

The Sound of Silence

by htbthomas

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Rating: G

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Author's Notes: A birthday ficlet for heartnut - who felt Clark should have come clean during the movie. ♥

Jason squeezed his hand slightly - whether it was in support, or to silently break the sudden tension, Clark didn't know. Maybe it was both.

Richard had compressed his lips into a small line, but he was overall not as shocked as Clark thought he would be. A considering expression came over Richard's face as he slowly looked between Jason, Clark and his fiancée.

Lois, however... Lois...

Lois sat there at her desk, completely at a loss for words. Her mouth was slightly open - in shock, Clark guessed - and her body was almost preternaturally still. If he hadn't been very aware of the rapid beating of her heart, he might have worried that she was going into heart failure.

And so the first person to speak was Richard. "Well, it certainly explains a lot. Your disappearances, the timing of your 'world tour'..." He swallowed once, still trying to take everything in. "And Lois... you really didn't know?"

Lois didn't respond at all. She sat there staring at Clark, at not even his face, her eyes transfixed on a mid-point of his body. The only movement was the clenching of her hand around the handle of the coffee mug she had been using only minutes ago. The steam rose into the air, the drink completely forgotten.

"She didn't..." He scrubbed a hand across the back of his head, "Well, it's-it's kind of complicated." Clark didn't have to fake the stutter in the slightest.

"Wow, I guess so..." Richard looked around the newsroom, which was virtually empty this time of night, but still lowered his voice. "You kept it secret for so long. So why tell anyone now?"

Clark paused. As soon as Superman had heard what had happened on the yacht from Lois, he had felt compelled to tell them the truth, after all, they were going to be raising his son. He couldn't let them struggle through that alone, the way his parents had.

Clark glanced back down at Lois, waiting hopefully for a moment that she would respond. This... lack of reaction... it was the farthest thing from what he thought she would do after he revealed himself as Superman. He had thought she would scream, rage, cry, grow icy with anger... but this... He didn't know what to make of it at all.

"Well, things are different now. For one thing, there's Jason..." He looked down at his tousle-haired son, who smiled impishly, obviously delighted at this turn of events. Jason had

wanted this ever since he had figured out Clark was Superman - and in addition, that they were somehow alike. Clark couldn't suppress an identical grin of his own. As he looked back up at Richard, the smile faded, and his features became soberly serious. His voice strengthened and deepened as he continued, "The time for secrets is long past."

Clark placed a tentative hand on Jason's shoulder. "I want to help you and Lois out with Jason. It's not easy to raise a..." Clark paused, trying to find the right word, "...a child with special gifts." His voice lowered as he fought to control the emotion welling up in his throat. "I couldn't be here the first five years, so it's the least I can do now."

Clark glanced again at Lois. Her hand had moved away from the coffee cup and was now beside her silver letter opener, but otherwise her expression appeared no different than before.

"So..." Richard scrubbed a hand through his hair. "Do you want...? I mean... you're his..." He seemed to struggle with what to say, much as Clark had earlier.

"Do I want custody?" Clark blushed nearly as red as his cape beneath his suit jacket. "Oh, no! I would never take him away from you! I just want to help - if you'll let me." He looked nervously at Lois, whose hand was now clenched into a fist above the stapler she was always borrowing from him.

"Will you teach me how to do all those cool things?" Jason was not able to contain his excitement any longer.

"I'll teach you as much as I can, I promise." Jason didn't really understand exactly why he and Clark were alike... but Clark knew that the time for explaining that had to come soon.

But only if Lois was on board... he suddenly wished she would scream, rant, rave, lash out... anything! Anything but this infernal silence.

His hearing suddenly picked up the sound of sirens - a lot of them. "I'm sorry, I have to... I have to go."

Richard's eyes blinked once in confusion, but then he startled, realizing what Clark meant. "Oh, of course, go. We can discuss this more later. And... thank you. Thank you for trusting us with this."

Clark nodded once, then began to swiftly walk toward the elevators. He only went a few steps when he heard Lois finally speak, her voice nearly toneless. "Before you go..."

A heavy object hit the back of his head with a loud thump. Out of habit, Clark started to wince and rub it, turning around. But his hand fell back uselessly to his side as he looked at Lois in awkward consternation.

"Your stapler back."