

# Better With Clark

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Summary: News is slow, and Clark is off visiting his parents in Smallville. With too much downtime, Lois starts to realize some truths about her life — things are definitely better with Clark.

Story Size: 1,606 words (9Kb as text)

**Author's Note:** This one's all Bek's fault—she asked for it, literally (more in the end notes). After days and days of editing (Yay, new job!), I was definitely primed for some writing time. Thanks to SuperBek for the idea and for helping me struggle through those last lines until the right one finally appeared! And thanks to AnnaBtG for a quick and thorough GE job!

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Lois had to admit it. Things were worse when Clark wasn't here. As much as she'd whined in the beginning about having a partner, about having to drag along a green reporter who would only get in her way and slow her down, he'd proven himself over and over again. Yep, whether she liked it or not, Clark made her a better journalist. Challenged her. Kept her on her toes. Complemented her in every way.

And what was more...

She wasn't just a better journalist when he was with her...she felt like she was a better person too. Somehow, in the last year and a half since she'd known him, he'd not only become the only partner she'd ever been able to work with—*would* ever be able to work with—he'd also become her best friend. And life was just lousy without her partner and best friend.

Okay, so maybe she wouldn't be missing Clark so much while he was off visiting his parents for a long weekend if it wasn't also a really, really slow news day. Slow news *week*. On Wednesday morning, they'd wrapped up their piece on the parking meter scandal, and Perry had been in such a good mood to have *something* to print—especially since he'd been able to stretch the definition of scandal to fit the headline just right—that he'd sent Clark off early to get packed and...then what?

Wait at the airport for an extra three hours? God, it must have been an exciting prospect for Clark because he was cleaning up his desk and jogging to the elevator in no time flat. Barely a quick goodbye for his best friend.

Okay, that was a lie. He'd said more than a quick goodbye, giving her arm a gentle squeeze and making her entire body tingle from just his touch. It had just felt like too quick of a goodbye. Especially today, on his fifth day of being gone when it just seemed like everything was worse because Clark wasn't here.

The morning staff meetings were more boring. The news was slower—sure that wasn't *his* fault, but she might as well blame it on him while he wasn't here. The traffic was far worse. Even her coffee was worse, she realized, wincing as she took a sip of cold coffee that just wasn't made right.

God, what had become of the great Lois Lane? A reporter at the top of her game, best in the city, maybe the world, and now...she was sharpening an entire box of pencils while being all mopey and maudlin about having had to work without her partner and best friend for four and a half days.

Lois finished sharpening the final pencil, put them all back in the box neatly, and put the box back in her desk drawer along with the pencil sharpener. She wondered idly if she could convince Perry to let her have the rest of the day off. Technically, Clark was supposed to be flying back sometime mid-morning. She could go pick him up at the airport or something.

But she sighed. It wasn't like Clark had ever let her pick him up from the airport—he'd always insisted it was just easier on everyone if he took a cab. She supposed he was right—and she couldn't exactly contact him and let him know she'd be there. His flight was likely still in the air at this point.

In any case, she had story notes she'd been putting off typing up in favor of moping and staring at her computer, waiting for it to update with breaking news. She might as well get things in order now, seeing as her partner would be back tomorrow, and he would undoubtedly admonish her for not being more neat and fastidious about her notes.

Lois had only just gotten started with typing up her notes when she heard the familiar ding of the elevator arriving on the newsroom floor—a not-frequent occurrence on a slow-news Sunday. She turned to look and see who it was, only to have her heart leap at the sight of her partner walking through the elevator doors, looking ridiculously handsome in a pair of well-fitted jeans and a snug navy blue T-shirt.

As if he'd sensed her gaze, he looked over at her and flashed his 1000-watt grin at her on his way towards his desk. He chatted with her for a few minutes, letting her know that his mom had had to drop him off at the airport early, and he'd managed to get on an earlier flight.

Lois asked with interest how his visit had gone, and she devoured his words, just the sound of his voice that she'd

missed so much, telling her about his mom's latest artwork and his dad's...crop something-or-other.

God, she'd missed him. Missed him more than she wanted to admit to him—because even after everything, she still had that little bit of fear and reservation about opening up and being vulnerable. Even though Clark was the only one she would even consider being vulnerable with.

Clark smiled that smile at her once more as he produced a small food storage container that could only be holding one thing—Martha's famous chocolate chocolate chip cookies. He excused himself to his desk, saying that he'd come in to type up some story ideas he wanted to run by Perry before Monday morning's staff meeting.

Lois's heart felt warm and content but with that edge of tingling and fluttering that always happened when he was around, whenever he touched her or looked at her or smiled at her. Things were looking better already, she decided. Just the fact that Clark had come back to the office straight from the airport to work, bringing her cookies from his mother and that 1000-watt smile, it showed that they were better together. Partners. Best friends.

Maybe someday, she'd be brave enough to risk trying that ever-tempting "something more" that she knew Clark wanted to offer but was holding back, waiting for her cue this time. She smiled as she watched him across the short distance between their desks, pursing his lips as he glanced at his notebook and then typed something on his computer.

Now that Clark was back, things didn't seem so lousy anymore, and it wasn't just because she had Martha's cookies waiting for her right there on her desk. She opened the container eagerly and felt her mouth water as she looked at the chocolatey concoction. When she took a bite, it was warm and delicious, the chocolate chips already melted as they delighted her taste buds. She'd swear they tasted straight from the oven, but maybe that was just because everything seemed that much better when Clark was around.

The chocolate was rich and warm and begged to be complemented by a swallow of coffee, and when she took a long sip, the heat and the flavor of her coffee blended perfectly with the decadent treat. She was in heaven, and might have even let a quiet moan escape her.

Clark looked over at her, as if he'd heard her, though he surely couldn't have. "They're perfect with a warm cup of coffee, aren't they?" And before he went back to his notes, there was that smile again.

Lois's heart leapt and fluttered and the sight of it, combined with the warmth her morning treat had provided, and she thought that this was turning out to be a pretty good day after all. It wasn't until she reached for another

bite of cookie and a second sip of coffee to wash it down with that she realized...

Her coffee had been cold.

All week, she'd been taking sips of coffee only to find it had gone cold from her inattention. No, that wasn't right. It hadn't been *all* week.

Just since Clark had been gone.

Her coffee had been cold. The cookies had been warm. Clark's flight had been...early.

Lois's gaze darted up to her partner again, and she could feel her pulse skittering around in her body as her mind raced. Yes, Clark, the cookies really are perfect with a warm cup of coffee. In fact...

She kept her eyes trained on him as she whispered, "They're just...super, Clark."

His head shot up, his eyes found hers, and for a moment, he was frozen still. But then, after a beat, he took a breath and slowly shrugged his shoulders up and gave her a sheepish grin.

Yep, everything was definitely better with Clark.

THE END

End Note: The other day, Bek randomly asked me, "Can you write a fic where Lois realizes Clark is Superman because she catches him reheating her coffee? Not like SEES him staring at it, reheating it, but...notices that her coffee is warm when it shouldn't be, but only when he's around... Or... something." So... that is this fic.