

For the Love of Lois

by Dandello (AKA Librarian)

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Rating: K+

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A/N: Written for the BlueTights August Challenge - Scream

Richard White remembered very clearly the first time he saw Lois Lane. She was making someone scream.

It was the Daily Planet Christmas party. Richard was on leave visiting his aunt and uncle and they had invited him to the company party instead of leaving him to his own devices for the evening. One of the men - Richard didn't know who but later discovered his name was Steve Lombard and he worked in sports - had trapped a slender dark haired woman against a desk under a sprig of mistletoe. The woman was obviously unhappy about the situation and Richard began to move in to rescue her.

He hadn't needed to - she brought her heel down hard on the man's instep and shoved a finger up his nose, pinching the delicate skin of his nostrils between her finger and thumb. The man screamed and limped away, holding his injured nose.

Richard heard a deep chuckle by his shoulder. His Uncle Perry was standing there holding a cup of hot cider which he handed to Richard. "You'd think that after three years of the same thing, Lombard would learn to *not* try and catch Lois Lane under the mistletoe," Perry said.

"That's Lois Lane?" Richard was surprised to see how young and pretty she was. Based on Perry's descriptions of her exploits Richard was expecting a much older battle-hardened woman. This woman looked like she was just out of college - probably went to school on a tennis scholarship - and her Hunter-green satin dress... Well what wasn't left to the imagination was positively delectable.

He started to walk over to introduce himself, but he saw her eyes flick over him, dismissing him as she walked away.

"I should have warned you," Uncle Perry said. "She's a little single minded. Not that I'm complaining - she's the best I've seen in a very long time, but if you're not a story or a lead to one, forget it." He sighed. "It's a pity though. At the rate she's going, she'll be murdered by thirty."

The second time Richard White saw Lois Lane she was crying and looking sick to her stomach as she ran into the ladies' restroom of the thirtieth floor of the Daily Planet Building. This time there was no one around to tell him she *didn't* need rescuing. Richard was the newly hired Assistant Editor and, in theory, one of his jobs was to handle personnel issues involving the prima donnas of the newsroom. He figured that the Daily Planet's top reporter running down the hall in tears constituted a 'personnel issue'.

He followed her into the restroom and found her bent over one of the sinks. She splashed water on her face and into her mouth.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

She gave him a startled look and he saw that her eyes were hazel.

"Can't you read?" she spat at him. "This is the ladies' room."

"I figured you might need some help," he said, wondering exactly why he had followed her. He should have just called one of the women to go help her.

She shook her head. "I just ate something that disagreed with me, that's all."

"And you always start crying when your stomach's upset?"

"I just found out..." She let her voice trail off as though she had just realized she was talking to a stranger. "You're Perry's new assistant, aren't you?"

"Guilty as charged. Richard White, at your service," he said with a little bow. "Now, what can I do to help?"

She sighed and shook her head again as she stood up. Her color was improving, at least. "I just found out that Perry's cancelled my hunt for Superman - it's been over a month since he's been seen - and my best hope of finding my idiot partner just crapped out on me and now..."

"And now?" Richard prompted.

"And if you tell Perry you found me upchucking in here, I swear to God I will see you die screaming," she announced.

Richard felt a bubble of mirth rising inside him as he looked at her - pale, damp hair hanging in her face, silk blouse stained with water - and realized he could very easily fall in love with Lois Lane.

Sometimes Lois simply made him want to scream.

They'd been dating nearly a month when she confirmed what Richard suspected - she was pregnant.

"What do you plan to do about it?" he asked. It was her body after all.

"I don't know."

"Does the father know?"

She shook her head. "I'm not even sure... Richard, I don't remember being with a man at any time in the last... well let's just say it's been a while."

"Date rape?"

She shook her head again.

"Do you have any idea who the father might be?" Richard asked.

She hesitated and he knew she had suspicions as to the identity her unknown lover. The look on her face kept him from asking whether or not the chief suspect was her missing ex-partner. Richard had heard the stories of their assignment to Niagara Falls and how they ended up working a story in Alaska instead. He'd heard the rumors that she'd come back suffering from PTSD even though he saw few signs of it.

"Look, I want you to know you don't have to go through this alone," he said.

"I don't need your help."

"I didn't say you did," he said. "I said I *want* to help, if you'll let me."

To his relief, she nodded. "I guess I should try and take it a little easier."

"Sounds like a good idea," he agreed.

A week later she was running down a particularly nasty home repair scam and came back to the newsroom with a black-eye and bruised ribs.

"You promised you'd take it easier," he all but shouted at her.

"I *was* taking it easy," she shouted back.

"Lois, Superman isn't around to save you any more," he yelled.

To his horror, she burst into tears. "Don't you think I know that?"

He wanted to scream - at himself for his stupidity, at her for her obstinacy. Instead, he simply put his arms around her and promised himself never to mention Superman's disappearance to her again.

That night, Lois woke up screaming. It was the first time she'd agreed to spend the night with him instead of heading to her apartment to sleep. She couldn't, or wouldn't, tell what her nightmare had been about but he suspected it had to do with Superman. Richard put his arms around her and held her close until she finally fell asleep again.

He knew he couldn't keep the nightmares away, but at least he could be there for her when she screamed in the night.

"I'll kill him," she screamed. "I swear I'll kill him for this."

"Remember your breathing, Lois," Richard reminded her as the obstetrician checked her progress. "Pant... pant..."

"Just a couple more pushes," the doctor told them. "The baby's crowning. You're almost there."

"Push Lois. Push," he urged. Sweat rolled off her face. He took a cloth and wiped her forehead. She gritted her teeth and grabbed his hand harder.

"We're almost there," the doctor assured them. "Just a little more."

Lois laid back to rest for a moment until the next contraction hit. Then her face screwed up in concentration and effort once more.

"Push, you can do it!" Richard urged her. Then there was a new sound in the room, a wail of outrage from between Lois's legs. The doctor held up a wriggling, bloody, slimy body with four flailing limbs and placed it on Lois's belly.

"Congratulations. You have a son," the doctor said.

Lois sat up a little and looked down at the cause of all her recent pain and effort. The doctor clamped off the umbilical cord and offered Richard the scissors to cut it. As soon as the baby was free, Lois picked him up, checking his fingers and toes.

"We need to get him cleaned up," one of the nurses told them, taking him from her arms and bundling him in a cotton blanket. "Does he have a name yet?"

"Jason... Jason Samuel White," Lois told her.

Richard looked down at the newborn in the nurse's arms. *His son?* Not biologically, he knew that, but his son, nonetheless. He hoped he would be as good a father as this little one deserved.

"Richard!"

Lois's scream broke through his sleep.

"Wha..." Richard managed to croak out.

"Jason's not breathing!"

Not breathing? Suddenly Richard was fully awake and standing beside his son's crib. The baby's skin was turning dusky despite Lois's attempts to breathe air into his tiny lungs. Richard felt for a pulse at Jason's neck and found one. It was barely there, but it was there.

"Call 9-1-1," Richard ordered.

"They're on their way," Lois managed to say. She was shaking but Richard didn't have time to deal with that. He took over the CPR, doing as he'd been taught in the infant CPR class they had both taken after bringing Jason home from the hospital. Jason had been surprisingly frail at birth and he had gotten worse after the collapse of the Spires sent tons of dust and debris into the air above Metropolis. But this was the worst attack yet.

Jason's pediatrician wouldn't admit it, but he had no idea what was causing Jason's breathing problems. They had tried everything - they'd removed the carpet and put in hardwood floors, and replaced the crib mattress and bedding with hypoallergenic ones. There were Roman shades on his windows instead of blinds or drapes - the shades could be easily vacuumed. But nothing seemed to help - there seemed to be no rhyme or reason to Jason's attacks except that they seemed far worse at night.

Richard held Lois close as they watched the EMTs thread a tube down Jason's tiny throat and began giving him oxygen. His skin color improved but Richard knew from hard experience that one-year-old Jason White would be spending another night in the hospital and Lois would be screaming in her sleep.

And there was nothing Richard could do but be there for both of them.

Jason grew into a toddler, exploring the Daily Planet newsroom with the same avidity that Lois put into her investigations. If anyone in the newsroom noticed that Jason didn't look much like Richard, they had the uncommon courtesy of not saying anything about it to Richard's face.

Jason's asthma abated somewhat with age, but he still required an entire pharmacopeia to help mediate his various problems. Richard occasionally wondered what would happen if they simply stopped everything and stepped back to see what Jason really needed, but Richard didn't dare make such a suggestion to Lois.

On the fifth anniversary of Superman's disappearance, Lois 'celebrated' by writing an editorial that ended up nominated for, and winning, a Pulitzer - *Why the World Doesn't Need Superman*. Richard didn't need to be a genius to read between the lines of Lois's article. It was written by a woman who felt abandoned and scorned. Richard hoped that writing it would get Superman out of her system. He also knew that his hope was probably in vain.

The inaugural flight of the Explorer space shuttle was little more than NASA grandstanding. Shuttle launches were old hat and even this one, the first time a shuttle was to take off from the back of a 777, wasn't exactly the stuff Pulitzer winning articles were made of, but Lois Lane was there anyway. Jason was a big fan of space exploration and, for that matter, so was Richard.

Richard watched the network coverage of the launch. One thing few people realized about Lois Lane was that a bored Lois was a dangerous Lois. It was a fact that Bobbie-Faye, NASA's spokesperson, was learning to her dismay. However, Bobby-Faye was good - she was barely showing her annoyance at Lois's repeated inane questions but Richard knew she had to be ready to scream.

Then a city-wide blackout hit, blanking out the television monitors. There were moans of frustration from the denizens of the newsroom and then the lights, and monitors, were back on. The power had been knocked out for only a few seconds, but it seemed a lot had happened in those few seconds - the Explorer was in trouble. They had been seconds away from launching when the blackout hit. Now it appeared that the locking mechanisms that kept the shuttle

docked to the top of the 777 had failed to release.

The Explorer was carrying a plane full of reporters into low Earth orbit. A plane that wasn't designed for LEO. A plane that had Lois in it.

Richard was watching a nightmare unfolding, hoping it really *was* a nightmare and he would wake up screaming.

Then a miracle appeared literally out of nowhere. A blue and red streak moving faster than any plane, any missile, was headed for the doomed vehicles. Within moments, the Explorer was free and heading into orbit. There was a hush, both inside the newsroom outside his office as people realized what was being shown on the monitors and from the control room shown in split screen on the monitor.

Radar and telescopic lenses followed the 777 as it went into a flat spin, heading for the ground. Radar tracked pieces coming off the plane. The fuselage was aimed for Miami. Then there was a rising cheer from the control center as the plane's spin slowed and stopped in a violation of every known law of aerodynamics. One word came to everyone's lips: *Superman*.

Every network was showing Superman gently setting the body of the 777 down in the middle of a ballpark. He smiled regally at people in the stadium before flying away. Lois came to the door of the plane, watched him leave and promptly fainted dead away.

"Superman's back," Richard repeated to himself. He didn't know whether he should cry from relief, shout for joy, or scream to the heavens, 'He's back!'

He's back! Dear God, now what do I do?