

Words Fail

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Rating: K+

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Author's Notes: A birthday fic for ellalou73.

Clark shifted from foot to foot, his eyes glancing from the buzzer on Lois' apartment door, to the box of chocolates in his hand, to the stairwell access door. *Is this really a good idea?* He could easily make some excuse, tell her that he'd had some errand to run - it wasn't as if she hadn't heard *that* one before - but should he?

He had made it all the way here, had managed to talk himself into accepting Lois' dinner invitation, but now that he was standing here, he wasn't sure if he had made the right decision. Three months ago, when he had kissed her for the last time, he had felt certain that he and Lois had no future together. But lately...

Clark had found himself unable to stop thinking about those days at the Fortress. Sometimes he wished he could erase his *own* memory, it would make working closely with Lois so much easier.

And strangely enough, Lois had been treating him differently lately as well, smiling a little more brightly, touching him a little more often, actually listening to what he had to say before charging off on her own... And then this dinner invitation out of the blue. What did she want? Could she be... falling for him?

He chuckled nervously. Ridiculous! He'd cultivated this nerdy persona to repel, not attract. What woman, especially a gorgeous one like Lois Lane, would want a klutzy mama's boy like Clark Kent?

With a self-effacing smile, Clark finally pushed the buzzer. She probably just wanted to talk about the Masterson case over dinner. She'd take in his formal suit and box of chocolates with an indulgent smile, and pretend as if she had no idea that her partner was infatuated with her. Just like alwa-

The door opened suddenly. "Clark! Come in!"

Clark's mouth dropped open slightly. Lois was wearing her filmy blue chiffon dress, the one she'd worn for her interview with Superman a few years ago. She looked radiant... and not at all like a woman prepared to put in an all-nighter.

"L-Lois!" he stammered as he ducked awkwardly through the opening. "A-Are you expecting someone?"

She closed the door behind him, and held out her hand for his overcoat. "Of course I am, Clark. You."

Clark handed over his coat in shocked silence. He couldn't even find two syllables to put together.

"Are those for me?" Lois gestured toward the chocolates in his hand, a small grin on her lips.

He stiffly proffered the box to her. "U-uh, yes! I hope you like dark chocolate..."

"Believe me, Clark, if it's chocolate, I like it." She put a hand on his arm, and then her hand slipped down to pull on his. "Dinner's ready - out on the balcony."

He let her lead him to the balcony, where she had a full meal set out on fine china, and a bottle of champagne chilling on ice. A single orchid rested in a slim vase in the center, and lighted candles flickered in the slight breeze. "Wow," Clark breathed, impressed. "Did you make all of this for me?"

"Me?" Lois barked a laugh. "Cook? Oh, no. But the Italian place on the corner does a mean take out."

As they sat across from each other, Clark was feeling more and more confused. He had never guessed that she would ever look at him with anything more than fond annoyance - not as Clark, anyway. "So..." He couldn't believe she'd actually ask him here on a... a date. "What did you want to talk about?"

Lois twirled a forkful of pasta before answering. "Oh, just this and that. Things people talk about when they're sharing a meal." She lifted the fork to her mouth and began to chew.

Clark reached for his water glass, and took a long draught. He was glad that he didn't actually sweat, because he'd probably be soaking through his undershirt by now. "Well, I-I think we're close to a breakthrough on Masterson." Clark began to push his salad around his plate, avoiding looking at her. "If we can just get those records unsealed-"

"Clark," Lois interrupted.

He looked up.

"Let's not talk about work, okay? That's not why I invited you here."

"It isn't?"

"No." Lois chuckled. "I swear, sometimes I can't tell whether you're being obtuse on purpose, or whether a person can really be this shy."

"W-what do you mean?" Fear gripped his heart - if she was really coming on to him, what was he going to do? What did he want to do? "This is all so confusing..."

Lois threaded her hand between the glasses and plates and covered his hand with hers. "Not to me it isn't. For the first time in my life, everything's clear."

Clark froze. Her words, a mirror of the words he had spoken to her that night in the Fortress... He tried to stare deeply into her glittering eyes, wishing more than anything that he could actually read the thoughts behind them.

She rose then, coming over to stand beside him. "Clark. I think you know why I asked you here. And as long as we've known each other..." She paused, taking his other hand in hers. "... as much as we've meant to each other... can we stop pretending?"

He was so stunned that he nearly floated from his chair. "I-I don't know what to say."

Lois pulled on their joined hands, bringing him to his feet. "Just say you love me." She leaned forward and pressed her soft lips to his.

Her kiss was intoxicating, he was swept away in a maelstrom of emotion. With his enhanced hearing, he could hear her heart pounding in her chest, almost keeping time with his. She dropped his hands to pull him close to her body, and it felt good, right... like coming home. The past few months of regret and longing dropped away at her touch.

Suddenly he didn't care about all the reasons he had to keep Lois in the dark about his other identity. He had tried, and failed, to move on with his life, to go back to the way things

were... Clark captured her face between his hands and kissed her even more deeply, willing that her memories would return the way they had been taken...

And then he pulled away, expecting to steady her. But instead of rocking dizzily back and forth, she was looking up at him with a secretive smile. "Did you expect something to happen there?"

Once again this evening, words failed him. He opened and closed his mouth, but nothing was coming out.

She pulled him into an embrace, laying her head on his chest. "You can't return memories that have already come back, Clark," she murmured. Her heart rate suddenly jumped, roaring in his ears, and she pulled one of his hands to rest on her belly. "Especially when I have such a wonderful souvenir of our trip."

And that was when he noticed the added fluttering sound, a tiny heart beating beneath his hand. He pulled away, even more shocked than before. "L-Lois? You're..."

"Pregnant. Yes."

At that moment, he saw a touch of fear over his reaction in the depths of her eyes. Overwhelmed with love for her, he lifted her from her feet in a kiss that twirled them slowly into the air and back down again. When it ended, he looked again at her now tear-streaked face. He reached up to wipe away a stray tear. "Oh, Lois, I love you so much."

"I love you, too." She removed herself from his arms to grab a napkin from the table and wipe her face. Then she noticed the champagne chilling to her right, and lifted the neck. "Shall we celebrate?"

Clark frowned for a moment at the thought of Lois drinking alcohol in her condition... but then he noticed the label, a detail that had escaped him in his earlier confusion. Nestled among the ice cubes was a bottle of sparkling cider.