

# The Perils of Popularity

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Rating: T

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"Lois?" Clark said questioningly. They were in his office, cleaning up after lunch - Lana and Richard generally brought them lunch at work every few weeks or so. Perry scolded his nephew for resigning and then never staying the hell out of the office, but he clearly welcomed the pair. It was a nice break from routine, and inserted a little civility into the otherwise hectic newsroom. They always ate in Clark's office, though. His desk was cleaner.

His wife glanced up curiously from where she was gathering her share of the plastic containers. "Hmm?" Lois stopped long enough to spy a lonely bit of bourbon chicken, and she quickly sent it to join its relatives in her stomach.

"Do you know what 'O. T. Four' means?" Clark asked.

Lois froze, her eyebrows arching curiously as her gaze crept up to his. "Yeah... But why do you ask?"

"Never mind that, just tell me what it is."

Lois waited a few more seconds to see if he'd cave, but Clark just looked at her with a slightly perplexed expression. "Alright, fine. It's a fan term. It comes from OTP, which stands for 'one true pairing'. Like, if you watch a TV show and think two characters should be together, those two are your OTP. Fans get online and argue about which is the real OTP and who should be together and who would never make it as a couple. Personally, I think it's all bullshit - there's more to life than arguing about fictional romances, especially for shows that aren't even *about* the romance."

"Oh," Clark said, considering. "So, OT4 is..."

"Clark, are you sure you want to know this? Where on earth did you pick this up from?"

"Just answer the question, Lois."

All too aware of what his reaction was going to be, she sighed. "It's short for 'one true foursome', which you don't hear a lot..." Lois trailed off, staring at his horrified expression.

"Clark? You okay?"

"Foursome as in...?" he began.

"Foursome as in foursome. As in threesome plus one," the dark-haired reporter said slowly, that one dark brow raised. "*What? You asked! You asked me!* Why are you looking like you swallowed a toad? I *told you* you didn't want to know!"

"So it implies a romantic relationship between *all four* people?"

"Geez," Lois sighed in exasperation, rolling her eyes. "I'd imagine that that would be a given. Clark, welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I know you were raised in the creamed corn capital of the world, but *please*. Not everyone out there opts for heterosexual monogamy. Don't be

such a prude. You have less reason to be than anyone else."

"No, no, it's not that," he hastened to correct. "What people do in their own time is their business, as long as they're happy I don't care. But..."

"But what?" she insisted. By now, the takeout containers were back on the table, Lois' arms crossed. "And where the hell did *you* hear that, anyway?"

Clark gulped. "Um, while we were having lunch ... someone over in the break room said *we* were."

Lois' eyebrow rose another notch. "You, me, Richard, and Lana?" Clark nodded worriedly, and Lois burst out laughing so hard she could barely breathe.

Eventually Clark had to coax her to sip some water, Lois sniffing back tears of amusement. "Oh, that's *priceless*," she wheezed, rubbing away her watering eyes. "I've gotta tell Richard, he'll crack up... Oh, man, what *won't* the rumor mill around here come up with?"

"At least you think it's funny," Clark sighed. "I don't really like the idea of people speculating wildly on my personal life."

That wry grin softened after a moment, Lois catching his chin. "And at least that explains the look on your face," his wife teased gently. "C'mon, you, don't worry so much. Just think of it this way: Lana wanted to make sure everyone knew that all four of us were still friends, right? It just worked a little better than she thought." Lois snorted again, imagining the look on Lana's face if the redhead heard *that* little piece of gossip.

Clark just shook his head. "Still ... 'oh, what a tangled web we weave' seems to apply, even though it was written about lies, not gossip."

"Not much difference between the two," Lois commented, kissing her husband's cheek. "Don't be too traumatized, okay? It could be worse - they could still be whispering that I'm seeing Superman behind your back. At least with this rumor, you're well aware of what's going on."

He grinned and stole a quick kiss. "That *was* getting old. No one would listen when I told them I wouldn't have married you if I couldn't trust you."

"It's just the price of popularity," Lois said with a shrug. "I mean, I *am* the star reporter - of course people think all *three* of you want me. Everyone does."

"Hey now," Clark began, but saw her teasing smirk and just kissed her, rumpling her hair slightly. "Lois, I swear your ego grows every day. By Christmas it'll block out the sun. Now hurry back to work, love, before Perry starts yelling."

"I've got two and a half minutes left in my lunch break," Lois said teasingly, kissing him one more time before turning to leave. "I love you."

"I love you more," he answered, and opened the door for her.