

Super Tired

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Summary: Being a new parent is exhausting — rewarding but exhausting — even when you have superpowers.

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Author’s Note: Here’s a little something that actually stayed rather short! I was hunting for a plot bunny that I could transform into a ficlet for Ficlet Friday, but RL seemed to be against me. So...now it’s Happy Monday, which isn’t as alliterative or descriptive, but oh well! Thank you to SuperBek, who cheered me along and helped me do way more troubleshooting/brainstorming about logistics than maybe was required for a fic this length, but she humored me anyway. Enjoy!

Clark was beyond exhausted as he made his way home, flying as fast as he dared in his current condition. He wouldn’t make it home any faster to Lois and the baby if he clipped the side of a building on the way. Still, he had to hurry. Lois had an interview with Senator Golding at 3:30 p.m., and she needed him home five minutes ago.

He shook his head and blinked his eyes widely several times. Almost home. He could hear their heartbeats already, and their brownstone was coming into view. As he landed on the terrace, a heaviness seemed to settle on him, but he’d made it. He hurried inside, where Lois was already waiting, holding little six-month-old Ellie, who was crying again instead of sleeping. The poor thing had been sick for almost a week.

“I’m so sorry, honey,” he said in a rush as he gathered Ellie from her and started trying to settle her. “There was a shooting on my way back from the bridge collapse, and I had to — ”

“I know,” she said softly, pausing to put her hand on his upper arm, brushing her thumb across the spandex. “It’s okay. Love you.” She came in for a quick kiss on the lips, then one for Ellie on the top of her head, before gathering her briefcase and keys and rattling off a list of things. “Jimmy’s coming by later to drop off the research for the Snyder investigation. Ellie just ate, and I changed her. Oh, and she had ibuprofen an hour ago, so if she’s still feverish and uncomfortable, you have to wait until 4 p.m. for the Tylenol. You know, I’m still not entirely sure that works on her, but in any ca — ”

“Honey, you’re late. It’s okay. Just go.”

“Right. You’re right. I just hate when she’s sick.” Her eyes were full of concern as she took a longing look back at their daughter.

“I know. Me too.”

“Okay, right. Leaving,” she said, straightening and adjusting her suit coat and the shoulder strap of her briefcase. “I love you.”

“Love you too,” he said, still rocking to soothe Ellie, though she had quieted, at least.

On her way out the door, Lois turned back for a moment. “Oh, almost forgot — Perry said he needs the follow-up on your shelter piece by morning. Bye! Love you!”

He nodded as she turned away and closed the door behind her. Focusing all his attention back to the baby in his arms, his heart clenched with a renewed helplessness. Just like Lois, he hated seeing her sick and miserable, especially when there was nothing to be done but hold her.

Though, there was something to be said for the feeling he got when she was snuggled and sleeping, warm against his chest. The fact that he was her Daddy and that she was so comfortable with and comforted by him was...it’d been six months since Lois had given birth, but the fact of that knowledge — that feeling and connection — was still a marvel to him.

“My poor Ellie Bean,” he said softly, raising her up to place a kiss on her forehead. Thankfully, it didn’t feel overly warm. “What should we do while Mommy is off intimidating allegedly corrupt politicians, huh?”

Clark swept his cape to the side a bit before sitting down in the recliner by the window, hoping he could glean a little energy from the last of the day’s sun while he tried to get Ellie to take a nap. As his body settled in the plush chair with her still cradled in his arm, he sighed with relief. His bones didn’t really get weary, but oh, was he tired, and the comfort of the chair and knowing that he definitely wasn’t going anywhere for the next few hours was such a welcome feeling.

It’d been like this all week, this delicate but frantic game of tag he and Lois were playing. Even being in daycare for the last few months, Ellie hadn’t really gotten sick very often, and certainly never for this long at a stretch. Until now, one of them taking the occasional day off to stay with her while sick hadn’t been an issue, and so...they’d failed to make a plan for if Ellie was ever sick for longer than a day or two at a time.

And now here they were, on day five of Ellie Watch, and they were *both* exhausted. Clark, needing less sleep than Lois, had tried to take the brunt of the near-sleepless nights with a congested baby when he could. But they’d also both been trying to keep to as much of a full schedule as possible, given that their stories were ongoing, the

investigations time-sensitive.

Of course, then there were the Superman rescues. Even keeping things to only the absolute most urgent, he had still seen an increase in his activity this past week. Maybe they should think about bringing his mom up to Metropolis next time Ellie got sick, or if she didn't feel better by morning.

Breathing a heavy sigh that turned into a yawn, he repositioned Ellie so that she was upright and chest to chest with him. She gave some gurgles and coos and a small, rumbling cough that tore at his heart to hear, but then she seemed to snuggle in closer to his chest, her little fingers trying but failing to grab hold of the spandex. He put a finger up for her to clasp onto and pushed the recliner back so she could settle a bit more easily.

For what seemed like long, blissful minutes, Clark soaked in the feeling of warmth and connection he got from having Ellie calm and settled against his chest. Part of him wondered whether it was the sun or Ellie providing the gradual and steady thread of strength he felt spreading slowly throughout his body, recharging every depleted cell in his body as he drifted off to sleep.

Clark woke when he thought he heard the sound of a table leg scraping across the floor. He could still feel Ellie's warmth and rhythmic breathing against his chest, so he didn't move and only opened his eyes slowly.

Jimmy.

Oh! Well, that was a relief. He didn't really want to have to deal with an intruder with a baby in tow, especially a sick baby who was finally asleep.

"Hey, Jimmy," he said softly.

"Oh!" Jimmy almost yelped, though he seemed to realize he was too loud and immediately lowered his voice. "I, uh...I didn't realize... I'm sorry! I was trying not to wake you... You looked so peaceful with Ellie, and she's been sick — well, I guess you know that, uh...anyway... Here's some research Lois asked me to bring; it took me longer than I thought, and shoot, sorry...I should probably just head out. Sorry."

"It's okay, thanks, Jim," Clark whispered back. "We've been looking forward to reviewing that research. Thank you!"

Jimmy narrowed his eyes a bit at him, but then busied himself with straightening the table he'd bumped, and he started backing his way up to the front door. "You're, uh, welcome... I'll see you...soon enough, I'm sure. Uh, bye!"

Clark watched as Jimmy edged his way quickly out the door, closing it very slowly and quietly behind him. Clark shook his head, far too tired to make heads or tails of Jimmy's odd behavior.

It wasn't long before he found himself drifting back to

sleep.

Clark yawned lightly as he and Lois walked down the ramp into the bullpen, and he followed Lois as she made a beeline for the coffee station. They'd both managed to get a better night's sleep last night, but Ellie had still been sick this morning. Lois had agreed it was long past time for them to bring in reinforcements, both wishing they'd thought of it sooner. So earlier this morning, he'd brought his mom up to watch Ellie for the day.

"Hey, guys!" Jimmy greeted, coming up to lean on the railing while he chatted. "I guess since you're both here, little Ellie's feeling better?"

"No, sadly not yet. She's still a bit congested," Lois said as she stirred her coffee.

"Oh, then did you..." Jimmy's voice fell to a whisper. "Did you get Superman to babysit again? That's so cool that he does that for you! And I thi —"

"Huh?" Clark interrupted, confused and panicked for a second.

Thankfully, Lois was quicker on her feet. "Ah, no, not today. And really, that was a one-time thing — yesterday, Clark was feeling *particularly* exhausted, and Superman did us a favor." She gave Clark's arm a squeeze, though whether the emphasis was meant as a subtle warning for him or a justification for Jimmy, Clark couldn't be sure.

Clark grinned sheepishly. "Yeah, guilty as charged. I must have been napping when you came to drop off those files yesterday!"

Jimmy's eyes clocked between them, and Clark was all of a sudden thinking it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world if their friend figured things out. But they were still likely in the clear for now.

"And Superman stopped by again this morning, asking if we needed anything — very sweet of him — and he very graciously flew Clark's mom up here to watch Ellie for a few days."

"Sweet!" Jimmy said, grinning. "I wonder if I could get a free flight sometime."

Clark did his best to hide the tightness in his smile and shrugged. "You never know, Jim. But Superman did make it seem like this was a one-time deal. He's glad to help out friends when he can, but it's not like he's an airline or a babysitter."

"Ah, you're right. I was just daydreaming anyway." Jimmy shrugged as well. "Still, I think it's so cool that Superman babysat for you!"

THE END