

That One Special Pulitzer Article

by Miss Les Paul

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Rating: K+

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Lois Lane was angry. After five years she was still angry, angry about many things. Had it been so long already? Time had flown by; she had a son to consider now, Jason. Juggling her job and taking care of him, with the help of the best father he could ever have, Richard, she had been able to manage everything quite well, if she thought about it. She loved them both dearly.

But she was still angry, perhaps it was spite. She did not know.

She watched the empty screen of her computer. If she wrote this article and let it be published, it would change her life forever. Of course, no one would notice and all the little things that made her life would stay the same. But *she* would be changed forever.

'For five long years the world has stared into the sky, waiting, hoping and praying for his return. We've spent our days asking where he went, debating why he left and wondered is he even alive. Perhaps he left us for another world, a world in peril, a world in greater need of a saviour. Is it selfish desire him for ourselves? Are we expected to share the man we've come to love or did we do something wrong?'

'Did we take him for granted? Perhaps we did. Maybe we all did, it's not our fault. We are far from super. Yet a mother will accept her children regardless of their misfortunes. Why have you rejected us for ours? Perhaps we're a lost cause unworthy of help and doomed to continue on a path of self-destruction. He has moved on, helping others with a foreseeable future of peace and harmony.'

She remembered it well...

She had not seen him in almost a month. No one had. People had started to get restless; the news had been full of it, even more than when he was still around. Newspapers headlining; *'Where has he gone?'*, *'Will he be back?'*, *'Is he still alive?'* and so forth. She was worried. Worried something bad had happened to him. He had not said anything to anyone. Just that one day, four weeks ago, he had not shown up after a disastrous earthquake in India, causing many people to die. And the same went for the days afterwards, and there was still no sign of him.

Everything started to change about two weeks prior to his disappearance.

Clark Kent, her trusted co-writer, her partner in crime, was sitting in Perry White's office. The large glass doors prevented everyone in the Bullpen from eavesdropping. He had been acting strange all morning, trying to speak to Perry. The Editor in Chief was, as always, busy, and it was hard enough to get a few private minutes with him. Lois had noticed Clark had been extreme fidgety, even for him. She had tried a few times to speak to him, asking him what was wrong, but he had answered he was fine and had graced her with that goofy, cheeky, farm-boy smile. Though she had known for sure something had been bothering him, because his eyes did not shine with the always-present laughter.

It had been ten minutes since he had gone into Perry White's office. Lois could not keep her eyes from the two men. Clark had reluctantly, so it seemed, sat down on the chair opposite of the older man and started talking, though Perry did not seem to be really listening, busy with approving and editing articles. After a few minutes after Clark had started, Perry's head shot up to directly look at the reporter and Lois could hear the loud *'What?'* through the window walls. These walls were double glass, and he had to be shouting very loudly for anyone outside to hear it. Reporters closest to the office had heard it too and looked at each other in surprise.

Perry now stood up briskly and walked around his desk, wildly motioning with his arms, obviously upset. Lois could see Clark visibly shrink in his chair. One did not make Editor in Chief Perry White angry and not

pay for it. Clearly Clark paid for it. Or so she thought. After only a few minutes Perry seemed to calm down and ungracefully sat down in his own chair. Did Lois detect an air of defeat? She could not have imagined it. Perry rubbed his forehead, leaning on his elbow.

And then it was Clark's turn again. This time Perry *did* listen, drumming his fingers on the surface of his desk. He seemed to sigh deeply, sitting back in his chair again and accepting something Clark gave him. Clark walked towards the door, but before opening it, he turned back to Perry. Probably saying something, Lois figured. Then he opened the door and walked into the Bullpen. Lois hurried to him.

"What was that all about?" she asked him. He shrugged and passed her, her hearing picking up something that sounded like 'Nothing, Lois'. He was not going to get rid of her that easily. Something was definitely up.

"Whoa there buddy, not so fast," she called and hurried up to him, blocking his way. "Perry may have a temper, but I don't think I've seen him, or heard for that matter, that angry. I could hear him all the way over here, for god-sake..."

He sighed and pushed up his glasses up his nose. She had wondered before why he did not buy a pair that would actually stay put... and more fashionable too.

"C-can we talk about this s-some other time? I have to... to finish some articles for, um, tomorrow's edition." He stepped aside. Lois stepped aside with him. He stepped to the other side. Lois stepped to the other side with him.

"No Clark, we cannot talk about this some other time." She held her ground. There was something going on and the reporter in her wanted to know the ins and outs, and the truth. "I want to talk about this *now*. You still have enough time to finish those articles."

"Lois..."

"Don't 'Lois' me! You work with me. I spend more time with you than with anyone else I've ever known."

"Not entirely voluntary," Clark murmured.

Lois bristled. "Damn it Clark, how long have we've been working together? Three, four years? If I haven't gotten used to you now, then heaven-forbid I will ever!"

He sighed again, this time it seemed in defeat. "I'm sorry, Lois. Another time, perhaps."

"Fine! Have it your way," she fumed. She was angry, very angry. Normally he would be the first to tell her what was going on, and him shutting her out on this one made her very damn pissed. She couldn't resist throwing a jab at him. "But don't think I'll stop chasing you," she muttered, loud enough for him to be able to hear her, but soft enough to prevent any eavesdropping. *Stupid farm-boy*, she thought as she all but stomped away.

Lois had not spoken to Clark for three full days, if you did not counted the work related conversations. He was, after all, still her working partner. They still went out together to interviews and chasing after stories. But the idle chitchat, that had become natural, was replaced by an uncomfortable silence. And Clark did not help. He was more fidgety than she had ever seen him. And that meant much because Lois had never met a person who was as clumsy and nervous as Clark had proved to be in the years they had worked together.

And then it came, three days after the strange conversation in Perry White's office. Clark and Lois were waiting for the mayor's press conference to start, when Clark suddenly spoke up.

"Lois?" She looked up to him, into those striking blue eyes that reminded her so much of that other man with resembling blues. Unlike many other times, he looked back at her directly. His hand went to his thick glasses again for the umpteenth time to push them up his nose. He sighed deeply.

"I'm leaving."

No emotions, no hesitation, nothing...

Lois' frowned, not understanding the depth of the statement. It was crowded with television crews, journalists, congressmen, and so forth. One was likely to feel a bit claustrophobic in here, especially someone Clark's size.

"Stuff it, Smallville," she huffed. "You're not going anywhere until we've got what we came here for."

"But--" he protested, but she would hear none of it.

"No buts, we're here to do our job." She turned back to the tables with the microphones to impatiently

wait until the mayor would finally arrive. He seemed to have given up on what he wanted to say, because he remained silent.

"Lois," he started again, and this time she did not look at him, still angry with him, and tired of his silly problems. "I'm leaving Metropolis."

And then it dawned on her what he had meant before. She whirled around.

"What?!" It was not a shout, but loud enough to turn some heads. And she finally understood why Perry's reaction had been the same three days ago.

Lois stood, lips parted, as if struck by lightning.

They did not have the time to discuss it until after the conference. Of course congress men had arrived right after the revelation.

They walked back to the Daily Planet, rather than taking a taxi which was their normal routine. But everything was far from normal. Clark had dropped the bomb when she had least expected it. Secretly she had thought it would always be like this; she and Clark, partners in crime. Sure, he was not the kind of person she would have chosen as a partner, but having worked with him it now felt like a second nature. He was clumsy, naive, and nerdy with the unfashionable, oversized clothing, the thick frames and his well-groomed hair. But he was always there when she needed him; he was her spell-check and her proof-reader; he was almost like a brother, the one to be ignored fifty percent of the time, sometimes a little annoying when he was acting like the typical hillbilly, not always welcome, but loved nonetheless.

They both were unusually and uncomfortably silent. Normally one or the other would talk about something work related or something completely random. Lois could not believe it.

"So," she started after a while, searching for words. "What's the deal?"

He hesitated. "The deal with what?" he asked, a little too innocently.

Lois pushed the air out of her nose in an impatient manner. "Don't patronise me, Clark. You know exactly what I mean."

He fidgeted *again*, and this time it annoyed her more than it normally did. "Well, eh, I-I've been, um, here--w-working here--for a long time, and, eh, I--"

"Spill it, Clark. This is not funny anymore." Lois was more than angry, sure he could tell, and her patience was running thin.

He sighed and his mouth closed with an audible snap of teeth touching each other. His eyes moved to look everywhere but her. She could tell he thought what he was about to say was as hard for him as it would be for her. He closed his eyes for a moment and rubbed his forehead.

"I... can't stay, Lois. Th-these years have been very--" He seemed to search for the right word as he plucked his lip with his thumb and forefinger. "--difficult for me. I've been trying to-to balance my private life and, um, work. But... I-I need to get away."

His mouth was quicker than her thoughts. "Like you *have* a private life."

And the look on his face said it all. The truth hurt more than he would admit. And she suddenly felt a little sorry for him.

As they walked on, she could see the entrance of the *Daily Planet* come into view. Then he stopped walking.

"Lois," he almost sighed. "I'm sorry I dropped the bomb on you like this." Lois thought at least he had the decency to look guilty. "I wasn't planning on telling you, I admit that."

Lois snorted at that. "What made you change your mind?" She put her hands on her hips and faced him. He almost squirmed under her stare. He swallowed... And again.

"I thought that, um, you'd want to know," he said, eventually, the admission sounding more like a question than a statement.

"Maybe you shouldn't have told me. Maybe you should've just left." This earned her another hurt look. But she chose to ignore it and walked through the revolving door, not caring that he did not follow her.

The next morning Clark Kent's desk was cleared and he was nowhere to be found.

Two weeks later, Superman was gone too.

Two men she cared for... gone. Clark had said what made him leave. Superman had left without saying anything. And that made Lois angry.

Even after five years...

'People have always longed for God, messiahs and saviours to swoop down from the sky and deliver them from their troubles but in the end these saviours always leave and we are faced with the same troubles that were here from the beginning. We wait for our saviour's return though it will never happen and we realise it was better had he never come at all.'