

The Smallest Thing

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Rating: K+

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Author's Note: A birthday fic for autumnrae89. Her prompt: *Superman Returns* and peaches. I've also been asked by **van_el** to add these **warnings:** Cheesy romance and sappiness aplenty. Rated I for ID-Porn. Also Rated C for Crack. :D

Lois stepped out of the building and into the fresh spring air. After the months of dreary weather, being able to wear short sleeves again felt like heaven. She tilted her face up to bask in the sun a moment, and then turned to Clark, who had followed right behind her. "Well, that's going to be an easy write up."

Clark also seemed brightened by the sunny afternoon, walking with a definite spring in his step. "It's nice to get those every once in a while."

"You know what? I'm starved. Wanna grab something?"

"All right, sounds good," he agreed pleasantly.

Lois scanned the street - a hot dog vendor, a cart selling Mediterranean food, a fruit vendor... Her stomach flipped a little at the last. She'd always had a little distaste for those carts, though she couldn't pinpoint why.

She started to walk toward the falafel cart, but Clark was already nearly to the fruit cart. Trust the farm boy to pick that one. Mouth twisting in a grimace, she looped an arm through his and tried to steer him away. But he plowed forward with the force of a steamroller - literally. She found her feet lifted from the street, like some sort of cartoon character.

She squawked with irritation, but Clark hardly noticed. He stopped in front of the cart, a broad smile lighting his face. "I can't believe these are already in season..."

"What?" Lois righted herself and pulled down her suit jacket fussily. Then she looked over the cart, full of all sorts of ripe-looking fruit.

"The peaches, usually they don't look this good this early in May." He lifted one, and tilted it in the afternoon light, inspecting it for... Lord knows what. Lois bought them canned.

He selected two of them with care, paid for them cheerfully, and then they were off down the street again. Clark handed one of them to Lois, and she took it with a hesitant smile.

He had no hesitation, biting into the fruit with gusto. His eyes closed, and he rumbled deep in his throat.

"That good, huh?" she teased, still tumbling the peach from hand to hand.

He swallowed, and gave her a serious look. "Heavenly. But you won't know until you try it." He immediately took another bite, the juice dribbling down the side of his mouth.

She watched him chew in blissful silence for a moment, and then shrugged. Lois lifted the peach to her mouth and took a small bite... and her eyes widened in surprise at the explosion of

sweetness on her tongue. She gulped the first bite. "Wow, you're not kidding. These are fantastic!" Lois bit into the peach again hungrily.

"If you think these are good, then imagine them in a fresh peach cobbler. There's this little café back home in Smallville..."

"I'll remember that next time I'm out that way." She lifted her hand to signal a taxi, which pulled over in front of them. Clark reached down to open the door, and Lois slid inside, taking care to keep the peach from touching the iffy upholstery.

She settled in, and then the car door shut behind her... without Clark beside her. She inched over to open the window with her free hand. "What's up? Aren't you coming?"

"Uh," he responded with a nervous glance to the side. "It's a really nice day, today. I think I'll walk instead."

Lois frowned, strangely disappointed. "Okay, suit yourself. I'll see you back at the *Planet*, then."

"You will!" He waved cheerfully, and then tapped on the roof of the taxi to let the driver know it was all right to pull away.

Lois waved back briefly, shrugging mentally. It was just as well - she had been meaning to contact Superman sometime today, to work out plans for the weekend. Jason usually spent an afternoon with him every other weekend these days. And Lois was starting to accept that it might not ever be more than that.

With a sigh, she took another bite of the peach. The glorious taste suddenly reminded her of what Clark's face had looked like as he savored his own piece of fruit - and she chuckled when she realized she must look the same way.

Twenty minutes later, Lois stood on the roof of the building. She had checked the monitors quickly before heading up, to make sure there wasn't any current disaster keeping him busy. She hadn't even bothered to check in with Perry first. A few minutes more before getting back to type up the story wouldn't make very much difference. And Clark would probably be at least another half hour.

"Superman?" she called softly to the spring breeze, which was quite a bit stronger at this altitude. "If you've got the time..."

She almost expected to hear the thump of boots behind her, and a low, "*I've always got time for you, Miss Lane...*" but there was nothing but the sound of the wind whipping her curls around her ears. She walked over to the base of the *Planet's* iconic globe and sat down to wait. It was too bad she didn't have another of those peaches to munch on.

The beautiful weather reminded her that the dreary winter months had been hard on everyone. Richard and Lois had drifted apart, and by Valentine's Day, they were on separate continents again. Superman had 'been around,' but the distance between them seemed as wide as ever. Even with his competition out of the way, something held him back. Lois hadn't figured out what it was yet. If it weren't for Jason, she'd probably hardly ever see him...

"Lois." Superman's voice took her out of her thoughts and she looked up. He stood there, cape swirling slightly in the wind. "What did you need?"

"I just wanted to ask you about this weekend..." Lois stood, brushing herself off. "...when you'd be coming to get Jason, what he needs to bring..." After months of this scenario, they seemed almost like a couple of long-divorced parents amicably chatting about custody arrangements.

"Nothing special this time. Play clothes will be fine." He tilted his head, searching her expression. "Was there anything else?"

"No, that was all," she answered, blushing a little. "I mean, it's not like you have a cell phone I can leave a voicemail message on."

With a small grin, he started to turn away, his legs bending to push off in flight.

"Wait!" she called out, not really knowing why. "There is one more thing." He floated gently back down and she stepped closer to him, placing a hand on his forearm. "I wanted to thank you."

Superman frowned in confusion. "For what?"

"These weekends mean a lot to him. He can't stop talking about it for days afterward. And it means a lot to me that you can take time out from your busy..." She struggled with the right word. "...job... to spend time with him."

"It's the least I can do..." He nodded, sadness entering his expression. "I wish it were more."

His face, so full of melancholy, touched her deeply. Even though the distance between them had been growing ever greater, she suddenly felt the urge to draw him into a hug. He resisted for a moment, but then allowed her to wrap her arms around him in a consoling embrace. "It's enough, for now."

Superman didn't answer, only gently placing his arms around her waist. It felt awkward, but oddly right. For a few moments she simply held him, wishing that he would open up to her. But this would have to do instead. She breathed in the scent of him, the aroma of peaches in the air... and stilled.

Lois stepped back, looking up into Superman's face, the image of a rivulet of juice running from his parted lips... and blinked rapidly. Then she squinted intensely at him, disbelieving her gut feeling.

It was the smallest of things, the scent of peaches, but too much of a coincidence to dismiss. In fact, thinking back, it was only the latest in a long string of coincidences... She drew a deep breath, speaking before she could stop herself. "You know, why don't you drop by later?"

"Lois, it's not..." he began, but she cut him off.

There was only one way to find out if her suspicions were correct. Looking directly into his eyes, she continued, daring him to challenge her. "You can take us to that café. I hear they have the *best* peach cobbler."