

Take My Breath Away

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© 28-Feb-08

Rating: T

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*Watching every motion in my foolish lover's game
On this endless ocean finally lovers know no shame
Turning and returning to some secret place inside
Watching in slow motion as you turn around and say*

*Take my breath away
Take my breath away**

Lois had been dropping hints for more than two days. Beautiful, stubborn, brilliant, irascible Lois Lane was on to him. "That'll be *super...*" she said repeatedly after Perry White announced their newest assignment - going undercover as honeymooners to expose scam artists taking advantage of young newlyweds.

"Oh, it won't take long, Clark," she told him. "We can just... fly right up there and then sort of... zoom right back again. You know... Like Superman."

When Clark Kent denied her absurd - or not so absurd - assertions, Lois jumped out of Perry's office window on the thirtieth floor of the Daily Planet Building to force Superman to rescue her. He managed to save her life without being seen or suspected, but it was a close call. She *had* finally stopped pestering him directly about being Superman, but Clark was certain she wasn't ready to drop the subject. She wasn't nick-named 'Mad Dog' for nothing.

Now he and Lois were registered at Niagara Falls' Honeymoon Haven as Mister and Missus Charles King. It wasn't that he didn't want to be alone with Lois - he did. It was simply that the circumstances were so awkward. And he wasn't sure how long he would be able to keep his secret in such close quarters with her. Worse, he wasn't sure he wanted to.

He hadn't wanted to go to the 'complementary' dinner the Honeymoon Haven was hosting, but Lois had insisted they had to go to maintain their cover. He had gone to the hotel gift shop to get flowers for Lois but what they were charging for roses was nearly twice what a good florist in Metropolis was asking. At least now he had an idea what Perry was thinking about when he sent the two of them out to investigate the situation.

Instead of buying flowers, he found pansies growing wild near the cottage and picked enough for a small bouquet. Lois would no doubt laugh at him. She had already snorted at the rented tuxedo he'd put on for the dinner.

He heard the shower running when he walked into their hotel room. He had forgotten his key, but in turn Lois had neglected to lock the door - Honeymoon Haven hadn't yet upgraded to keycard, auto-closing and auto-locking doors. Clark resisted the temptation to look in on

her. He knocked on the door to the bathroom but there was no response so he knocked a little louder. He heard the water stop and a moment later the bathroom door opened.

"Whoops...!" Lois wheeled back behind the door as Clark turned his back in embarrassment. She had the white bath towel in her hand, not around her body.

A moment later, Lois reappeared with the towel wrapped around her. She didn't seem at all upset with him seeing her state of undress as she sat down at the dressing table and began combing out her hair.

"It's all right now, Clark," Lois said with a chuckle. "I just didn't hear the knock, that's all."

"Lois, for goodness sake, the room door wasn't even locked," he managed to protest. "I mean, just *anyone* can walk in here."

"There you go, Clark," she said, continuing to comb her hair. "Running yourself down again."

"Very funny." He nervously dropped the wildflowers onto the dressing table. "Anyway, here. A little something for the newlyweds' dinner tonight."

Lois glanced at them, amused. "Pansies, Clark? How... different."

"Would you believe they grow wild around here?" he told her. "You should see what they're charging for roses in the gift shop."

He sat on the bed, watching her reflection in the mirror as she combed her hair. She smiled in the mirror and he smiled back. Maybe it wasn't quite as bad as he'd been afraid of.

"You know something, Lois?" he began tentatively "In spite of the unreality of this all... posing as newlyweds and everything" He found himself fumbling for words. He was a writer - a good one - but he still found it hard to talk. "In spite of myself, even... I'm sort of finally starting to kind of feel like one, in a way..."

Lois was openly amused with him now. "A newlywed? You?"

"Well, I don't see why it should be that strange for me to..." he began defensively.

"I'm sorry, Clark. Really I am," she said. He could tell she was trying to sound contrite at insulting him again. Trying and failing. "I bet there've been lots of girls who... Well, a few anyway, who..."

"Go ahead and say it."

"What?"

"That, that somehow I don't seem to... shape up in your eyes," he told her. "Well, darn it, I have nothing to apologize for. I'm a good reporter... and an even better friend to you... when you let me."

He knew he was the only reporter Lois Lane had ever been teamed up with that had lasted more than a week with her. He had lasted three years. Three years of bringing her coffee, donuts and pizza, correcting her copy, watching her back while she was in the field, and arguing with her when she was wrong. The one thing he hadn't been able to do was get her to take him seriously outside of the newsroom. Most of the time, she didn't take him seriously even there.

She watched his reflection carefully in the mirror. "Stand up, Clark," she ordered.

"Stand up?"

"Just for fun," she assured him.

Obediently, he stood up, tugging at his bow tie. It was feeling tight around his neck, like he was going to choke. He watched her as she watched him.

"Look at yourself," she said. "Potentially, this handsome, aggressive, dynamite guy

capable of anything he wants to do. It's not my fault, Clark - you run *yourself* down."

"How?" he asked in a small voice.

"Well, in the first place you slouch. Stand up straight for once. Go ahead."

Clark straightened up. Slouching was second nature to him when he wasn't in the blue spandex. It took several inches off his height. Superman *never* slouched.

"Good. Now find yourself a jacket with more than one vent," she ordered. "Shoes that don't lace up. A shirt with some color or a pattern."

She was back making the same old arguments. A change in wardrobe would turn his life around. The point she consistently missed was that he chose to dress the way he did for a reason.

"All right, all right, Lois, you've made your point. I know where this is all leading, and I'm sorry but no matter how hard I try, I'll never be... *him*."

Lois just watched his reflection. "Him who?" she asked innocently, reaching into her make-up bag for her eye shadow.

"Who else?" he came back. "Superman... I can't help the fact you seem to think you love him. That's just something I've got to live with. But darn it, Lois, it's enough now. Maybe I just can't stand the competition anymore."

She put down her make-up, still watching his reflection in the mirror. "And maybe you've just been the competition all along," she stated cryptically

"Lois, I've never been particularly good at riddles..."

"Then let me give you an easy one," she said. "Why, with thousands of children falling off something lethal somewhere else in the world, why would Superman appear here - at Niagara Falls - today? Why not the Grand Canyon?"

"Why don't you ask the child's family? I'm sure they'd..."

"And why is it always when I'm with you?" she said, interrupting him. "Right up to the moment, of course, when Superman appears... You're never there, are you? You've always just disappeared, somehow. And somewhat conveniently, it's always seemed to me."

"I was getting us hot dogs, for Pete's sake! You were the one who asked me to!" He knew she wasn't going to buy his protest of innocence this time. A part of his mind wondered why she had accepted it for so long.

It was too much of a coincidence, Superman appearing just in time to rescue a boy who had climbed through the safety railing and fallen off. Unlike when Lois had jumped out of Perry's window, there had been no convenient awning to break the boy's fall. There'd been no way to engineer a miracle that didn't involve Superman's direct intervention.

"And when *Superman* arrived on the scene I looked over at that hot dog stand. You were gone, Clark. You were nowhere."

"I was... I was..." he fumbled for an excuse that she might, just possibly, accept. "Darn it, Lois, just because I had to go to the..."

She gave him a knowing look in the mirror. "You are Superman. Aren't you?"

"Lois, we've been through this delusion of yours before. Don't you remember what you almost did to yourself, jumping out of a building thirty stories up? Can't you see the tragic mistake you almost made?"

She smiled thinly at his reflection. "You're right, Clark. I did make a tragic mistake. What a fool I was..." She opened a drawer in the dressing table and pulled something out. She swiveled in her seat and that was when he realized she had a pistol in her hand and she had it leveled at him.

"I bet *my* life instead of yours."

"Lois, don't be insane," he protested. "Lois, you're crazy!" He could see her finger on the trigger, the muscles contracting and he knew there was nothing he could do that wouldn't make things even worse. The gunshot echoed in the room.

He stayed standing.

"I knew it," Lois said. There was a touch of triumph in her voice, and wonder. "I guess I must really have known it for the longest time..."

"You realize, of course, if you'd been wrong," Clark allowed himself to say, dropping his voice to its more normal register and straightening to his full height. "Clark Kent would have been killed."

Lois chuckled softly. "How? With a blank?"

Clark closed his eyes in frustration. In the stress of the moment, it hadn't even occurred to him that he hadn't felt the bullet strike him.

"Gotcha," she added with a gentle smile. "By the way, do you always refer to yourself in the third person?"

They flew up to the Fortress of Solitude. Lois was only temporarily awed by the alien crystalline structure - a testament to her resiliency. Nothing fazed her for long. But then, this was a woman who had faced down muggers, murderers, district attorneys, and big city editors and who claimed the planet's most powerful being as a friend and possible lover.

He showed her the structure, the various nooks and crannies, watching her reaction. He dared to caress her neck, smiling shyly at her.

Her stomach growled and she giggled - they had forgotten about dinner and Lois's stomach was famous for having a mind of its own. But it wasn't going to be pizza or donuts this time. Superman hurried around the world to gather dinner for the two of them. It wasn't often that he got to show off this way.

The Fortress created a table with two chairs and two place settings in crystal and silver.

"What else is missing?" he asked her as he poured the wine.

"For the very first time in my life - nothing at all," Lois replied, watching him. Her expression was full of love. It was what he had always wanted, but he was filled with trepidation. It was too easy. He was going to wake up in his apartment in Metropolis and it would all be a dream.

He leaned in to kiss her and found she was trembling at his touch. She pulled him to her, fingers weaving into his hair as though she was as afraid as he was, that this was all a dream. The kiss sent shivers down his spine. It was beyond anything he had ever dreamed.

"Where did you learn to do that...?" Lois whispered when they finally separated.

"Here... just now..." he confessed. "You take my breath away. No one's ever done that before."

"So, which one is the real you?" she asked after they had eaten. "Superman or Clark?"

"Both, I guess," he answered. "I was raised as Clark Kent. But even then I was different, alien. Then I found out I really was an alien and my natural father's AI tried to train me to be an alien, to be Kryptonian. They were a great and noble people."

Pictures from the AI's database shown on the far wall of the chamber - a family group in alien clothing. They waved at an unseen camera just like any other family. They seemed happy. The man was older, distinguished looking with a mane of white hair. The woman was

blonde and was holding a cheerful dark-haired baby in her arms.

"That's my father, Jor-El... and my mother, my... real mother. Her name was Lara... and that's me... as a baby..." Clark explained a little self-consciously.

"It's amazing. I never really thought of you as having a family like... everyone else. I mean you just sort of... were, you know? Like a fact. A fact without a mother, or a father..." Lois said.

He drew her closer as they sat on one of the wide nook platforms. This one even had a mat and covers, like a bed. "There were so many times I wanted to tell you," he told her softly. "Sitting next to you as Clark, smiling shyly, listening to you talk about Superman, and how much you... loved him..." He stopped as he realized exactly how many times over the past three years he had listened in on her conversations at work.

Lois chuckled. "That's all right. I suppose it is a little late in the game for me to play hard to get."

"It's all real now, Lois," he said. "I'm real... and I love you."

She pulled him to her again, kissing him with a passion he had only read about.

"Mmm. If you only knew what that felt like..." she murmured dreamily.

"The kiss?"

"Not... exactly..." She smiled and pulled him down onto mat with her. "Take my breath away..."

Watching I keep waiting still anticipating love

Never hesitating to become the fated ones

Turning and returning to some secret place to hide

Watching in slow motion as you turn to me and say

My love, take my breath away

Take my breath away

It hadn't lasted. Not even for a few days.

"If you will not be Kal-El," the AI had stated "If you will live as one of them... love their kind as one of them, then it follows that you must become... one of them."

He walked willingly into the chamber that would make him human. Human so he could love her as a man. Human so they could make a life together.

But in that cheap hotel in Alaska, he saw the sorrow, the disappointment in her eyes while they lay in the bed together watching the news on GNN. Watching the reports of the disasters that Superman *wasn't* attending to - a killer tsunami in the Philippines, a jumbo jet that ran off the runway in Moscow and burst into flames killing all on board. That he'd taken a beating in the run down diner hadn't helped.

"Maybe we ought to hire a bodyguard from now on," Clark suggested bitterly.

"I don't want a bodyguard," Lois told him. "I want the man I fell in love with."

"I know that, Lois. And I wish he were here..."

Superman was dead, killed so Clark Kent could have a life that didn't involve running off at a moment's notice to solve someone else's problems. He watched her watching him, grief, disappointment, regret, pity, playing across her finely sculpted face, her eyes dark as she watched him. And as much as she said she loved him, he knew she was lying to herself as well as to him. She didn't love Clark, not really. She didn't protest when he told her he had to go back, that he had to try to bring Superman back to life. She didn't ask him not to go.

It wasn't going to work - he knew that now. He knew that the AI was right and he was

doomed to live his life alone. When it was over, after Superman returned to the world, Clark found Lois at her desk in the newsroom. She had gotten a flight out of Anchorage when he hadn't come back within a day.

"Lois, hi..." Clark managed to stammer out when he found her. She looked like she'd been crying. "How've you been? Did you sleep okay last night?" It was stupid question, considering everything.

"No, I didn't close my eyes at all last night, or the night before," she said, confirming his suspicions. She walked to the coffee machine and poured herself a cup. Then she walked into the conference room, pausing only momentarily to make sure he was following.

"Look, Lois, I..." he tried again.

"I understand, I understand," she said, cutting him off. She shut the door behind them. "I sat up the past two nights listening to the voices of reason. Do you how vile it is to hear the first birds of the morning singing when you've been sitting up all night crying?"

"I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry, too," she said. "I guess it's sort of like being married to a doctor... You know, the doctor gets a call in the middle of the night and the wife has to cope with the fact that he's gone. I guess I'm just too selfish."

"No, you're not selfish at all," Clark protested softly.

"Yes, I am selfish... I am selfish when it comes to you," she replied. "I'm selfish and jealous of the whole world."

"Lois, it may not be easy for you to hear this now, but someday, you'll..."

"Clark..." she interrupted him again. She smiled sadly. "Look, don't tell me I'll meet somebody. You're kind of a tough act to follow, you know?"

He sighed, not believing her.

"Now, I'm gonna be fine. You don't have to worry about me," she told him, turning away.

"I like worrying about you," he said.

"Would you stop?" Her back was to him, but he knew she had started crying again.

"Lois, I don't know what to say..."

"Then don't say anything. People do this all the time. No regrets, you know?" she said. "I mean I did it, didn't I? I got the man I love to love me?"

"Yes." He felt like all the air had gone out of the room. "We'll see each other. All the time, like before. But it can't be like..."

"Don't you think I know that?" she asked, her voice breaking. "It's tearing me up inside that I can't... I can't be with you. I can't show anyone how I feel. I do love you. You know that... But this is killing me..."

"I know," he managed to say.

He pulled her to him one last time. It was tearing him up inside to see her like this - heartbroken, in tears. It would be better for both of them if the previous few days hadn't happened at all. With those thoughts running through his mind, he kissed her.

One last kiss.

She responded with the same passion as before, as if she knew it was their last as well.

Then he pulled away. Her eyes were closed. "Take my breath away..."

She swayed as if dizzy and when she opened her eyes, there were no tears - only a touch of confusion.

"Clark? What just happened...?"

"Nothing much, Lois. Nothing much," he said. "I'll talk to you later." He wasn't certain

what had just happened, only that somehow, he had managed to suppress the psychic link between them, suppressing her memories as well.

'It's better this way,' he told himself, knowing it was a lie.

Three days later came the news that Earth astronomers had found evidence of Krypton's survival. One week after returning to Metropolis following his disastrous liaison with Lois he walked away from the Daily Planet - his job, his friends, everything he had come to love.

He walked away from *her*. But he couldn't walk away from his own broken heart.

*Through the hourglass I saw you, in time you slipped away
When the mirror crashed I called you, and turned to hear you say
If only for today I am unafraid*

Take my breath away

Take my breath away

Clark came back to a world that had spun on without him. Lois had moved on. She had a fiancé and a son. She had won the Pulitzer for an editorial entitled 'Why the World Doesn't Need Superman'. She had a good life that didn't include either Clark Kent or Superman. He wasn't even sure if he wanted to take up the burden of being Superman again. But when the 777 carrying the *Explorer* space shuttle, and Lois Lane, got into trouble it was Superman to the rescue just like old times.

And for the second time since he'd known her, Lois Lane was speechless.

"Richard's a good man," she told him when he finally screwed up enough courage to see her while dressed in the iconic blue and red. "And you've been gone a long time."

He had bent down to kiss her one last time, but she turned away. His prediction of so many years before had come true. She found someone else. She didn't want him back in her life. But he couldn't stay away from her. She was like an addiction.

"Were you in love with him?" her fiancé asked her later in the house they shared. Superman was hovering out of sight, listening, watching. His addiction had turned him into a voyeur and he hated himself for it.

"He's Superman," she answered the question. "Everybody was in love with him."

"But were you?" Richard insisted.

There was a pause and finally she answered: "No."

Superman died a little inside.

Then Lex Luthor struck, using stolen Kryptonian technology to create an island continent that threatened to destroy the entire north Atlantic coastline. Eventually, it would have caused the destruction of the entire planet. Superman saved the city, the world, from destruction once again, even though he'd been stabbed in the back with a kryptonite shiv.

He didn't remember falling back to Earth, even though the crater where he fell was fully thirty feet deep and the concussion shattered ancient oak trees in Centennial Park. His memories of his hospital stay were vague. He wasn't even sure at the time whether or not he had dreamed Lois's visit, or her telling him that her son was also his.

It hadn't been a dream. He had a son. He had spent nearly six years of his life searching for his people, his family, only to discover he had left them behind on Earth. But the mother of his child belonged to another man.

But nothing remains the same. Within a week, Richard White, Lois Lane's fiancé was dead, murdered while on an investigation with Clark. And Clark ended up in the hospital - again. Lex Luthor had taken his venom out on Clark Kent this time not even knowing that

Clark and Superman were one and the same.

"Clark, I remember Niagara Falls and I remember Alaska," Lois told him when he finally regained consciousness. "I remember all of it."

"How?" he wondered aloud, still puzzled.

"Luthor had one of the crystals on him. I have it now," she answered. "When I touched it, it was like, I don't know, like a door opening. Everything came back. Us, Jor-El, the crystal chamber, everything... I remember the look on your face when I told you I couldn't take seeing you every day. That it was killing me," she said softly. "I remember you trying to live by the rules your father laid down and how it was killing you. I remember him forcing you to make a choice, the way he looked at me for corrupting you, how he disapproved of the choices you made. You nearly died trying to live up to his expectations."

He swallowed hard, trying to understand what she was saying. "He sent me here to be an example," he said finally.

"He sent Kal-El to be an example," she corrected him.

"But I am Kal-El."

"You've been Clark Joseph Kent a lot longer," she replied. "Jor-El wanted his son to be above us primitive humans, to be better than us, purer, holier. He warned you not to interfere but made it impossible for you not to. He told you you weren't human, but he knew you would be raised as one, that you would end up human where it counts, inside your head, in your heart. If he wanted you to be celibate, he should have told you to become a priest."

"You don't like Jor-El, do you?"

"What clues you, flyboy?"

"I was wondering, though, what would it take to make you say 'yes'?" she asked him six months later while they were in California on assignment. Lois had been poisoned by a drug that increased the libido to monstrous proportions and she had spent much of the previous evening trying her level best to seduce him.

"You're teasing me again," he said flatly.

"No, I'm not," she assured him. "You're the most honorable man I know. So I want to know, what would it take?"

"Lois, it isn't a good idea," he stated. "I don't know if..."

"Earth women are a lot stronger than they look," she told him softly. "You won't hurt me. And it's not like we haven't done it before. So what will it take?"

"A wedding ring. My ring on your hand."

"Oh, I see," she murmured.

"I shouldn't have said that," he said quietly, staring at the sidewalk. "Now I've ruined everything again. It's too soon. And..."

Lois put one finger under his chin and raised his head, looking into his eyes. "Clark, you're babbling," she intoned.

"I am?" His eyes went wide as he thought about it. "I am."

"Uh huh." She slipped her arm through his, urging him to start moving again. "You know, Reno's only about two hundred miles from here."

He stopped again. "Lois, please don't tease me like that."

"Who's teasing?" she asked. His mouth dropped open in complete astonishment and she began to giggle.

"Lois, are you sure you want to do this?" he asked. "I mean, are you sure it's not the

poison still talking? I can understand..."

"Clark, you've already left me once, and it hurt like hell 'cause I couldn't do anything about it," she told him earnestly. "More than once I've come too close to losing you, even if I didn't know it was you at the time. I don't want to go through that again..."

Her words hurt and he knew it showed in his face. She grabbed his arm to make him face her. "I don't want to go through that again," she repeated, "but I know that's a risk I have to take. It's a risk we both have to take. I want you. I need you. I'm not going to let you go this time."

"There's one thing you didn't say..." he said. *'I want you. I need you. But there ain't no way I'm ever gonna' love you...'* That's what the song said.**

"I want you, I need you, and yes, I love you, Clark Kent."

"I love you, Lois Lane. Will you marry me?"

"I thought you'd never ask." She pulled him down into a sensual, devouring, soul-searing kiss, completely ignoring the fact that they were still standing in the middle of a sidewalk.

"That meant 'yes', by the way."

"You take my breath away..."

*Watching every motion in this foolish lover's game
Haunted by the notion somewhere there's a love in flames
Turning and returning to some secret place inside
Watching in slow motion as you turn to me and say*

Take my breath away

My love, take my breath away

After all this time, she was still beautiful. The years had turned her dark brown hair silver, but her eyes were still bright and she could still run her juniors ragged and did so, on a regular basis. She was over a hundred years old and looked far, far younger. The scientists at STAR labs had told him that her proximity to his aura for such a long period of time had protected her from many of the ravages of time.

Lois had stopped working regularly at the Daily Planet many years before, choosing to become a columnist and then a free-lancer as the children, and then grandchildren and great-grandchildren, arrived and grew up. There was quite a contingent of them now, along with the other meta-humans who had slowly come out of hiding following Superman's example.

Clark had moved on from the newspaper business altogether after a stint as editor in chief of the Planet. His travel and history books, and adventure novels, had bought him a freedom he had never imagined as a youngster growing up in Kansas.

They had a good life, despite the ups and downs. It had been harder than either of them had imagined for them to build a life together - Clark's other job, and Lois's tendency to run in where even Kryptonians had better sense than to go, had mitigated against it - but they had managed despite everything.

Clark inspected his reflection in the mirror. The years hadn't done too much damage to him either, considering. His hair was gray now as well and the deepening lines around his eyes and mouth indicated he was aging, albeit a little slower than a normal human.

"Clark, how long do you think you'll live?" Lois had asked him many years ago. They'd just returned home following a party at the Planet celebrating yet another Pulitzer for the famous Lois Lane. Many of their current and former co-workers had been there, and many of them had traded in their 'old' spouses for 'newer' models.

Clark had taken a moment to answer. From her demeanor, he suspected she was comparing herself unfavorably to the young women who had been put on display. "According to STAR Labs, under ideal conditions, I could live until the sun turns red. But, um, considering how much gray I have, they now think I won't live much longer than a normal, healthy human male. They don't have a good explanation for it."

His own suspicion, even then, was that his six years away from Earth coupled with low-grade but chronic kryptonite poisoning had rendered him mortal and had granted him the gift of aging as a mortal. There was also the possibility that the AI in the Fortress of Solitude had done something unexpectedly charitable when it found a way to return his powers after his disastrous decision to throw them away so very many years ago. He was afraid to ask the AI about it.

"Do you have any regrets?" she had asked.

"Only that it took me so long for me to realize what an idiot I was for leaving you for a fool's errand," Clark answered. "What about you?"

"Only that I didn't haul your cute ass off to Reno the first chance I got," she had said with a chuckle. "You take my breath away..."

"Mom, Dad?" a yell broke through Clark's reverie - Jason, or Skyhawk as he was known while in his superhero guise, was waiting to take his parents to the opening of the new Superman exhibit at the Metropolis Museum of Natural History. The opening was also celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Superman's first appearance in Metropolis.

"We're going to be late..." Jason added.

Clark checked the skin-tight blue uniform one more time - he didn't wear it very often these days. Superman had been cutting back on his public appearances and would be announcing his official retirement this evening. He and Lois had already agreed that tonight would be the last time he would wear the 'suit' in public.

It wasn't entirely voluntary - Superman's powers had been fading for several years and it was only a matter of time before it became public knowledge. It was better to quit before his powers failed completely while on a rescue and someone was hurt.

He walked into the living room and found Jason and Lois waiting for him. Clark knew that the other children were waiting for them at the Museum. The grandchildren were patrolling the city.

He smiled at the delight in Lois's eyes. After all this time, he was still amazed that he had managed to capture her heart, that she had chosen him, an alien from another world, to be her husband and lover.

"Oh my..." he heard Lois murmur. Her eyes were bright behind her glasses as she looked at him. She sucked in her breath. "I never did get over being jealous of the whole world, you know..."

"I know," Clark said.

Jason had the courtesy to look distractedly out the penthouse window.

"But I always came back to you and I always will," Clark continued. "And you still take my breath away."

**Take My Breath Away by Giorgio Moroder and Tom Whitlock*

*** Two Out of Three Ain't Bad by Jim Steinham*