

Career Change

by repmetsyrrah

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Rating: K

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"Jimmy, you come 'round for dinner at least once a month, I don't see how this is going to change much," Clark tried to explain after almost tripped over the photographer for the third time in as many seconds. "You don't have to follow me around either," he said gently, "I'm not going to leave without saying goodbye."

An ambulance siren briefly caught his attention but it was only speeding to the house of a man who'd had a heart attack. He tuned back into the bullpen where Jimmy was following him to his desk. "I know we'll still see each other, CK, but I just can't believe it's your last day. You're not going to *work* here anymore. I mean, you've been here forever."

"It's only a year, Jim, two at most," Clark reminded him.

"But that's a long time!" his friend exclaimed, leaning on Clark's desk as he cleared out his drawers.

"Not with these two," Clark said as he pulled out his wallet and flipped it open to the picture of two three day old infants. He couldn't help the wide grin that appeared on his face as he thought about his kids, two incredible sons and a beautiful daughter and now twin girls, he had to be the luckiest man alive.

"Yes, CK, I've seen it," Jimmy sighed, "I think everyone's seen the picture."

"Well excuse me," Clark chuckled, "When you have kids you'll be just as excited and won't believe how fast they grow either. It seems like just yesterday we were trying to name Sophie, now she's off to *school* and we've got three more. Trust me these months are going to fly by."

"Maybe for you," Jimmy muttered under his breath. "Have you thought about the impact this is going to have on-" he lowered his voice and glanced around carefully "- you know, your *other* job?" he asked, making a sweeping motion with his hand and raising his eyebrows.

"Jimmy, we've talked about this, the emergency services can handle most of them and for the big ones our neighbor, Mrs. Taylor, works from home and is willing to watch the kids on short notice. She thinks I'm going freelance and may have to go meet important sources very suddenly."

"Really?" Jimmy asked, raising his eyebrows.

Clark shrugged. "We'll hopefully think of something better to replace it with but it's working for now. In the meantime I want to spend a bit of time where it really matters." He grinned, picking up the last picture on his desk.

It was of the whole family just two months ago. Jason, Sophie and Dean were grinning while a heavily pregnant Lois was glaring at the camera, although it was more likely her gaze

was directed at her husband behind the lens. Lois had never quite forgiven Clark for making her pregnant but, as much as she tried to deny it, he knew she loved him for giving her their children. Although maybe *five* was pushing it...

"So, Kent, I hear the wife's making you stay home and take care of the litter." Steve Lombard interrupted his thoughts, grinning at his own joke as he leaned on the now-empty desk. "Did Lois scare all the nannies away?"

Clark sighed. "Lombard, it may be hard for you to believe but some of us actually *like* our families."

Gil Truman laughed as he joined them. "Good one, Kent." He shook his head. "Man, becoming a full-time Dad? Lois really has you whipped doesn't she?"

"Hey." Jimmy stepped in to defend his friend. "Leave him alone. Just because you guys couldn't take care of kids if your life depended on it."

"I think it's sweet," Erica Hills, another reporter who just 'happened' to be passing by Clark's desk interrupted before Steve or Gil could retort. "Full-time Dads aren't all that uncommon anymore either. It's a big responsibility to take on though, especially with five of them."

"Ah, I see." Steve snapped his fingers and pointed at Erica. "The ladies love it. A man taking care of the kids while the wife brings home the bacon. Thinking of getting a little something on the side while Lois is out doing the real work are we, Kent?"

Erica snorted and rolled her eyes at Steve. "You're disgusting," she told him flatly, "no wonder no woman would touch you with a ten-foot long bargepole." She turned back to Clark. "I think what you're doing is brilliant, Clark," she informed him, before shooting another disgusted look at Steve and walking off.

Steve grinned as he watched her leave. "She'll come 'round," he said, "they always do."

Jimmy and Clark stared at him and even Gil looked at him with distaste. "Sure, Stevie," he muttered, shaking his head.

Steve ignored him and followed Erica calling after her, "Hey sweet-cheeks, you still single then?"

Gil looked like he was about to comment but the lift had just opened to reveal Perry White. Not wanting to be caught not slacking, he started to move off but as he passed he grinned at Clark and made a noise like a whip cracking and laughed.

"Don't listen to them, CK," Jimmy said, looking upset at the way his friend had been treated.

"I'm not, Jimmy," Clark assured him. "They can say whatever they want, I want to do this and *I* know this is the right thing to do. That's all that matters."

"I guess," Jimmy sighed. "But..." He trailed off, suddenly looking uncomfortable. Clark raised his eyebrows and the younger man continued with a shrug. "You do have to admit it *is* sorta more a woman's job to stay home and take care of the kids."

"You really believe that?" Clark asked, surprised that his friend would have such a narrow view.

Jimmy shrugged, looking apologetic. "I don't know- maybe it's just because my Mom was a stay-at-home."

"Jim, don't worry," Clark told him, checking his desk one more time to make sure he'd got everything. "I know that a man staying at home while his wife works isn't exactly traditional. But this is what *I* want to do, it's not for anyone else to decide, not even Lois."

"I guess," Jimmy said with a shrug "and I can't really see Lois as the housewife type," he

added with a grin.

The pair automatically turned toward Lois' desk where she was angrily yelling down the phone at someone. After a moment she slammed it back on the cradle before turning to bark at an unfortunate intern who was nearby. It was almost impossible to believe she had given birth two days ago and had five children waiting for her at home.

"No," Clark agreed, trying not to smile at his beautiful wife as she tore apart the hapless teenager, "you really can't, can you?"

Suddenly a loud yell from across the bullpen drew their attention and they turned to see Steve Lombard holding his hand and gasping in pain. Erica was standing over him, looking furious. "If you try that again, I'm suing," she told him firmly, glaring down at his pain-filled face.

Jimmy and Clark shared an amused look before Jimmy sighed and looked at Clark's empty desk. "So you're *really* leaving then?"

"I'm really leaving." Clark picked up the photo of his family again, remembering the last time he'd left the *Planet* and marveled at the complete contrast of his life then to his life now.

He looked back across the bullpen at Lois and smiled. "And this time I'm absolutely sure it's the right thing to do."