

Confessions on a Football Jersey

by Dandello (AKA Librarian)

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Rating: K+

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Clark

"Kent!"

The screech came from the hallway outside his apartment door and made Clark wince. One of the downsides of super-hearing. He'd been focusing on the clean-up at the fire Superman had put out half an hour before. He had concerns that some of the firefighters would ignore his warning that the pillars holding up the bottom floor had been weakened more than they should have been. Luckily the fire chief had taken his warning to heart and was keeping his people out of the building until inspectors could arrive.

Of course it did help that the sky had opened up just as he was finished cooling the fire into nothingness and doused everything in a torrent.

"Smallville, open this door! Or..."

Clark hurriedly straightened his glasses and threw the door open. "Lois..." He stopped and stared at the sight in front of him. Lois was soaked to the skin and dripping water on the hallway carpet. To say she was mad as a wet hen was an understatement. A wet cat, maybe, but he'd seen wet hens, and cats, before and they had nothing on a sopping wet Lois Lane.

She stalked into his apartment, kicking off her ruined shoes.

She padded over to him. "Where have you been?" she spat, poking him in the chest. "I looked around and you were gone. *Again.*"

"Lois, did you walk here? Why didn't you drive, or call, or..."

"I did call you. Have you even bothered to check?"

He felt his face grow warm and he ducked his head. He had forgotten to check his cell phone for messages. But then he'd only gotten back to his apartment a few minutes before Lois arrived at his door. Just long enough to type up the story on the fire and email it to the office.

"... and my purse is locked in the car and *you* have the freakin' keys!" she went on.

His gut clenched. In his rush to get away from her so he could deal with the fire, he had completely forgotten that he had her car keys, or that she had put her purse in the trunk of the car, taking only her recorder with her as they went to meet her source.

"Lois, I can explain..." he began, hands out in supplication.

"Don't even try," she snarled. "I am going up to your bathroom. I am going to take a shower. When I get done with my shower, we are going to have a talk about your habit of running out on me while we're supposed to be working together. And so help me, if you're not here, I will hunt you down and not even Superman will be able to save you."

Clark had the sense not to say anything as Lois climbed the stairs to the bedroom-loft and his bathroom.

It wasn't the first time she'd co-opted his bathroom, and the sweats he kept for her, but it might be the last time He couldn't remember the last time she was this angry with him.

I have to tell her. She is so going to kill me.

He listened to the water in the shower, listened as her heart rate slowed to something more normal.

The water stopped and her cell phone rang. "Yes, Jimmy," she said, answering it.

"Is Clark with you?"

She sighed loudly. "Yes, Jimmy."

"Would you tell him to check his email? Eduardo has some questions about the fire story he just sent in and Clark isn't answering his cell again."

"Fire story?"

"Yeah." Jimmy sounded surprised. "Superman saved three firemen not more than forty

minutes ago. Weren't you there too?"

"No, I was meeting a source," Lois stated in a saccharinely sweet tone.

Uh oh.

"I'll tell him," Lois promised and flipped her phone shut. A few minutes later she was coming down the steps, barefoot, hair in a ponytail, wearing the royal blue sweat set with the Superman logo emblazoned across the chest that he'd bought her as a joke last Christmas.

It seemed so long ago now, even though it was only a few months. The sweats had been the final straw for Lois's long term engagement to Richard White.

*"We'd been on the rocks for a while," Lois confessed to Clark following another all-nighter not long after the Daily Planet Christmas party. Richard had abruptly accepted a post in Japan. "I tried to fool myself that it could still work, that I was over **him**. Richard knew better and he's never been one to accept being second best."*

"I guess any guy would feel, I don't know, second best when compared to Superman," Clark managed to stammer out.

"Do you feel second best against Superman?" Lois asked. There was something in her voice that sent warnings shooting through him.

Tell her you idiot.

"Yeah, sometimes," Clark admitted. "But then, I can't imagine Superman sitting down in an all-night diner having pie and coffee."

"Do you think he gets lonely?"

"Superman? Maybe, I guess so."

"Do you think he has someone to talk to when things get bad?"

"Maybe. Why don't you ask him?"

She snorted. "He's not... He visits Jason, not me."

Clark didn't have anything to say to that. He hadn't exactly been avoiding her as Superman, but he hadn't been going out of his way to meet her for interviews either.

Clark busied himself unpacking the care package his mom had sent him. On top were two packages of foil wrapped cookies, one for him and one for Jason. Underneath he found his two Kerth awards, his Meriweather plaque, his school awards and his old high school football jersey.

"You really need to check your messages," Lois stated, arms akimbo as she glared at him. "Eduardo wants to ask you about that fire. The one you turned the story in on while you were supposed to be with me?"

He already had his phone in his hand and held it up to show it was plugged into its charger. "It was dead."

"Clark, you are a reporter. That phone is your life line. Check your messages." She enunciated each word slowly and clearly, as if speaking to an idiot.

He flipped open the phone and checked his messages - three from Lois, two from Eduardo at the Planet, one from Jimmy. He listened to the messages from Eduardo and Jimmy then stepped away from Lois to call Eduardo back. As the new assistant editor, replacing Richard White, Eduardo Juarez was taking his responsibilities painfully seriously. Clark wasn't sure why, but he was keeping especially close tabs on Clark.

"MFD confirms it was arson?" Eduardo demanded.

"Superman confirmed it was arson," Clark corrected. The building had stunk of diesel and multiple point ignitions were rarely accidents. "The fire marshal still needs to investigate it, of course. And I haven't had time to look into the background of the building or the owners."

Lois was going through the box behind him. He tried to focus on what Eduardo was saying on the phone. He was being assigned the follow-ups to the fire. Finally Eduardo hung up.

Clark turned to see Lois holding up the red and black jersey. The back was to him, with his name emblazoned across it. "I never knew you played football, Smallville."

"There's a lot you don't know about me, Lois," he said, trying to keep his voice low and even.

"Were you any good?"

"Yeah. I played quarterback and wide receiver," Clark admitted. *What has she getting at?* "I threw the Hail Mary pass for the touchdown that won us the state championship our senior year. Won MVP."

Her forehead creased as she regarded him. He knew that expression. She was puzzling over something, a contradiction, or missing pieces. *Tell her. You love her. Just tell her.*

"Quarterbacks aren't generally klutzes. So why do you want everybody to think you are?"

"I don't know what you..." *Tell her. You love her. Just tell her. It can't be worse than this.*

"Clark, I know when you're lying," she stated. "I know that little muscle in your cheek that twitches, the way your eyes shift. So why do you want everybody to think you trip over your own feet?"

"Gee, Lois, the newsroom is kind of crowded, and I'm not exactly a dainty person," Clark managed to get out.

"Grizzly Lombard weighs more than you do and he hasn't dented a trashcan yet. Monica wears thicker glasses and she manages to stay on her feet."

"Lois, what are you getting at? You're not... you're not back on that kick me being Superman are you? You remember what happened the last time. You nearly killed yourself."

Tell her. You love her. Just tell her who you are. It can't be worse than this.

"I remember."

He gave her a questioning look.

"I do remember. I remember jumping out of Perry's office window, and I lived. I shouldn't have." She gave him another of her appraising looks - the look that said I'll know it if you lie to me. A 'mom' look. "Where did you go?"

"I heard the sirens..."

A frustrated sigh.

"When you left for six years. Where did you go?"

"Didn't you read the postcards?"

"You're very good at avoiding direct answers," she commented. She stepped closer, still holding the jersey. She draped the shirt over his shoulders then stepped back to look at it critically. The number 'eight' was emblazoned across the front, right where Superman's emblem would be if he...

Tell her.

"All the gossips say you still have it bad for me and the reason I'm so mean to you is that I still haven't forgiven you for leaving me pregnant with Jason," she said. "It would be almost funny if it weren't so close to being true."

What does she remember?

"You were mean to me *before* I left," he reminded her, folding up the jersey and dropping it on the coffee table. "And I thought Superman was..."

"I don't remember sleeping with Superman. I do remember sleeping with you."

"You do?" He couldn't quite keep the squeak out of his voice.

"Yes. I can't quite place where, or how, but I do remember that very clearly. You loved me then. You were *in* love with me then. And I think I was in love with you."

"I still am. I love you, Lois. I think I always have."

There, he'd said it.

He heard her heart rate jump at his admission. She studied his face then reached up and pulled off his glasses. Under normal circumstances he would have grabbed her hand to stop her. He didn't this time.

Tell her.

"Where did you go, Clark?"

Tell her.

"Krypton."

For: kassandrajones - for the 12 Days of Clois November 2008 Fiction Exchange

Clark is struggling to tell Lois both that he loves her and his secret

Preferred Genre(s): Romance.

Preferred Category(ies): Smallville or Superman Returns.

A specific you want: Clark's Jersey. Story from Clark's point of view.

Lois

Lois Lane was beyond furious. She couldn't remember the last time she'd been so angry, or so wet. Her bra was stuck to her, as was her silk blouse and her panties squished as she walked, sending icy water to places she didn't want to think about at the moment.

"Kent!" she yelled outside Clark Kent's apartment. She frankly didn't care if the crazy lady across the hall with the all the cats objected. She was soaked to the skin, her feet hurt and she was pissed as hell.

"Smallville, open this door! Or..."

The door opened. "Lois..." He stopped and stared at her. It would have been funny if she wasn't so pissed at him. She pushed past him and kicked off her ruined pumps. Six hundred dollar Jimmy Choo and they were utterly destroyed. Someone was going to pay.

She padded over to Clark in her stocking feet. She didn't care that she was dripping water all over the hardwood floors. "Where have you been?" she spat, poking him in the chest with one forefinger. "I looked around and you were gone. *Again.*"

His eyes widened behind his glasses as if it only now occurred to him what he had done. "Lois, did you walk here? Why didn't you drive, or call, or..."

"I did call you. Have you even bothered to check?" She glared at him and he had the courtesy to blush with embarrassment. She knew him well enough to know the answer to her question. He hadn't checked his phone messages because he'd either forgotten his phone at the office or the battery was dead. *Again.*

"You left me alone to meet my source, my purse is locked in the car and *you* have the freakin' keys!" she went on.

They'd gone out to Hob's Bay to meet someone who claimed to have information on Senator Harrington's dealings with a questionable defense contractor. If it was true it could lead to a major story and she had wanted a witness on her side. But the source was skittish. He hadn't wanted either of them to carry anything large enough for a gun or a bomb. And her new skirt didn't have pockets for her keys. Then she heard sirens somewhere in the vicinity, Clark's mumbled apology for something, and then her partner went missing.

"Lois, I can explain..." Clark began, hands out in supplication.

"Don't even try," she snarled. "I am going up to your bathroom. I am going to take a shower. When I get done with my shower, we are going to have a talk about your habit of running out on me while we're supposed to be working together. And so help me, if you're not here, I will hunt you down and not even Superman will be able to save you."

Clark had the good sense not to say anything more to her as she climbed the stairs to the bedroom-loft and his bathroom. Unlike most of the guys she knew, Clark kept his place spotlessly neat. He even kept her favorite body wash and shampoo in the cabinet for the times his place was more convenient than hers for getting cleaned up after an all-nighter. *When did it happen that I'd rather get cleaned up at Clark's than spend a cab ride going home to do it?*

She turned the shower on full and let hot water pound on her. The warmth seemed to drive the anger out of her as she relaxed. It probably wasn't really Clark's fault. He had heard the sirens and had to check on it. She probably simply hadn't understood what he was saying before he ran off. *Maybe. And maybe pigs fly. "You're always around, until Superman shows up and then you're nowhere to be found."*

She turned off the water and grabbed one of the big fluffy bath towels she and Richard had got Clark as a housewarming gift. Had it really been only three months? Her cell phone rang and she hurried to answer it. "Yes, Jimmy," she said.

"Is Clark with you?"

She sighed loudly. She wasn't Clark's partner - she was his keeper and she already had one kindergartener at home. "Yes, Jimmy."

"Would you tell him to check his email? Eduardo has some questions about the fire story he just sent in and Clark isn't answering his cell again."

"Fire story?"

"Yeah." Jimmy sounded surprised. "Superman saved three firemen not more than forty minutes ago. Weren't you there too?"

"No, I was meeting a source. But I'll be sure to tell him," Lois said, trying to not sound annoyed. *How did he manage to get it typed up so fast?* She snapped her phone shut and rummaged through the top drawer of Clark's dresser for the sweats she knew he kept there for her - the royal blue set with the Superman logo emblazoned across the chest that he'd bought her last Christmas.

It seemed so long ago now, even though it was only a few months. The sweats had been the final straw for Lois's long term engagement to Richard White.

"I try to give you something with Superman attached to it and you nearly throw it back in my face," Richard said after the Daily Planet Christmas party. "But Clark, your ex-partner who you never once mentioned while he was gone... It's okay for him to give you Superman stuff? How did he even know your size?"

"He asked," Lois responded. It hadn't been the first argument they'd had about Superman since the superhero returned. It hadn't even been their first argument about Clark Kent coming back into her life. But she was getting tired of it. She loved Richard, she really did, but she didn't like him very much when he picked fights about her past relationships.

"Richard, I don't know what your problem is with Clark, but get over it. He was my partner on a couple projects before he left. We worked well together and Perry assigned us to be work partners when he came back to get him back in the swing of things."

"Lois, in the past two months you've spent more time with him than with me. Even Jason spends more time with him," Richard pointed out. "I'm getting pitying looks from the old-timers in the office, like... like..."

"Like what, Richard?"

*"Like they're wondering when you're going to tell me the truth about you and him. About Jason being **his** son, not mine?"*

"Don't be ridiculous," she said. But she knew Richard and the old-timers were right. The timing was right for Jason being Clark's son, better than for him being Richard's. Jason had been small at birth, but not premature.

Then the dreams started - only they weren't dreams. They were memories of her and Clark together. A week later, Richard took an assignment in Tokyo. He said he needed to 'time to get his head together' but they both knew it was the end.

"Have a good life," he said as he left for the airport. "And try not to hurt Clark too badly. He's a good guy."

Lois was almost calm by the time she was dressed and downstairs - at least calm enough not to take his head off. *Yet.* She found Clark unpacking a large box - a care package from his mom, from the looks of it. He'd already pulled out two foil wrapped packages. One had a label on it: For Jason. *For Jason?*

Lois wasn't going to be deterred. "You really need to check your messages," she stated, hands on her hips as she glared at him. "Eduardo wants to ask you about that fire. The one you

turned the story in on while you were supposed to be with me?"

Clark held his phone up to show her that it was plugged into its charger. "It was dead."

"Clark, you are a reporter. That phone is your life line. Check your messages." She enunciated each word slowly and clearly, as if speaking to an idiot.

Clark flipped open his phone.

She turned her back to give him a little privacy. Eduardo Juarez had taken over Richard's spot as assistant editor and he seemed to have taken it on himself to keep Clark on task - even though that had never been one of Clark's problems. So far Clark hadn't made any complaints about it but Lois promised herself to talk to Eduardo. *She* was Clark's partner. Keeping him on task was *her* problem, even though it was tough when he had the habit of disappearing.

"You're always around, until Superman shows up and then you're nowhere to be found."

Lois started unpacking the rest of the box for him. She found his two Kerth awards, his Meriweather plaque, some school awards, including a football trophy and a football jersey. She held up the red and black jersey. It was number eight, and the name printed on the back proved it was Clark's. The team was named 'Crows'.

"I never knew you played football, Smallville," she said after he closed his phone.

"There's a lot you don't know about me, Lois," he said quietly.

"Were you any good?"

"Yeah. I played quarterback and wide receiver," he said, giving her a curious look. "I threw the Hail Mary pass for the touchdown that won us the state championship our senior year. Won MVP."

Something didn't add up. "Quarterbacks aren't generally klutzes. So why do you want everybody to think you are?"

"I don't know what you..."

He shifted on his feet just like Jason did when he was avoiding the truth. *Why is he avoiding the truth?* "Clark, I know when you're lying," she stated. "I know that little muscle in your cheek that twitches, the way your eyes shift. So why do you want everybody to think you trip over your own feet?"

"Gee, Lois, the newsroom is kind of crowded, and I'm not exactly a dainty person," Clark managed to get out.

"Grizzly Lombard weighs more than you do and he hasn't dented a trashcan yet. Monica wears thicker glasses and she manages to stay on her feet."

"Lois, what are you getting at? You're not... you're not back on that kick of me being Superman are you? You remember what happened the last time. You nearly killed yourself."

"I remember." She did remember the incident. Something had clicked about Clark - his clumsiness, his disappearances, his 'knowingness' about Superman activities. Something had clicked and she'd been forced to try and prove it. "I do remember. I remember jumping out of Perry's office window, and I lived. I shouldn't have." She remembered other things too. Superman flying to the rescue at Niagara Falls and Clark being nowhere in sight, *again*. *Six-four, two-hundred or so pounds*. Everyone in the office recognized the resemblance, but no one ever looked past it. "I'm always around," Superman had told her. *Superman left for Krypton and returned. Clark left and returned...*

"Where did you go?" she asked.

"I heard the sirens..."

She sighed. He could be so damned obtuse when he wanted to be, and she had no doubt he wanted to be.

"When you left for six years. Where did you go?"

"Didn't you read the postcards?"

"You're very good at avoiding direct answers," she commented. He never actually lied. He just avoided telling the truth. 'I never lie,' Superman had said during his first interview with her. *He just avoids telling the whole truth.*

She stepped closer to Clark, still holding the jersey. She draped the shirt over his shoulders then stepped back to look at it critically. The number 'eight' was right where Superman's emblem would be. It seemed so 'right'.

She could feel the heat pouring off him. *"I'd forgotten how warm you are..."*

"All the gossips say you still have it bad for me and the reason I'm so mean to you is that I still haven't forgiven you for leaving me pregnant with Jason," she said after a moment. "It would be almost funny if it weren't so close to being true."

"You were mean to me *before* I left," he said. He took the jersey and folded it up. "And I thought Superman was..."

"I don't remember sleeping with Superman. I do remember sleeping with you."

"You do?"

"Yes. I can't quite place where, or how, but I do remember that very clearly. You loved me then. You were *in* love with me then." She paused, watching his eyes as he seemed to come to a decision.

"I still am. I love you, Lois. I think I always have," he said so quietly she was almost reading his lips. She reached up and pulled off his glasses. He didn't try to stop her. The glass's lenses dulled the color of his eyes, but they were the same unearthly hue as Jason's.

Of course.

"Where did you go, Clark?"

"Krypton."

Of course.