

# Forever

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Rating: K+

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Cause if your love was all I had  
In this life  
That would be enough  
Until the end of time

**Justin Timberlake**, *Until the End of Time (Futuresex/Lovesounds)*

Superman sat on the examining table in the STAR Labs medical center. He studied his hands, the floor, anything to give himself time to absorb what he'd just been told. Finally, he looked over at the young man who was now his personal physician - Bernie Klein had retired many years ago, but it still seemed like yesterday.

"You're sure of the results?"

"Yes, sir," Doctor Manning said.

"And nothing can be done?"

Manning shook his head. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Superman said as he hopped off the table. He shook Manning's hand. "Thank you." He headed for the door.

"Sir, what do you plan to do now?"

Superman stopped and looked back over his shoulder. "I plan to go home. Then I think I shall take my wife out to a nice dinner and maybe dancing."

"Your wife?"

Superman just grinned at him as he shut the door behind him.

"You're awfully chipper tonight," Lois Lane-Kent commented as she put on her earrings. A touch of arthritis made it more difficult than is used to be, but reaching a hundred-ten years old wasn't for sissies either. "What did Doctor Manning say?"

"Same old, same old," her husband of eighty-two years said. "Stay away from kryptonite. It can kill you," he quoted with a chuckle.

She watched as he checked his tie in the mirror. Age hadn't done much damage to him. His face had laugh-lines and crows-feet, but he was still as trim and muscular as he had always been. His hair was white now, instead of the black of his youth, but still thick, soft to the touch. His eyes were still bright behind his old-fashioned glasses frames.

"Does he know if your powers will come back?" she asked. She smoothed out her hair. It was as white as his and her wrinkles were only a little deeper. She suspected his invulnerable

aura had protected her from the worst ravages of age. They both looked far younger than their real ages.

He gazed thoughtfully at her reflection in the mirror. "Would you be upset if they never came back?"

"Is that what he said?" Lois commented as she put on her lipstick.

He nodded.

"It would be one way to get you to retire. It's not like there aren't enough part-Kryptonians and meta-humans around to pick up the slack." She laughed. "And to think you left to find a family and came back to find you already had one."

He kissed her neck, just above her diamond necklace. "Do you have any regrets?" he asked.

"Only that we didn't get our acts together sooner, Smallville," she responded.

"Seriously honey, I haven't always been as supportive as I could have been," he said. "God only knows how many times I've had to leave you holding the bag, or the baby, while I went off to save the world. I certainly never made millions."

"I married Clark Kent, a damn good writer, who happens to moonlight as Superman," she said, patting his hand. "If I wanted money, I would have married somebody with money."

Clark smiled then his expression turned more solemn. "I love you so much. I don't know what I'd do if I lost you."

"Nobody lives forever, Clark," she told him softly. "We both know that. Nobody knows how long they've got. And it's not the years that count. It's the moments. Right now. As they happen."

"Well, right now, I intend to take my wife to dinner, and then, if she's not too tired, dancing."

"I'm never too tired when I'm with you."

"Even if I'm not 'super'?"

"It's not the abilities you have, but what you do with them," she reminded him. "I'm hungry. Feed me."

She'd fallen asleep almost as soon as her head hit her pillow. Clark propped his head up on his hand as he watched her slowly breathing. He'd fallen for her the first time he saw her, brilliant, feisty, domineering, incorruptible. She in turn had fallen for the alien superhero who wore blue spandex and a red cape. Over time she discovered the man beneath the spandex and despite his mistakes, despite his abandoning Earth and her for nearly six years, gave him more than he had ever hoped for - a home, a family, a sense of belonging. She was his soul-mate.

They'd had a nice dinner not far from their apartment, had gone dancing at one of the revival ball rooms that were so popular in Metropolis at the moment. He knew she was worried about him but he'd tried to keep up a cheery conversation even though it had eventually devolved to reminiscing about their days at the Daily Planet, Perry's death, all their friends who were now long in their graves. At least they hadn't outlived their own children so far.

Clark closed his eyes and promised himself to call the kids in the morning. He reached over and took her hand. And as he had every night since they were married, he kissed her. "I love you Lois Lane."

She opened her eyes for just a moment, returning his kiss. "I love you Clark Kent."

"Forever?"

"Until the end of time."

Samantha Elinora Kent, the youngest of the Lane-Kent children, found them the next morning. She'd gotten worried when her mother didn't call as she usually did after breakfast. Even though Samantha was seventy years old and had grandchildren of her own, her mother had always made it a point to call her. Samantha called her siblings.

"They went in their sleep, together," she told them. "They looked content. Maybe even happy."

"But Dad's Superman," Esperanza complained. "The invulnerable aura...?"

"I called Superman's doctor right after I called you. Told him the old fella died in his sleep," Samantha told them. She sighed. "Dad was exposed to kryptonite again and his body had stopped repairing itself. His powers weren't going to come back. Manning gave him a week at the outside. I figure his aura was what was keeping Mom alive. When he stopped, so did she."

"Why didn't he tell us?" Jason demanded. "We could have found a way to help." Jason was a medical researcher, well respected in his field. His co-workers would hardly guess he moonlighted as a super hero.

"I don't think he wanted us to worry," Samantha told them. Of all the children, she was the one who probably understood her parents best. Lane and Kent, the hottest team on the Planet. She was the one who had become a journalist. She was the one who was now editor-in-chief of the Daily Planet, like her father had been before her. "Their obituaries will be running on the banner," she told them.

"Not Superman's?" Charles Jerome Kent asked. He was the lawyer, environmental law.

Samantha smiled despite the tears running down her face. "In a few days, maybe. Remember, Superman isn't dead. Legends don't die. But you get to tell little Clark that he's wearing the blue suit now."

"I don't think he'll mind too much," Charles said. "Legends don't die."

## **Epilogue**

Clark Jerome Kent, AKA Mok-El, stood at his grandparent's grave in Smallville Cemetery. He read the headstone again. Clark Joseph Kent, Beloved husband and father, Lois Joanne Lane-Kent, Beloved wife and mother. The one link to Superman was the glyph of the house of El inscribed in the granite. It was well known that it had been Lois Lane that gave Kal-El the name of 'Superman.' She had been his 'press agent' until her retirement.

The funeral for the elder Kents had been a quiet, family affair in Smallville. The memorial service in Metropolis for Superman had been more suited to a head of state. The fact that the other 'supers' were in attendance had turned it into a media circus. It was there that the new Superman had made his first appearance.

Clark ran his hand over the symbol of the house of El on his blue uniform shirt - Superman's uniform, red cape and all. It felt strange to be wearing such an iconic uniform. "I miss you, Grandpa, Grandma. I'm wearing the Suit now. But I wish you were here. I can't believe you were my age when you first showed up as Superman. I just hope I'm up to the challenge. You left some pretty big boots to fill."

There was a whoosh behind him, the distinctive sound of a Kryptonian coming in for a landing. He looked up to see his father coming toward him. "You'll be fine son," Charles Jerome Kent, also known as Ultraman, told him. "But we have to get going. Volcanoes don't wait for man or Superman."