

Kiss Me

by htbthomas

© 18-Feb-08

Rating: K+

Disclaimer: All publicly recognizable characters, settings, etc. are the property of their respective owners. The original characters and plot are the property of the author. The author is in no way associated with the owners, creators, or producers of any media franchise. No copyright infringement is intended.

Author's Notes: This story was sort of a challenge to myself: how many *Kissing Tropes* can I fit into one story? Feel free to play 'spot the trope' along the way! Thanks to **van_el** for alpha help, and **sean_montgomery** for the beta. And the beautiful banner is thanks to **elliania!**



Lois' plump lips slid across the pencil as she turned it in an absent-minded spiral, teeth biting down ever so gently on the surface. The cracks her incisors made in the wood were as loud as an axe cutting down a tree, the way he had focused on the pencil moving back and forth...

Clark blinked and shook his head forcefully. *You have got to pull yourself together!* Ever since the day he had discovered Lois was available again, he had been fighting constant thoughts about her.

When Lois and Richard had been engaged, he'd felt justified in keeping a respectful distance... being supportive of their son... pushing down any personal desires. It was the correct thing to do, especially since he had no right to impose himself on their little family unit, which had obviously been thriving in his absence.

But he had returned. And just his presence in Lois' life, no matter what distance he tried to keep, had caused the dissolution of her engagement. His heart tore in two to see Lois and Jason in the bullpen now, knowing he was most of the cause of those lonely faces.

I don't have the right! he kept asserting to himself. Their relationship had fallen apart once before, and jumping headlong into a relationship again would likely lead to the same consequences.

So why couldn't he stop gazing at the way her mouth moved, the pulse in the hollow of her throat, the glittering of her lashes as the sun slanted across her desk...?

Clark growled low in his throat and turned deliberately away from her. His self-control

was fast-eroding, and until he could figure out a way to make it work, to balance the superhero and the man, he was going to have to stay away from her.

All unconsciously, however, his thoughts began to drift, as they did more than he'd like to admit, to that almost-kiss on the rooftop...

His mouth was only a breath away from hers - any moment his soft lips would press against hers and she'd be lost again in his kiss...

Lois startled out of her thoughts, practically cracking the pencil between her teeth. *That almost-kiss*, she thought with annoyance, *why can't I stop the constant instant replay?* That night on the roof, she had pulled back at the last second, thoughts of Richard pulling her back just in time. "*Richard's a good man,*" she had said in a low voice, "*And you've been gone a long time.*"

Only in this little mental video, the images had been replaced with a different ending, an ending where she let herself be thoroughly kissed into a state of bliss. Never mind what a disaster that would have been back then, or the fact that she hadn't quite decided how she felt about Superman's return...

Oh, yes, now her traitorous mind was filling in all sorts of imaginary details of what would have transpired if she'd given in. The ones that didn't fade to black were the most dangerous of all...

That's it, Lois determined, setting the pencil back down on her desk with a snap. *I'm going to settle this once and for all.* Lois reached down to retrieve her purse from the lower drawer of her desk, pulling out her makeup bag. She removed a tube of lipstick - Valentine Red - and slowly applied the slick substance to bottom and upper lip. Rubbing her lips together, she replaced the tube and stood.

Throwing a, "I'm going to get some air," over at the desk where Clark was working with his back to her, she headed for the elevators.

Once she stepped out onto the concrete roof, she tried to summon all of her considerable confidence. "Superman! Can we talk? It's important," she called to the empty air, save for the sounds of traffic far below.

As she waited, a bit impatiently, she started to rummage for her pack of cigarettes... then stopped. It would just mess up her lipstick, and they weren't even in there anymore. She had promised him she would stop, and so she would keep that promise.

Leaning against one of the pillars, she thought of the other semi-kiss they'd recently shared, the one in the hospital room. He'd lain there unconscious, almost as if he were waiting for a true love's kiss to awaken him... but of course, her brush against his cold, still lips did absolutely nothing. She'd felt foolish and selfish. It would serve her right if he'd woken up and recoiled from her in revulsion.

But that memory had the same ability to take her into fantasy land. In her mind's eye, she could see him wake up, whisper endearments and wrap her in a passionate embrace. Her eyes fluttered closed, mouth parting involuntarily.

"Lois..." he seemed to whisper beside her ear, and suddenly the voice was coming from behind her. She turned to see him standing there, almost glowing in his brilliant colors.

"Superman, you came!" Lois stepped closer, within touching distance, but fear of another rejection kept her hands by her sides.

He smiled enigmatically. "Of course, I told you I would always be around, didn't I?"

She nodded, and swallowed nervously. Why did this man make her lose her grip on her

tightly controlled emotions? "Kal-El," she began, hoping the more familiar name would make him more receptive to what she had to say, "I don't want you to just be 'around' me." She moved directly within his aura, a hair's breadth from touching. "I want you to be *with* me."

He opened his mouth, "I-"

"No, wait! Don't talk yet. I don't want you to say, '*It's too soon,* ' or '*There are too many complications,* ' or even, '*The world has to come first.*' I know all of that. But it doesn't matter to me, don't you see? I know you won't be able to be at my side twenty-four hours a day, be at my beck and call whenever I need you, whenever Jason needs you..." She plunged on, before he could jump in with any sort of protest. "All I want is the time you can give us - to spend my nights with you and any days you can spare. We can *do* this, you and I. We could find you some sort of a *disguise*, even. I bet with a T-shirt and jeans, maybe a ball cap-"

Her tumble of words cut off with a surprised squeak, as his lips covered hers possessively. She melted into his strong, muscular arms, gasping with the sudden passion he was kindling to a fever pitch inside her very core. His hands threaded through her curly locks, framing her face. She was almost without breath, but she didn't care... not if it meant that she would die here in his arms...

Then he was pulling away, murmuring, "I love you, Lois." His voice wafted out into the chilly rooftop air... and then he was gone.

Lois opened her eyes and found herself bereft. The fog of passion lifted with a jolt-

He had never been here at all. Her damned fantasies had taken over again - this had been the most intense one yet. Growling at her overwrought romance-novel dreams, she looked at her watch. She had been up here for over half an hour, and no Superman to be seen. Maybe there was some sudden emergency that had called him away...

No matter. It was time to get back to work. Clark would be wondering where she went, and Perry probably was pacing the floor waiting to hand out a new assignment. Yanking her purse from the ground a little more forcefully than necessary, she stalked to the elevator shaft.

Lois emerged from the elevator and walked into the bullpen, glancing at the monitors. Clark knew she would probably be annoyed with him for not showing up, but his resolve needed to remain firm. She didn't have to look so disappointed, though, did she? Or so kissable, with her ruby red lips turned into a beautiful frown...?

"She's gorgeous when she's mad, isn't she, Clark?" Jimmy said from his shoulder, startling him a little. It wasn't easy to sneak up on Superman, but when his mind was on Lois... *This is why you need to focus, Kent! You're no good to the world when you're acting like a horny teenager!*

But he kept a pleasant grin on his face as he turned to his friend. "I-I think she's gorgeous no matter what mood she's in," he replied, not really having to exaggerate very much to keep up the lovestruck geek act.

Jimmy sighed. "Yeah. Don't know *why* Mr. White ever let her get away. But I guess that's just our luck, isn't it? Some other guy will come along and sweep her off her feet before we can get up the nerve to ask her out ourselves..."

Maybe he *should* try asking her out again. And this time no hamburgers or hot dogs, no sir. Instead, a dimly-lit Italian restaurant, tapered candles casting her heart-shaped face in a gentle glow. She would order lasagna, but she would eye his linguine with cream sauce. He would slowly twirl a forkful of pasta for her and hold it out across the table. After she slurped it down, he could imagine a dollop of cream clinging to the edge of her mouth, where he could

gently lap it away...

"-Clark?"

He looked up, startled, to find Lois in front of him. Jimmy must have wandered off. She tilted her head to look at him strangely.

"Uh-uh, yes, Lois?"

"The Chief wants us in his office. You coming?" She nodded toward the editor-in-chief's office, and walked briskly to his door, no trace of her earlier pique. In fact, she waited at the door for him to rise and join her, instead of going inside to begin the meeting without him. Clark was pleased to see their partnership was beginning to become, well, a partnership again.

"Kent, Lane." Perry White nodded to each of them as they entered the room. "Trey Manyx is back in town after his trip to Hong Kong, and his company is financial trouble. We need an interview with that man, and I'll bet a shiny new quarter you two are the ones who can do it."

"Trey Manyx?" Clark asked, eyebrows rising. "He's almost impossible to pin down."

"Yeah, Chief. He has a long-standing habit of refusing to see reporters," Lois put in.

Perry simply gave them each a flat stare. "Are you... or are you *not*... my top reporting team...?" He sat back in his chair, and lifted the morning's edition to open. The front page had yet another headline brought in by Lane and Kent.

Clark gave Lois a sheepish shrug, Lois grimaced a moment in return... before giving Perry a friendly one-finger salute behind the upraised paper. Then she turned on her heel, leaving Clark to follow her out into the bullpen.

"I saw that, Lane..." drifted Perry's voice from behind them as they grabbed their coats and made for the elevators.

"I meant for you to, you old codger," she muttered in response. All Clark could do was chuckle.

"Excuse me," Lois addressed the receptionist in a no-nonsense tone. "I'm Lois Lane, with the *Daily Planet*. I'd like to see Mr. Manyx."

The man hardly glanced up. "I'm afraid Mr. Manyx does not speak with reporters, especially those who are unannounced." He typed something into his computer at the desk, his posture a clear dismissal.

From Clark's vantage point around the corner, he was able to focus in on the monitor. The receptionist was entering information for Mr. Manyx's schedule. Apparently he was in the middle of a board meeting at the moment. But afterward, his schedule appeared to have a few openings...

They had decided to approach the desk separately, just in case. Clark leaned as nonchalantly as he dared against the wall beside an access door. It was locked - he'd tried it.

"Are you sure there isn't something available later this afternoon?" Lois' voice softened as she changed tactics. After crossing her arms below her breasts, she leaned forward and dropped her voice to a conspiratorial tone. "My editor is going to be *so* mad at me if I can't get an interview with him..."

The angle was just right, her neckline just low enough to give the clerk an eyeful. And with Clark's vision focused on the desk as well, it was almost as if he had been given a front row seat. Clark swallowed, hands clutching unconsciously around the metal of the door handle beside him.

But Clark seemed to be the only one enjoying the show. The clerk glanced at the monitor

again, clearly not even aware of what he was missing. "I think that Mr. Ickes, our senior vice president, might be able to see you tomorrow morning." At that moment, the man looked up without batting an eye, and asked pleasantly, "Shall I schedule you for that appointment?"

Lois sighed. "I guess that will have to do." Clark sighed as well, mostly because she had straightened back up.

The appointment made, Lois walked resolutely out of the main lobby and around the corner. "I got us something with the senior vice president... no dice for Mr. Manyx."

"Uh, I guess it's my turn now," he responded nervously, not needing to fake his awkwardness at all at the moment.

"Good *luck*," she murmured to his retreating back. A few months ago, she might have meant that remark sarcastically, but he could easily tell by her tone of voice, heart rate and tense posture that she was mostly annoyed with herself.

"Hello," Clark greeted politely. "I would like to set up a meeting with Mr. Manyx, if you don't mind."

This time, the clerk did acknowledge him with a brief smile. "May I ask what this is regarding? Mr...."

"Kent," Clark responded, holding out his hand to shake with an answering smile, and taking note of the man's nametag. "I'd like to speak with him regarding rumors of a hostile takeover, Mr. Maxwell. With so much speculation in the press, it would greatly relieve the shareholders to have the truth from the man himself."

"Another reporter," Maxwell murmured under his breath. "Look, Mr. Kent. I already explained to your colleague that he is not seeing anyone from the media."

Clark smiled sheepishly, expecting his reaction. "Yes, I'm aware of that. But I'm not sure your employer realizes how much the company's public image is being hurt right now." He consciously inflected his voice with a touch of his hero-timbre as he continued. "Much more and the stock might plummet..."

Maxwell's eyes narrowed in thought. "Honestly, he's in a board meeting right now, and depending on what goes down in there, his afternoon could be completely full..." His eyes crinkled as he added, "...or completely available."

"Understandable," Clark answered, eyes widening. Was the man... *flirting*?

"Why don't you give me your card..." Maxwell held out his palm warmly. "...and I'll contact you once we have more to go on."

Clark retrieved one from his suit pocket and passed it over quickly. "Thank you, you've been a great help." He nodded as amiably as he dared and headed toward where Lois was waiting. Turning the corner, he expected to be pelted with either questions or insinuations or both...

No one was there. He frowned for a moment, but before he could focus his x-ray vision or super-hearing to locate her, a strong grip on his arm pulled him into the doorway beside him.

"Lois!" he whispered in surprise after the door had shut behind them. "Did you pick this lock?"

"No," she called over her shoulder as she started to walk down the hallway. "It opened when I tried it. The catch was broken."

Clark's face heated as he chased after her. "I was able to get the clerk to take my card, I think we'll be able to get in to see him this-"

Lois led the way with purposeful strides, behaving as if both of them belonged there. She walked to the staff elevator, eyes surveying the floor directory. "Why wait until then? If we

can get the jump on the competition..." She smiled deviously, and turned her gaze on the lighted display above the doors.

As they waited, Clark thought about the door handle he had obviously busted while watching Lois. *If I can't even control my strength in the little things anymore, how can I function? Maybe I should ask to be reassigned...*

He ran a hand through his hair, determined to get through the day. After Lois went to pick up Jason, he would talk to Perry.

After a short ride, and a couple of wrong turns - he knew where the boardroom was located due to his earlier scan of the building, but it would have looked odd to be so knowledgeable - they were standing ten feet from the boardroom doors. Various staff members were busy about their jobs, and so far had not noticed the two of them. "Are we going to wait until he leaves, and corner him, or something?" Clark whispered.

"Or something." Lois suddenly looked curious. "I wonder if you can hear anything from in there..." Lois nodded toward the custodial closet across from them, on the same side of the hallway as the boardroom. "Come on." She opened the closet door and beckoned for Clark to join her inside.

The closet barely had room for both of them. Clark shifted nervously to avoid touching her. Lois' proximity was intoxicating, even as she leaned away from him to press an ear against the wall.

He could easily hear what was going on, but he had never printed a word of information that he had obtained that way. It was important that he had iron-clad proof and the proper sources for his facts. But watching her trying to finagle her way into a scoop made his heart race a little. And the excitement she radiated was beyond attractive to him. He wanted to throw caution to the wind and take her into his arms right then and there.

He closed his eyes to block the sight of her, and tried to concentrate on what was being said on the other side of the wall, figures being quoted, plans discussed, voices raised in heated argument... instead of Lois' racing heart, the sound of her breathing, the rustling of fabric against her silky skin...

The sound of the door rattling on its hinges made both of them jump. Lois turned to Clark with a calculating look in her eyes, and pulled him into her arms. She laid her lips over his forcefully, pushing him into the shelves behind him. After a moment of shock, he responded willingly.

The door opened, and there was a gasp and a pause. "Sorry..." The door shut quietly again.

Not that either of them particularly noticed. Clark encircled her waist with his hands, and pulled her closer, putting his all into the kiss. If he couldn't tell her directly, maybe he could show her. After all, she had figured it out once before...

She drew back in confusion. "Clark...?"

"Lois..." he breathed.

"What?" she hissed, and he crashed back to reality. Lois was still crouched over with her ear to the wall. "Can it wait? I can hardly hear as it is."

"Uh... sure." His heart pounded. All a fantasy? With Lois right here beside him, no less? Normally they didn't take over his entire consciousness like that... this was getting to be intolerable.

That's it, he decided. This tension is getting to be too much. After we get out of here...

Lois grinned gleefully as she swiftly typed up the interview at her desk. After a moment of affronted shock, Manyx had realized he was face to face with none other than Lois Lane and Clark Kent. Though he had every right to throw them out of his building, he had answered a few pointed questions... and then politely had them escorted out. Lois smirked. *Better that than risk more bad publicity.*

Clark was debriefing Perry in his office on the information they'd gleaned while she worked. She glanced up briefly to see them talking... and rather seriously. Clark was standing rather stiffly, and he suddenly seemed much taller than usual. Perry's face was stormy and confused by turns - what the hell were they talking about?

She frowned, but turned her attention back to finishing the last paragraph of their article, hitting 'Save.' Clark could work his editing magic on it now...

Lois stood up to see Clark leaving Perry's office in an awkward rush. He nodded as he passed her desk, but didn't really make eye contact. "Clark...?"

He didn't hear, or pretended not to, shuffling papers on his desk while pulling his briefcase from the floor.

Lois walked quickly over to Perry's office, sticking her head into the doorway. "Chief, what was *that* about? If you had a problem with how we got our story, you could have talked to *both* of us about it-!"

"Lane, it's not that at all," he interjected, cutting her off. "You'll have to ask Kent yourself." He jerked his head to where Clark was making a beeline for the elevators, shoving his hat onto his head as he went.

She swiveled, eyes widening in confusion. It was almost as if Clark were right in the middle of one of his famous disappearing acts. Except he seemed to be fleeing from her personally.

"Clark! Wait!" she called, not even bothering to grab her purse or her coat. He entered the empty elevator, which opened ahead of him, without turning around. Lois hopped out of her heels, pitching one at the rapidly closing doors.

There! The shoe jammed right between the doors, tripping the mechanism back open. *And for once, I'm glad my father wanted a boy...*

She limped lopsidedly into the elevator, retrieving her shoe to put it back on. The doors closed behind them a moment later. Lois stepped close to her partner, her petite frame at odds with her formidable presence, and poked a finger into his white button-down shirt. "Are you running away from me?"

He flushed then, trying to back away, but getting stuck in the corner. "Uh... no. I just remembered that I..."

"...had to pick up your dry cleaning before five? Had to meet a source? Had to call your mother?"

He had the grace to look embarrassed. "...had to run an errand. A personal one."

"And you couldn't have said so? *No.*" She looked heatedly into his eyes this time. "I think you *are* running from me. You wanna tell me *why*?"

Clark tore his gaze from hers, looking at the floor. "Actually..."

Lois waited for a moment, but when he remained silent, she stalked over to the control panel, slapping the emergency stop button. "If you want to make it to your mythical 'errand' then you'd better *talk*." Lois crossed her arms and fixed him with an expectant glare.

He looked like a trapped animal, eyes beginning to dart everywhere, especially upward. "I... I..." Suddenly he deflated, slumping back against the wall. "I can't work with you

anymore, Lois."

"What?" Her heart dropped in her chest. Instead of angering her further, Clark's statement unexpectedly pained her. "Why...?" she asked, unable to keep the hurt from her voice. "We were really starting to click again... just like old times..."

"That's part of the problem, Lois. It's *too* much like old times." He closed his eyes, face crumpling. "I can't handle being so close to you anymore. Because..."

"Because what...?" she asked softly, all heat gone.

"Because..." He suddenly opened his eyes again, the irises bright with raw emotion, and lowered his voice. "...when I'm near you, I can't deny what I feel for you."

She'd always known about the crush he harbored for her, but something in the tone of his voice sent a shiver down her spine. "Oh, Clark..." she breathed, feeling like a complete idiot for forcing this out of him. She reached out a hand and placed it on his shoulder. "I'm..." In this moment, apologizing felt extremely hollow. They had so many years of friendship despite his long sabbatical; she owed him much more than that. Instead, she pulled him gently into a comforting embrace.

He seemed to melt into her arms. Through his bulky jacket, he felt warm and strong... and oddly familiar. She hadn't felt this comfortable in a man's embrace since when Richard and she were still happy... no, actually, since she had flown in Superman's arms...

He moved his arm then, and the feel of his glasses against the side of her head was gone, probably so he could wipe his eyes...

"Lois," he murmured against her ear, startling her again with his deep, earnest voice. "There's more."

"More?" she asked, staying put. After her day of fantasies, she was amazed at how good real human contact felt. She had no urge to move even a centimeter. And his emotion-choked voice, so out of character for her goofy, open-hearted partner, was tickling some long-forgotten memory of holding him this way... though she had no recollection of when that might have been.

"I've been trying so hard to go back to the way things were when we first met..." He stopped then, and she opened her mouth to prompt him further, but then he continued. "But I keep finding myself back at the same place I was five years ago..."

He pulled back just then, and lifted her chin with one finger, so that she could look him in the eyes.

"...wanting you so much that I forget the rest of the world..."

She was looking into the eyes of Superman - Superman in ill-fitting civilian clothes, Superman with floppy brown hair, Superman with a look of anguish - into the eyes of... "Clark!"

He nodded, and her vision swam. The tickle in the back of her head exploded into a mass of returning memories - all wonder and joy and heat and pain and sorrow...

"Oh, my God..." Lois placed a hand over her eyes, rubbing at the sudden tension in her forehead.

"Are you all right?" he asked, voice tinged with worry.

"I... I'm fine... but, oh, my God..." She lifted a hand up to stroke his cheek. "It really is you, isn't it?"

"Yes..." At his look of longing, a spark passed along her hand to her arm, and shot through her body like fire. "It is."

She suddenly felt overwhelmed by the weight of her imagination - all the dreams that had

been keeping her up at night, and the ones that had lurked just out of reach - and she felt inexorably drawn to pull his head toward hers...

Clark couldn't believe he had done it - he was making exactly the same mistake again. But the feel of her in his arms was intoxicating, and the dreamy look of wonder in her eyes was so similar to that night at the hotel in Niagara...

He had to kiss her again. Even if it were the last time.

Suddenly his super-senses kicked into high gear - Lois' eyes suddenly cleared and her hand came flying - he turned against the blow in the nick of time.

SLAP!

"You idiot!" She waved her hands in the air, and then rubbed her hand against her hip with a wince. "How can you even *think* doing that again! To me! To Jason! To *us!*"

"Lois, listen..."

"No, *you* listen. Did you think I was just going to *fall apart* every time you had to go on some mission? That I was going to blab all over about your 'secret identity'?" She started to pace the narrow confines of the elevator car. "If you didn't notice, I didn't fall apart when you left for five years - I even raised your *son*, and I've kept his paternity secret...!"

"No, I *know* I can trust you, Lois, but we've been through all of this before!"

"Have we? One weekend is enough to base a lifetime of assumptions on?"

Her words brought him to complete stillness. "You remember...?" he asked quietly.

Lois simply folded her arms, facing him across what suddenly seemed like a bottomless chasm.

"Then you have to remember what it was like. I almost lost you then..."

"So you'd rather be alone than worry about 'almost'...?" Her voice lowered to a painful whisper. "I never thought you were such a *coward*."

Clark recoiled in almost physical pain, she had echoed his own worries so perfectly. He turned away from her in shame, covering his face with the crook of his arm.

Silence settled over the unmoving car for a few minutes. He waited for her to restart the elevator, and walk away from him. But the sound of her heels approached him, instead, and she laid a gentle hand on his back. "Clark, I'm sorry..."

"Why?" he answered dully, not turning around. "It's true, isn't it?"

"*No*... I was just so angry... I just don't understand." She threaded her hands through his arm, and pulled him in her direction. "You'll fight for Truth, Justice and the American Way..." She lifted a hand to tilt his face toward her as he had done only a little while before. "...but why won't you fight for us?"

In her expression he didn't see disgust, or pity... he didn't see anything but complete faith in him. And his last resolve broke.

He pulled her into his arms, covering her mouth with his possessively. She matched his passion equally, lips pressing against his with absolute urgency. He burned for this woman, wanted to speed her away from here with every fiber of his being...

"*Hey, this is maintenance. Is everything all right in there?*" a voice crackled from the speaker box under the control panel.

They broke off the kiss, both shaking their heads as if trying to wake up. "Um, no, everything's fine. Sorry about that..." Clark fully expected to find himself alone again, the victim of another cruel fantasy...

But Lois was still here in his arms, smiling ruefully up at him, her lips slightly reddened by

their urgent kissing. "Are you really all right? You look a little funny..."

He laughed guiltily. "No, no. I'm just amazed it isn't all a dream..."

Lois grinned in return, and just before pulling him into another lengthy kiss, murmured, "It'd better not be."