

Truth, Lies and Smart Kids

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Summary: Lois finds herself searching for companionship and reaches out to Clark after Amy Valdez is placed with her aunt. What happens when the truth of the encounter with Lex Luthor and Superman behind closed doors makes its way to Lois?

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Lois Lane stalked through the grocery aisle, searching for the last few ingredients to satisfy her intense cravings for chocolate fudge sundaes. She reached the end of the aisle, eyeing the selection of whipped cream with a critical eye and tapping her hand across the shopping cart handle as she chewed on her lower lip.

Ice cream.

This was what she had been reduced to as she surfed through the range of emotions between being relieved, angered, and moreover feeling an intense sense of loss. She had gone to great lengths for a story before. She had more than enough awards and accolades to prove her dedication to her work. It wasn't like she expected some sort of award or even a pat on the back. She just felt like there should have been something more than a phone call and a rushed goodbye in the middle of Beckworth State School's lobby to go from foster parent to ...

'What?' her mind taunted her as she tried to put a name to what or how she felt.

That was the problem.

There was no name for it. There was no tangible term to describe it. Not one that she could put her finger on rather. The aching hole that continued to taunt her pushed her to a place she didn't like. She felt almost as if...

'Quit it!' she ordered herself, reaching for the red bottle of whipped cream on the shelf and shoving it into the cart.

She was fine.

Amy would be much better off. She and Inez would be far away from experimental drugs and doctors that wouldn't take advantage of her vulnerable circumstances. So why did she feel like she had just been kicked in the gut?

She rounded the corner to where the cash registers were lined up, already preparing herself for the judgmental stares at a cart full of junk food and chocolate cravings. She didn't really care what anyone thought at this point. She just wanted to dig into the mocha chocolate ice cream and indulge in her long-awaited treat without the heavy weight looming over her.

Clark laid on the couch and tossed his football above his head, listening to the game as the announcers yelled over one another through the television speakers. He tried to focus on the game but found his mind filled with turmoil as each what-if scenario ran through his mind. His conversation with Phillip and Lex Luthor weighed heavily on him.

The poison that had been developed by Luthor to use those kids as guinea pigs for what he still couldn't be sure, but there was no denying the surprise on Lex Luthor's face when Phillip had admitted to consuming and fixing the Metamide 6 formula. A move that had probably saved the young man's life.

<< "Even you're not fast enough to stop me from using this. Mr. Luthor here could end up with the I.Q. of a radish." >>

"My mind is so big..."

"You took Metamide 6? But you're still..."

"Smart? Oh, yes. There was a flaw in the formula, but I fixed it." >>

Poison.

That was the lament translation STAR Labs had provided when analyzing the compound of Metamide 5. It was terrifying knowing the man who claimed to care for the city and who also donated to charities that were supposed to help children and those less fortunate was the same man funding such a deadly experiment.

He'd been the subject of Luthor's tests time and time again over the last few months and knew all too well how far he was willing to go, but these were kids.

No superpowers.

No invulnerability.

His inner thoughts were jarred to the present as a hard thud came from the other side of his front door. A quick scan of the door revealed his partner, Lois Lane, behind the knock. He reached for the glasses sitting on the table and made his way to answer the door.

"Lois?"

"Ice cream?" She held up a canister of chocolate and vanilla ice cream inside the bag in her hands.

"Sure." He stepped aside, allowing her to enter the apartment and followed her with a bewildered expression.

She flashed a quick smile at him as she set the bag in her arms down on the kitchen counter and began pulling out item after item one would find in a dessert of some kind. Nuts. Sprinkles. Brownie Bites in a bakery box. A jar of fudge.

"Well, the Smart Kids are no more. The notes from Dr. Hamilton have been destroyed..." Lois pulled out a jar of maraschino cherries and set it down. "I figured after the weeks we've had chasing the Smart Kids down we both deserve a little celebration." She flashed him a weak smile. "I would of course have invited Superman if I knew how to get ahold of him, but hey... ice cream sundaes always hit the spot, right?"

His eyebrows rose a centimeter as he gazed at the spread on his kitchen counter. They closed cases all the time, but this was the first time she'd shown up on his doorstep to 'celebrate' closing a case. He wasn't one to look a gift horse in the mouth, but he couldn't shake the feeling in his gut that told him this was much more than Lois wanting to celebrate another headline.

He managed a quick nod in her direction, offering up a well-meaning smile before turning to grab some bowls from the cupboard and spoons from the drawer. Lois had already found the ice cream scoop and was in the process of breaking the seal on the ice cream.

"So, you think we'll be having any follow-ups on the Smart Kids?" he asked, attempting to gauge Lois' state of mind as he watched her scoop out a tight round ball of chocolate and vanilla into her bowl.

"I don't know." Lois shrugged. "I mean, Professor Hamilton is dead, and his notes were destroyed by Lex Luthor." Lois' face fell into a grimace as she tossed toppings on her sundae. "Though anything's possible, right? We don't really know the effects of Metamide 5."

"Or if Hamilton was working alone," Clark pointed out.

<< "Normal is boring."

"Different is worse. I know. Different is never quite fitting in, never quite blending in. Different is wishing you weren't."

"Phillip, you're not different. You're special." >>

"You think he was working for someone?" Lois' forehead creased in perplexion as she topped her sundae off with a maraschino cherry.

"Possibly," Clark remarked evasively, scooping out his own ice cream into a bowl and selecting a few toppings to go with it.

“Most scientists have to receive funding from somewhere to continue with their research, and I doubt Beckworth had the funds.”

“I guess there are a few unanswered questions,” Lois agreed with a nod, taking a seat at the table across from him.

Clark nodded. “Well, maybe when we’re answering some of those questions, we can check up on Amy and Enez and see how they’re adjusting.”

Lois bit her lower lip, shaking her head. “I’m fine.”

“I’m not saying you aren’t,” Clark insisted.

“I mean, what do I care, right? It was just a temporary situation. I got what I needed, and the letter to their mother helped get Amy’s aunt involved.”

“Of course,” Clark nodded, preparing himself for the inevitable rambling tirade he was sure would come bursting out at any moment, declaring how ‘fine’ Lois felt she was.

“Though one has to wonder why in the world it took her aunt as long as it did to come into the picture.” Lois jabbed her spoon into her bowl before taking a hard bite.

“Maybe circumstances changed?” Clark suggested. “The important thing is Amy and Enez are together and happy, right?”

“Right.” Lois nodded in agreement changing the subject. “It was a good thing Superman was able to talk Phillip down before he hurt Lex Luthor.”

“Yeah.” Clark felt his face fall into a frown, unable to hide the distaste that overtook him, reminded of how he had a hand in helping Luthor continue to inflict his dangerous will on the people of Metropolis.

<< “I had no idea Dr. Carlton was using his research grant at LexLabs to experiment on you kids. I’m shocked, of course, but I take full responsibility. Let me make it up to you and the others.” >>

“What’s wrong? Not a fan of the brownie bites?” Lois asked, gesturing to the ice cream in front of him that was melting into a swirl of chocolate and vanilla before his eyes.

He let out a heavy sigh, shaking his head. “No, I just ... I don’t think Luthor was in any real danger from Phillip.”

“He kidnapped him.”

“To get everyone to leave him and the other kids alone,” Clark reminded her.

“Well, Lex said he was threatening to inject Metamide 5 into him...”

“And Superman said it was a ruse,” Clark responded on instinct, catching himself after the words had been uttered. He watched as her face changed from defensive to intrigue in a matter of seconds and her eyes narrowed, staring him down in perplexion as she silently willed him into revealing how he knew what Superman had said.

“I mean...when I was talking to him after the police arrived,” Clark stammered, hoping Lois would believe his lie as he feigned a calm he didn’t feel.

The dangerous arch in her eyebrows seemed to all but disappear as she took another bite and asked quietly, “Why are you waiting till now to tell me?”

“I guess with all the commotion, it just...slipped my mind,” Clark explained lamely.

‘Liar.’

“If it was just a ruse, then why was Lex making it out like his life was in danger?” Lois wondered aloud.

“Superman said Phillip did make it seem like he had Metamide 5 in the syringes but then made it clear at the end it had been a cherry flavored candy.” Clark shrugged his shoulder. “I’m not sure. Maybe he didn’t register what was going on, or maybe he wanted...”

“...wanted to make it seem like he survived a more dangerous situation than he had?” Lois finished for him, twisting her mouth into a tight ‘oh’ as she tapped her fingers on the table.

<< “As long as you stay the way you are, men like Lex Luthor will find ways to use you for their own selfish ends.”

“He wants to take it away from you. I want to give.” >>

“Maybe, maybe not.” Clark shrugged. “Who really knows with Luthor.”

“Really?” Lois mused, shaking her head. “No conspiracy theory that Lex is behind this plot too?”

“I don’t accuse him of everything,” Clark argued, taking a bite of his mushy ice cream.

“Just everything that leads back anywhere remotely to the companies he owns.” Lois smirked back at him. “Which, by the way, is almost every major business in Metropolis.”

“If it has his name on the side of the building, wouldn’t you think he’d know what’s going on there?”

“Maybe, maybe not.” Lois took another bite of her ice cream.

“He’s either a horrible businessman who is clueless or a *really* good businessman who is also a criminal.” Clark bit into the last of the brownie bites covered in ice cream. “You can’t have it both ways.”

Lois frowned, seeming to finally get what he had been trying to tell her for the past few months without the usual comeback of trying to prove him wrong. “I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to see if any of Lex Luthor’s businesses have any partnership with Emil Hamilton.” She tapped the spoon on the side of her bowl.

“Are you admitting I have a point to my suspicions?” Clark asked, surprised.

“A good investigative reporter looks at everything from all angles, right?” Lois prompted him.

“Of course.”

“And Kent, if this does pan out don’t get cocky. It’s not a good look.”

Clark chuckled, shaking his head. “Whatever you say, Lois.”

Lois smiled, grinning ear to ear, seeming to have prompted herself out of the dark clouded mood she had been in upon her arrival. “So, I guess I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” he agreed, watching silently as she gathered her things. He couldn’t help but wonder just what tomorrow might bring with this change in Lois’ perspective of Lex Luthor. He’d spent months screaming into what felt like a void over his suspicions on Lex Luthor and somehow, all it took was a slip of the tongue to get her to take a second look.

Was it really that simple?

Only time would tell.

He certainly couldn’t wait to find out.

‘Tomorrow.’

THE END