doesn't cause destruction everywhere they go." Clark scowled, growing more and more irritated with Mike's attempts to pacify the guilt he carried with him. "I wanted to do good and all I'm doing is putting a target on innocent lives." He straightened up, floating into a standing position as he pointed to the city below him. "Superman has done nothing but cause misery for this city. It would have been better if he'd never existed." Then with a defeated sigh he added mournfully, "Better if I never existed."

With that he flew off the ledge of the building, focusing on pushing the past several hours out of his mind. The midnight clouds whispered against his face with a cool tingle. He let out a heavy sigh, raising his arm up above his head, flying against the turbulent winds.

The cold air against his face brought a calm over him as he found himself circling over the bay. He found an alley by Louie's bar and changed back into street clothes, brushing off the conversation with Mike earlier. The man seemed to show up at different times in his life, offering pearls of wisdom, and most of the time, his advice was sound and helpful. Tonight, however, his pearls did nothing for the aching guilt that consumed him.

He had failed.

Not one victim had survived the bombing.

He couldn't rationalize any of it.

He couldn't accept a 'better luck next time' when he had failed in such a profound way.

He turned the corner, heading to Louie's intent on keeping his watch closer to where most of the trouble rose up. He turned the corner and frowned when he saw the building that had always been Louie's had changed to red brick lodge with the steel sign '*LexCo Rental Properties*' outside the door.

A red and white sign stood outside the manicured lawn '*For Rent*'.

Clark did a double-take, uncertain how to process the presence of his former enemy's name staring him in the face.

"What the...?"

He looked around, noting even the street signs were different. '*Hobbs Street*' now read '*Lexington Rd.*'

"Hey! Watch where you're going!" a voice called out to him.

"Sorry," Clark responded, feeling shell-shocked as he stared at the monumental changes to the area. The entire residence and small businesses had been changed into building complexes with perfectly manicured lots.

"There's no loitering here in LexCo Properties. Unless you've got business here, you best get going!" the man ordered, flashing Clark with his flashlight. Clark caught a glimpse of the man's security badge, which read 'Olsen', and immediately recognized the man's face.

"Jimmy?"

Jimmy's frown moved from annoyance to curiosity, "Who wants to know?"

"It's me, Clark," Clark gestured to himself, looking around the unfamiliar street. "Clark Kent."

"That supposed to mean something to me?" Clark asked.

"Jimmy, it's Clark Kent. From the Daily Planet. We've known each other for ten years." Clark stammered out, unsure how to appease Jimmy's request of him.

A snort escaped his throat, and Jimmy let out a sharp cough, "The Daily Planet shut down eight years ago. Has been ever since LNN went worldwide. Nobody reads newspapers anymore."

"Luthor News Network, right," Clark feigned recognition.

"You hit your head or something?" Jimmy asked. "I can get a patrol to take you over to Luthor Hospital."

"No, I...I'm fine."

"Well, you best be getting on. We don't issue curfews to Luthor City for the hell of it." Jimmy said matter-of-factly.

Clark's head turned around, shaking his head. "Luthor City? You mean Metropolis, don't you?"

"What's with you? This is Luthor City. Has been for the last ten years... You sure you're not nursing a knock on the head or something?"

"No, no, no..." Clark backed away, pointing to the entrance that '*LexCo Business Park*' and nodded to Jimmy. "I must have been mistaken."

He reached the end of the business park, turning to see if Jimmy was watching him before making a sharp left to see another street sign that had changed. "What is going on here?"

"Quite a sight, isn't it?"

Clark turned around, surprised to see Mike standing next to him in the cool winter night. "Mike, do you know what's going on here? Luthor is supposed to be in prison..."

"You asked for a world where you and Superman never existed. This is it. Lex Luthor was never exposed as a criminal mastermind. He's continued his thirst for power unopposed for years," Mike explained, gesturing to the sign with a picture of the multi-trillionaire.

"What happened to all the neighborhoods and businesses that used to be here?" Clark asked numbly.

"Gone," Mike explained with a shrug of his shoulders. "In a world without Superman or Clark Kent there is no one to speak up against the tyranny Lex Luthor brought to the city."

"This is insanity," Clark shook his head, slapping the side of his face as he attempted to lift off to fly away.

"I'm afraid you won't be flying anywhere, Clark," Mike explained, gesturing to the sky above them. "In a world where you don't exist, your superpowers don't exist either." Mike smiled, winking at Clark as he explained, "You've been given a great gift, Clark, a chance to see what the world would be like without you in it."

"This has to be some sort of trick," Clark said, shaking his head. "Kryptonite. There has to be some Kryptonite."

"No meteorites are at work here, Clark," Mike explained

calmly.

Clark shook his head, unwilling to listen further as he slogged through the snow-covered road, "This has to be some sort of dream or nightmare I'm having here. I'm going home."

"Home?" Mike called after him. "What home?"

"What home?" Clark echoed with annoyance. "You know what? You're crazy!" With that, he stormed past Mike and walked past the bay, stopping at the intersection where a sign read '*Luthor City*'.

The city he had come to know and love over the years was but a distant memory and in its place was a place of activity and lights. Gone were the small businesses and homes he had come to know over the years. Each corner was covered with pawn shops, casinos, and dance clubs. High rise buildings covered the downtown city.

The ice and snow beat against his face as he turned the corner, making his way to the residence he knew by heart. Everything would be fine. He just needed to go home and rest. Just wait till he told Lois about this...

He reached the street where the home he and Lois had shared for the last five years only to be given another cold hard slap with chaos as he looked across the rundown neighborhood with a demolition crew in the center and a sign that read, '*Coming Soon LexCo Condominiums!*'

"What is going on here?" Clark muttered aloud. He walked past the barriers keeping everyone out of the rundown neighborhood set up for demolition. He approached the home he had known for so long, walking up the steps. The doors were nailed shut, and windows boarded up. He looked around bewildered as he continued to search for any sign of the life he'd built here with Lois.

"She's not here, Clark," Mike's voice echoed in his mind, and he looked over his shoulder in surprise, turning to see Mike standing behind him.

"Who's not here?" Clark asked, skeptically.

"Lois. You don't exist. You never bought this home. You never married Lois and ...." Mike explained.

"This is insanity," Clark turned to accuse Mike. "What have you done with her? Where's Lois?"

"Gone, Clark," Mike explained calmly. "Your family doesn't exist here." He let out a heavy sigh, reaching his hand out to place it on Clark's shoulder, "Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives, even more, when it's as significant as yours. When he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"

Clark moved down the steps, turning toward the park where he and Lois had enjoyed many walks only to find himself in the middle of a cemetery. "What in the world?"

Mike cleared his throat, placing a hand across Clark's shoulder, "So much impact in the small gestures one man makes throughout his life. Hope drives so many decisions and helps so many...."

"Where is Lois?" Clark turned on his heel to look at Mike, feeling his frustration grow with each second. Mike was silent, following him through the cemetery until Clark found a gate leading to the exit. Near it was a large tombstone with the familiar logo from the Daily Planet on it. The name 'White' was etched into the stone. Clark shook his head adamantly, backing away from the headstone in denial. On the headstone, the name 'Perry White' was etched in large print with the inscription below it, 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Perry White was all of these things and more.' Clark swallowed hard when he saw the year Perry had passed on. '1936-1994'

"A heart attack. Losing the Daily Planet broke Perry and left him without a purpose." Mike explained.

"No, he helped me bring Luthor down. He helped expose him. He...."

"Was shunned as a lunatic when his suspicions over Lex Luthor came to light. With no one there to help him, he lost everything..." Mike explained to him gently. "Don't you see what a difference you made? You had a wonderful life. Do you really want to throw it all away and give up hope?"

A light shone in the distance, and Clark watched as a woman with long dark hair held a small Christmas tree in her hand and approached Perry's tombstone. The way she walked and moved felt so familiar. Surely it couldn't be...

"Well, another year is gone, Perry." Lois' voice cracked as she spoke, seeming to hold back the heavy emotions that were tumbling within her. She dabbed at her eyes, setting the tree on top of Perry's tombstone, brushing the snow and debris off of it. "I never was good at holidays, but with daddy's stroke and mom's cancer diagnosis last month I figured it wouldn't hurt to have a little nostalgia. I really miss you. I wanted so desperately to be the best and do something to help make the world a better place. I can't even call this city my home anymore. Everything is controlled by Lex Luthor, and every story is a cog in his master plan... I've never felt more useless." She looked away, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "Which is why I know you'll understand my reasoning for leaving. I just can't stay here any longer."

Clark felt the overwhelming urge to reach out and touch her. "Lois?"

She jumped, startled by the sound of her name and Clark pulled back, uncertain how to explain his presence there. "Who are you?"

"Lois, it's me, Clark," he tried to call out to her as she backed away from him, taking a fighting pose.

"Look, buddy, I don't know who you think you are, but you can just keep moving. I have a license to carry, and I am a regular at the Luthor Firing Range every Thursday."

"She doesn't know me," Clark realized, looking helplessly at the fearful eyes of his wife – who wasn't his wife, but rather a shell of the woman he had come to know and love over the last ten years.

"She never found love, and that which she found her purpose for was stripped from her by the hands of Lex Luthor," Mike explained. "You see how impactful you are to each life you've touched over the years. Superman and even Clark might have their failing moments, but a world without Superman means a world without hope."

"I've seen enough," Clark pleaded, backing away from Lois and clamping his eyes closed. "I just want to go home."

The snow continued to fall around him, and everything disappeared. He blinked, looking around the familiar street that had transformed back into his neighborhood. He let out a heavy sigh, breathing in a sigh of relief when he saw the snow-covered patches along the road leading up to his home.

'Home.'

With a rush of adrenaline, he moved at super-speed, flying inside, desperate to reaffirm to himself that he was indeed home. The chaotic evening hung heavily over him and he moved through the house, noting the familiar knick-knacks and handmade drawings from his son hanging on the refrigerator. He spotted Lois' sleeping figure on the couch and moved to her side, reaching his hand out to cup her cheek, brushing the stray hairs from her face.

Her eyes flinched from the cold against her skin.

"Sorry," he whispered as her eyes fluttered open.

"Hey," her eyes fluttered open, peering at him with a half-smile. "You okay?"

"I am now," he nodded, leaning in to kiss her.

She reached out to wrap her arms around him, holding him to her with the sweet serenity of her embrace, "I know it's hard to just brush off a rescue like tonight, but everything Superman does helps inspire hope in the world. You can't save everyone. You

can't be everything to everyone. You help where you can when you can."

"I didn't save anyone tonight, Lois," Clark reminded her.

She placed a hand on his chest, "Are you going to give up Superman?"

"No," he shook his head.

"Then you saved one." She whispered, leaning up to kiss him.

"I love you," he murmured in her ear.

"I love you too," she whispered back to him.

THE END