

# 110 Kisses: I Need You

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Summary: When Clark tries to tell Lois goodbye — for good — because he believes he’s responsible for the heat wave, will she manage to convince him to stay? Sort of an episode fix-it for the episode “Man of Steel Bars” and also a self-imposed challenge to write 110 ficlets with kisses based on a list of 110 prompts on tumblr.

Story Size: 2,595 words (14Kb as text)

This story is part of the “110 Kisses” series. [View all the stories here.](#)

**Author’s Note:** So, I saw 90sfangirl79 on AO3 post an awesome one shot based on a prompt from [this list](#), and she has a whole collection of them (and I’m way behind on my fic reading). And then I had this idea that I should write a kiss for every dang 110 prompts on this list. So...we’ll see if that works out. LOL! Here’s number 1. “I need you.” This is pretty much a “Man of Steel Bars” fix-it fic, so there’s a good deal of dialogue I just took from there. And I know I was trying to do a kiss for each ficlet... I...um... there’s still a kiss in here, but barely. I’ll try to do better next one. Thank you to SuperBek for help getting me untangled when I was a bit stuck! Oh, also? I’m not sure WHY this came out as first-person, present tense POV... I don’t really do either of those things! So, surprise! But also a big YAY and another thanks to SuperBek because I’m 100% sure I’m a better writer—with a newly expanded skill set now—thanks to her.

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My brain feels foggy as I hear him say my name, and he touches my shoulder. “Clark,” I say, a page from the book I dozed off on sticking to my face briefly as I lift my head. “I must have fallen asleep.”

“It’s late, Lois,” he says softly. “You should go home.”

The rest of the sleep clears from my mind as I remember exactly what I had been doing. “There’s no time,” I say as I pick up half the science textbooks on my desk. “Here, take these over to your desk and...”

I trail off when I look over to his desk and see how bare it is, the surface of it cleared and a cardboard box on top, his belongings peeking out of it. My heart clenches. “What are you doing?”

“I’m...leaving Metropolis,” he says, and my heart starts sinking, but I stop it.

He doesn’t mean it. “Clark, I’m a little too tired for jokes.” I set the books back down on my desk.

“It’s no joke.”

I look back up at him, and I can’t stop my heart from sinking this time when I see the hesitant look of regret on his face. I’m not even quite sure why it matters so much to me, and I still have trouble believing what he’s saying.

“Leaving? As in quitting?”

“I’m going to work for the Smallville Post. Managing editor.” He stares for a beat, and I can tell he’s serious. But if he is, why isn’t he happy about it? “I guess I’m just not cut out for big city life.”

Is that...all? I still don’t want to believe him. “Well, nobody’s cut out for big city life. That’s what makes it so exciting,” I tell him as I pat him gently on the chest for emphasis, trying to curb his dejection and my reaction to it, but my stomach is clenched and I have to sit down.

“Look...I know there’s no good time to—”

“We’re in the middle of a crisis,” I cut in, clinging desperately to the anger I feel because I can’t focus on why this hurts. There’s no time. “Superman is on the line and you’re out of here?” A note of hysterical desperation edges into my voice, but I don’t care.

I watch him flinch, bristle at the words. Good. But then that tic in his jaw appears, the one that means he’s serious, that he’s fighting back emotions that he’d rather not be having. Well, good. I’d rather not be having these emotions either, Clark. So just...stop. Don’t say any more.

“I just wanted to say goodbye—”

“Goodbye?! We’re partners!” Why was he doing this?

He’s silent for half a second before he sits, and I don’t like the resignation in his voice when he tells me, “You don’t *need* a partner, Lois. You never did.”

His words hit me with a feeling I’m not quite expecting, and my heart stutters then twists. “Well, maybe not.” I have to look away. “But...I was...starting to like having one.” I’m not sure where my sudden willingness to be vulnerable comes from, but the emotions playing on his face make me glad for it, even as my stomach fills with a sense of dread. He’s serious. He’s really serious.

Clark stares at me with this longing and regret, and it’s too much. I have to look away again.

I don’t understand why he’s doing this. It doesn’t make sense, and it makes even less sense why this news is tearing me apart inside. It’s unsafe, this feeling, and I reach for my anger once more, anything to deflect and push down this pain I shouldn’t be having.

Finding some of my resolve, I turn to him, almost daring him to misstep so I have something to call him out on. “So are you planning on giving notice?”

He doesn’t even take the bait, reaching immediately into his inner coat pocket and pulling out an envelope.

“This is for Perry. I was wondering if you might give it to him for me?”

I take the envelope, swallowing back the tears, pushing them down. And suddenly I realize that maybe this isn’t about me, that I haven’t scared away another partner. “I get it,” I say with a defiant certainty I don’t feel.

“You do?” he asks softly, confused.

“It’s obvious, Clark.” At least I hope it is. “I mean, nobody gives up a great job in the middle of the night because they have the chance of a lifetime to edit the *Smallville Gazette*.”

“Post.”

“Whatever.” My emotions dampen the small, inexplicable thrill at him correcting me. Always correcting me. But...never again? I let out a breath and try to refocus, leaning in toward him slightly. “This isn’t about a job. Did you really think I hadn’t figured out what it was with you and Superman?”

“What do you mean?” he asks, looking kind of guarded like I’d figured out his biggest secret.

“You idolize the man, Clark,” I tell him, and he knows I’m right. He hangs his head, embarrassed, maybe.

“And now he’s in trouble and you share his pain.” Clark looks so uncomfortable, shifting in his chair, and I want to make sure he knows I’m on his side. We’re all on the same side. I stand up, determined, and he looks up at me when I put my hand on his shoulder. “Look, we all feel bad about Superman, but the only way to make it right is to fight like crazy. Don’t give up on him because he wouldn’t give up on us.” My voice sounds a little dramatic and high-strung, but I need to make him understand. To make him stay.

Clark stands, and I can see he’s frustratingly unconvinced. “Maybe you don’t know him as well as you think you do, Lois,” he says, something like resentment in his voice, like he’s mad at or disappointed in Superman.

I don’t understand why Clark’s doing this. “This is stupid, Clark,” I counter. “Go unpack your stuff and—and let’s get to work,” I demand, my gut clenching and a knot clawing at the back of my throat. And I sit down in a poor imitation of a huff, hoping that if I just assume he’ll follow my lead, he will. He always has so far.

But he doesn’t—he’s just standing there—and it’s a moment before I can look at him again. I need to swallow back the tears first. “You’re not a quitter,” I tell him, my voice trembling slightly, but he just turns his back to me.

I look down at the book in front of me and flip some pages, trying to pretend this isn’t affecting me like it is. I turn another page in the deafening silence of the newsroom, my chest and stomach heavy with feelings I don’t really want to acknowledge right now.

I turn, unable to resist another look at him. His back is to me, and he’s lifting the box from his desk into his arms. Then he turns and heads toward me, his face full of anguish that I still don’t understand. I can feel the tears burning at the back of my eyes as he approaches, and there’s a tension in the air—something terrible and nonsensical, a tether between us that’s getting tighter in my chest the closer he gets. And now I know with a sinking feeling that he’s about to sever it.

He’s in front of me now, and he shifts the box to one arm so he can bring his hand up to cup my cheek. His hand is warm and the opposite of comforting because the silence and distance between us is so suffocating.

I can hardly breathe as he leans in to kiss me. His lips are warm and soft, and I feel my heart catch in my chest as I realize this is...

“Goodbye, Lois,” he whispers, his voice thready with emotion.

My breath catches because he lets his gaze linger as he straightens, and there’s pain and regret and something more that I know I’ve caught glimpses of before. He’s walking away, and I feel frozen in place, as though the whole terrible moment is suspended in time, waiting to crash down on me and crush me alive as soon as the elevator doors close and he’s gone for good.

But then I inhale sharply, able to move again. “Wait!” I cry, and my heart catches in my throat when he stops at the top of the ramp.

It takes him a moment to turn around, as if he’s afraid to look at me because that would make him stay. I pray that’s true, that he’ll turn to see me and be unable to leave, even though I don’t know what this means or where these feelings are coming from.

“Please don’t go,” I try to say, but my voice is only a hoarse whisper pushing past the lump in my throat. “I need you.”

Finally, he turns, though he still hesitates to come back, to walk back down the ramp and put his things away and pretend he never made this ridiculous decision.

“Lois...” His voice is quiet, strained, and it hurts somewhere deep in my chest that he’s fighting this, whatever this is. If this is hurting him as much as it seems like it is, why is he so intent on leaving?

“Will you at least tell me why?” My voice cracks with emotion, and I stand up, taking half a step in his direction.

“I have to,” he rasps as though it’s hurting him just to breathe.

“Why, though? Why do you have to leave, Clark?” I can’t tell if it’s impatience or desperation in my voice. Maybe both.

He doesn’t answer, but at least he’s coming back down the ramp. When he’s in front of me again, I can see the

anguish in his eyes, and for the first time since I've known him, it looks as though he might be on the verge of tears. He sets his box down on the ledge next to my desk.

"Why?" I ask again softly.

"I-I...I *can't* stay." His eyes are searching my face, like he's trying to memorize it, like it's the last time he'll see it.

I don't even want to ask again, but I do. "Why?" I whisper.

"I don't want to hurt you..."

My frustration flares in me, and I raise my voice, thankful that the newsroom is empty this time of night. "That doesn't make any sense, Clark. This! *This* is hurting me!"

I see him wince, like it's some revelation to him that his leaving would hurt me, and that just makes me mad. "I...I-I didn't mean..." he stutters and for once can't get an excuse out.

"Yeah, you didn't mean to hurt me. Well, newsflash—you just did." I'm hiding behind my anger now. I always do. But with Clark, the hurt edges through easily enough for him to see—he's always been able to see. And maybe that's why it hurts even more. "What makes you think you can just—just kiss me goodbye and then, what, never see me again? *Why*, Clark?"

"Because it's not safe!" he yells, knocking my anger away.

"Clark, no... I know Metropolis isn't as safe and quiet as Smallville, and maybe you're still a bit homesick from when we were there last week, but—"

"No, Lois...*I'm* not safe. I...can't explain. I just...I have to leave. I...have no choice," he says, with his jaw clenched and some sort of desperation in his voice as he reaches up and cups my cheek again.

The more he says, the less I understand, but as his thumb smooths across my skin and his brown eyes stare at me, full of sadness and regret and a great deal of pain, I...

My breath catches as I realize this moment has already happened today and it's not *deja vu*.

"*You can't leave,*" I pleaded with Superman at the courthouse.

"*I have no choice,*" he said, his jaw clenched and voice full of emotion.

My mind is racing, the pieces of the puzzle falling all too easily into place. His eyes, his hand on my cheek. The sadness and despair and regret about leaving. All the same.

I said it earlier, so I say it again. "They can't be right, Clark! It's not... You're not—Clark...you're not dangerous!"

He lets his hand fall back to his side, his breath hitching as he searches my face again, this time for a different reason. He finds the truth, but he hangs his head. I

can tell he doesn't believe me. "I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I hurt anyone...if I hurt...you."

"But I need you... I-I need your help. You might say I don't need a partner, but I do. I need you. You make me a better reporter, and we make a good team. Together, we can figure out...we can—"

"I can't take that risk." The anguish is coming off him in waves, and my heart is twisting painfully.

"Superman wouldn't give up," I challenge him, crossing my arms defiantly.

"It's not giving up," he insists. "I'm keeping people safe. That's what Superman does."

"Fine then. Clark is not a quitter, and Clark would not leave me when I need his help."

His jaw tics again. "It—it doesn't work like that, Lois."

"You said tomorrow at noon. Noon." I look at my watch. "That still gives me—*us*—eleven hours to prove that I'm right." I'm breathing hard, but at least my determination is keeping the tears at bay. "So are you going to help me or not?"

I watch his shoulders sag—either with defeat or relief, but no matter which, I know I've won. "Show me what we've got, partner."

THE END