

# An Echo of Legend

by Kala Lane Kent

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Rating: T

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Inspired by 'The Date' portion of Adventures of Superman #613, with many liberties taken.

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Lois unzipped the garment bag and took out the blue dress, running her hand gingerly over the chiffon. *Yep, it's still the fashion disaster of the decade. It's a million years old, it was vintage when I bought it, and I have so many other things that look better on me*, she told herself, but that couldn't stop the chill running down her spine as she looked it over. This was *the* dress, after all, and that mattered more than her youthful lack of fashion sense, blue chiffon or not.

She took it off its hanger and stepped into it, drawing it up carefully over the sheer white hose and lacy garters. She'd bought new lingerie for Valentine's Day, all in white, except for the pale pink panties she'd purchased at the same time. The shop clerk had looked askance at the single non-matching item, but Lois had grinned and said it was an in-joke, which made the younger woman smile. That was at least better than the dubious look she'd gotten for buying a bustier; maybe the college-age clerk hadn't thought anyone over thirty was still having sex. *Trust me, kiddo, you have **no** idea. And if you did, you'd die from the jealousy*, she had thought with a smirk as she left.

The most important thing was that Kal-El hadn't seen any of these items, except the dress. And even that he'd only seen once, years ago. Still, she was betting he would recognize it instantly. *He'd better*, she thought with a grin. Lois knew from experience that he remembered that night as well as she did, if not better, and she'd been secretly contemplating this ever since they'd moved into the penthouse over a year ago.

Once she was sure that the dress was falling right, Lois set about pulling her hair up and checked her reflection in the full-length mirror, teasing a few still-wavy strands out of the chignon to lie against her cheeks and neck. It took a very critical minute for her to decide that it looked perfect; after all these years, she'd remembered how to flat-iron her hair without taking all the body out of it. Then she made her way out onto the terrace and opened a bottle of wine, setting two glasses on the patio table. A newly-opened pack of cigarettes lay on the table with a lighter beside it, which Lois picked up. All she needed to do now was light a candle...

A sudden breeze put out the lighter and plastered the long dress against Lois' calves. She smiled to herself as she started just the slightest and lit the candle, waiting a moment before turning around. And then the voice she knew so well spoke in that tone that struck to the core

of her. "Good evening, Ms. Lane."

She took a deep breath, feeling her heart race madly. Then Lois whirled around, wide-eyed, trying to look startled when there was only one thing on her mind right now, *Here we go again...*

Kal-El had finished his evening rounds and flown home leisurely. The twins were with Ma and Ben for the next few days and Lois had been acting so uncharacteristically pleased with herself since they'd left that he was almost certain she had something planned. That was fine; they were still trying for another little Lane-Kent, and even though they hadn't succeeded yet, they both enjoyed the attempts. He grinned, and slowed a little more, scanning ahead to see what she was up to this time.

The sight that met his keen Kryptonian vision gave him a powerful sense of déjà vu. The same balcony, of course, but the patio table was right where it had been so many years ago, and on it were, seemingly, the same bottle of wine, the same glasses, the same pack of cigarettes, even the same note pad. What made the past echo even more sharply in his mind was the dress Lois wore. It was the same long, flowing blue chiffon, the dress she'd dismissed as far too old-fashioned in the years since that first interview. He stared at her for a long moment as she bent to light the candle in its glass holder, wondering if this was a vision of the past, if he'd somehow flown back in time.

"Good evening, Ms. Lane," he said without thinking about it, that feeling of déjà vu growing stronger. When Lois whirled around, though, she unknowingly broke the illusion. This was not the startled young reporter confronted with the story that could make her career and break her heart. The wide-eyed woman before him was his wife, looking at the man she loved with mischief forcefully hidden, and she had only grown more beautiful in his eyes.

Then again, he had to admit that a little playacting never hurt anyone, especially in a situation like this... He stood on the parapet, his cape rippling in the breeze, and smiled that warm smile she knew so well. "Oh, hi," Lois said breathlessly.

"I'm sorry," Kal-El replied, using his perfect memory to recall his exact words to her on that night years ago. "Did you have plans this evening?"

It was impossible to miss the mischievous flash of her eyes. Obviously she was having just as much fun with this as he was. "Oh, this old thing? No," she laughed nonchalantly. So far it seemed as if she remembered her lines just as well as he had, although Kal-El would not have been surprised to learn that Lois had spent the afternoon reading her notes.

"Well, listen, it's no trouble at all for me to come back later," he teased.

"Don't move." At the first interview, Lois had said that nervously; now her voice was a husky purr. She chuckled a little then, walking toward him in an almost predatory way and adding in the same tone, "Or sure, you can move. Just don't fly away."

He grinned, knowing there was no way he'd leave her tonight. Not when she had that sway in her step and that gleam in her eyes. True to the past, he kept that knowledge out of his voice ... for now. "Sorry to drop in on you like this, Ms. Lane," he said, stepping off the parapet and floating down to her. "But I've been thinking, there must be a lot of questions about me that the people of the world would like to know the answers to."

Without missing a beat, Lois turned away to the patio table. He could see and hear her take a deep breath. "Of course," she replied after a moment, picking up the pack of cigarettes and pulling one out.

Just before she put it to her lips, he informed her, "Ah, you really shouldn't smoke, Ms.

Lane."

She gave him a taunting little smile and he knew she was holding back some saucy little remark about that precise comment for the believability of the scene they were setting; besides, she barely smoked anymore, and never Marlboro Reds. This pack had been purchased only as a prop and they both knew it. "Let me guess - lung cancer, right?"

This time, when he used his x-ray vision to check her lungs, he also noticed the lingerie, and let his expression show what he was looking at. Lois knew that slow, considering smile very well. "Well, not yet, thank goodness," he replied, his voice low.

Lois grinned wickedly. Yes, that was exactly what she'd been expecting, from the look of that particular smile. If he had known the effect of that smile, how many times he would see it and under what circumstances, years ago... So caught up in the thought, he nearly missed her offer of, "Would you like a glass of wine?"

"No thanks, I never drink when I fly," Kal-El answered, shaking off those thoughts, and he saw the spark of amusement in her hazel eyes. As always, she knew it when she threw him for a loop. "Nice place," he said, returning to their little game, glancing into the apartment as if he hadn't been living there a year.

Lois went on without a pause, although he didn't miss the smallest quirk of her lips at the absurdity of the comment in light of the reality. "Oh, thank you. Thank you. Should we get started ... with the ... interview?"

As before, he moved in closer, and the nearness of him ruined her concentration. She expected him to just pull the chair out for her, but instead Kal-El leaned in and murmured, "I'd love to." Only then did he pull out the chair for her and sit down himself.

That moment seemed to have been enough for him to throw her off her game, Kal-El hearing her heartbeat picking up just a bit. "Let's start with your vital statistics," Lois murmured, fidgeting with her notepad. "Are you married? Do you have a girlfriend?" Her hazel eyes ticked up boldly to his on the last word, almost challenging.

"If I did, Ms. Lane, I'm sure you'd know about it," he answered smoothly, those blue eyes intense.

That had the desired effect. Lois blinked at him, immediately catching his second slight deviation from the past, before she bit her lip. The light in her eyes made it clear that she was struggling to hold back delighted laughter. "And how old are you?" she went on with only a flavor of her amusement in her voice.

"Above the age of consent," Kal-El answered, and that time she did blush.

He was deliberately provoking her now, almost daring her to trip up. Nevertheless, Lois remembered the interview well enough after a moment to say, "I understand, you don't want anyone to know... Okay, how big - how tall are you?" Whether it had been a case of Lois misspeaking or an attempt to shock and keep him off-balance the first time, it was all too clear where she was going with it just from her tone.

Kal-El leaned forward, resting his chin on his palm, and said softly, "Which question would you like answered?"

Her eyes went wide, sudden heat flaring there before she could control it, and then Lois broke down in incredulous laughter from the tension. It seemed that a certain reporter's weakness for her story was starting to show. "You gotta be *kidding* me," he heard her chuckle under her breath. She cleared her throat, took a deep breath, and said, "I'll estimate. I'm sure my guess is pretty close. How much do you weigh?"

"Two, two twenty-five," he replied, and added, "but that doesn't include the uniform and

boots."

Now even the tips of her ears were blushing; Lois always had issues with him in uniform, or freshly out of it. It was one thing to love Kal-El and marry Clark Kent, but the idea of sleeping with Superman always riled her up. "Hmm," she muttered and uncharacteristically looked away. Even more atypical was the way she continued to keep her gaze averted, despite the fact that history said otherwise. Again, her heart sped up and her breath was coming more quickly. "Well, I, um, I assume then that the rest of your bodily functions are ... normal?"

He leaned back in the chair and smiled broadly. "Oh, *far* above normal... if past reactions are any judge."

Lois still hadn't looked up, biting her lip. The flush on her cheeks was becoming obvious. She was probably thinking she'd gotten herself into more than she could handle. And they both knew what she'd asked next. "Well, putting it delicately ... do you ... eat?" She finally met his gaze then, and her eyes begged him to keep this one clean if he wanted to get through the interview.

Several naughty replies occurred to him, but Kal-El didn't say such things out of bed. "Yes," he replied, using the exact same inflection as in the first interview. "Yes, I do. When I'm hungry."

She closed her eyes and sighed, managing to laugh a little in relief. The tension in her whole bearing was apparent, making him even more sure that the hero angle was chipping away at her reserve. "You do. Of course you do. Is it true that you can see through anything?" As soon as it was said, she was up and out of the chair, trying to compose herself as she strolled over toward the planter. He, of course, didn't miss the brief moment when she closed her eyes and let out a nearly silent sigh of relief.

"Yes, I can," he replied, following her. He could be very quiet when he chose, and was right behind her when she glanced back. As before, his nearness startled her. "Pretty much."

"And you're totally impervious to pain?"

"Well, so far." She turned to him briefly then as they shared a smile, knowing and a little sad. That was no longer true, but he didn't want to deviate from what she would ask next. Not with the way this was going so far.

By that time she was standing behind the same lead planter and grinning, her former anxiety fading a bit. Obviously she was anticipating this as much as he was. "What color underwear am I wearing?"

"Hmm," he said. Breaking the repetition of the past, he put his hands down on the planter and leaned over it to peer at Lois. He slowly looked her up and down, taking his time, and Lois' breathing went a little harsh. "Pink." Only then did he catch her darkened gaze, and grin mischievously. "Sorry Ms. Lane, I didn't mean to embarrass *you*."

"Oh, you didn't embarrass me," she purred throatily, leaning toward him with her elbows on the planter. The pose and his x-ray vision offered him a generous view of her cleavage. Growing more distracted by the moment, he couldn't resist a smile when she forgot to ask him where he was from, and went directly to, "Do you like pink?"

He smiled slowly, waiting three heartbeats before replying, "I like pink very much, Lois."

What could she say to that? Not much, if she wanted this interview to continue. Lois gave him a saucy little smile before skipping ahead again to ask, "How fast do you fly, anyway?"

"I never bothered to time myself," he replied. He had to step away from her; the magnetic attraction between them was as strong as ever, and Kal-El needed to clear his head a little just to remember his line. With forced casualness, he said, "Say, why don't we find out?"

"And how do you propose we do that?" she taunted. Lois had seen how much it affected him, as well, and he knew that devilish grin very well.

"Take a ride with me," Kal-El said, and he didn't even need to create double-entendre for that one. They both knew what flying had always symbolized in their relationship. Lois' ex, the psychiatrist, had teased her about it when she first showed interest in Superman.

"You mean I can fly?" Lois whispered as he drew near. The tone of her voice and the way she looked up at him echoed that similarity between flying and lovemaking. Two heights she and Kal-El had reached together many times...

"Actually, I'd be handling the flying, if that's okay," he replied, meeting her gaze just as steadily.

She smirked, and tossed the notepad and pencil indifferently toward the table. "This is utterly fantastic," Lois murmured. "I should get a sweater - it must be kinda cold up there." Now her tone and the words were completely mismatched. She certainly wasn't chilled, not with her heart racing like that.

Kal-El's arms slid around her, his hands on her hips. "Nah, you'll be warm enough," he told her, pulling her closer. As before, the heat of his body sheltered her from the cold February air.

One fine dark brow quirked as she looked up at him with lidded eyes. In clear divergence from history, Lois slipped her arms around his neck, her lips temptingly close before she leaned back with a teasing murmur, "Clark said you're just a figment of somebody's imagination. Like Peter Pan."

He smiled slowly and said, "Clark would know better."

Lois licked her lips almost nervously, but all he saw was that mouth he so loved to kiss, those eyes whose depths he'd stared into so often gone starry. Kal-El tightened his arms around her and rose to the sky.

They soared above the streets of Metropolis, following the same route they'd taken on that first flight - first *planned* flight, anyway. Lois clung to his arm as they turned toward Hob's Bay, the chiffon gown fluttering in the breeze. To her surprise, it was just as romantic as the first time.

She'd flown with Kal-El many times - sometimes a necessity, during which he would chide her for needing to be rescued so often, but sometimes just because he loved to fly with her. Lois was the only person he took along on those recreational flights, the only one to share the simple delight of soaring with him, and she cherished it every time. But this flight was special.

Maybe it was the memories - here was the spot where she'd finally uncovered her eyes and gasped in wonder at what lay below her, and over there was the bay which had gleamed like black silk that night. Lois found her heart swelling; after so much time together and apart, just this simple act could still fill her soul with joy and wonder. Kal-El beamed at her, rising gently through the clouds.

The moon was full, casting its gentle light on the clouds below and limning the pair of them flying gently along. At least on *this* flight, there was no owl to almost crash into them, and Lois chuckled at the thought. Kal-El looked at her, bemused, but she didn't feel like speaking. The silence between them was warm with shared memories, and she had no desire to break it.

Kal-El let Lois stretch her arms out, quickly gaining her balance, but this time he kept his

hand securely locked around her wrist. No falls this time; once had been enough for that particular experience. She laughed delightedly, knowing that this was as close as any human being could come to being able to fly...

He changed direction, spiraling upward and drawing her close as he did so. Lois found herself face to face with the man she loved, sliding her arms around his neck. They hovered in midair, silvered by moonlight, a mile of empty air beneath their feet and a wealth of stars scattered above them. Kal-El's hands on her waist drew Lois closer still, and she pressed against him, leaning up for a kiss.

An errant breeze swirled his cape around them both, but neither noticed, lost in each other. All the mad attraction between them since the moment they'd met, all the wild wonder of those few brief days together, all the terrible yearning of the years apart, and now all of the ever-blossoming joy of their life together: all of it was bound up into that kiss.

Lois only pulled away when she couldn't go another second without air, her hazel eyes brimming. "I love you," she said softly.

"I love you," Kal-El replied. It was enough; no words could really express their feelings, so those three would have to stand for all the emotions they couldn't name.

Lois grinned wickedly and leaned up for another kiss, this one molten. He returned it with equal passion, not even sparing a thought for the fact that they were essentially in public. At any moment a plane could fly by, or the cloud cover beneath them could break and reveal the story of the year to someone with a telescope...

They broke apart again, both of them breathing faster. "I think you'd better take me home," Lois whispered huskily, sliding her leg along his.

He smiled, understanding the nature of his Valentine's gift at last. The night of that first interview, Lois had been so thunderstruck by the flight and by falling in love with him that she was utterly vulnerable. One word, one gesture, even one kiss, and it had been highly likely that she could've gone to bed with him that night without a single regret. She'd admitted as much since they'd gotten back together, but not without some embarrassment. Fortunately for them both, he was too much a gentleman to have taken advantage of her momentary weakness.

Now, though, Lois was giving him the opportunity to take *full* advantage of the effect flying always had on her. Kal-El shifted effortlessly so he was cradling her in his arms like a groom carrying his bride across the threshold, and flew back down toward the apartment. *Their* apartment, now, and their bed, where Lois' hair would look so shockingly dark against the ivory sheets. He grinned wickedly in anticipation, thinking that his gift to her - tastefully wrapped and hidden inside the stockpot in the kitchen, where Lois would never look - would have to wait. There was another gift to be shared first...

Lois kissed his cheek and murmured, "Fly me home, hero." She wasn't as starry-eyed as that young reporter, who had barely been able to speak after Superman flew away, but Kal-El saw the unending awe in her eyes. Words failed him; he had no way to tell her that she was as fascinating and amazing to him as he was to her. Kal-El decided that *showing* her would be more convincing, anyway.

He kissed her softly as they landed, and instead of setting her down, he carried Lois across the terrace to her door. She nestled against him, a dreamy smile on her lips, and as he deftly opened the French doors he whispered, "Happy Valentine's Day, Lois. As always, the best gift is you."

"Just keep thinking that."