

Worth A Million Words

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Rating: K+

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A/N: The Superman movieverse in general, both the Reeveverse and SR. Written for Dandello

Jimmy Olsen slid the memory card into his computer's media drive, feeling a familiar thrill of excitement as he waited for the pictures to load. Seeing a new batch of photographs was still a bit like Christmas morning; he never knew until he saw them on the large monitor how the latest shots would turn out. What looked like a guaranteed front-pager might have flaws the bigger monitor display exposed, and what seemed like an ordinary shot could have a wealth of detail the camera's tiny view screen couldn't show. The uncertainty, the possibility of finding a real gem, drove the photographer, even when what he was looking at were merely experimental shots.

The computer onto which he was uploading the photos was new, a reward for his iconic shots of Superman catching the *Daily Planet* globe. It had come with lots of memory and a slew of media software, toys that Jimmy was eager to play with. The animation and video-making programs had intrigued him the most, but before he could put together a nifty little animation, he had to have some photographs to start with. He'd chosen to hide his camera on the *Daily Planet* roof, setting it to take time-lapse photos of the skyline every five minutes. Jimmy had left the camera up there for a little over twenty-four hours, hoping to use the photographs to create one of those neat animations where an entire day seems to pass in minutes. A pretty basic project, but a more fun way of learning to use the program than its bouncing-red-ball tutorial.

Jimmy had left the flash off so he could capture the lights of the city as darkness fell, and he had carefully concealed his camera at the base of the recently-restored globe. No one went up on the roof these days, but with the Olsen luck, if he left the camera in the open *someone* would go up there and take it.

The computer dinged softly, and a new window opened, showing thumbnails of the three hundred photos. Jimmy quickly clicked on the first one to open it; unsurprisingly, it showed his chest as he adjusted the camera. Chuckling, he clicked the button for the next shot, and quickly scrolled through the first few pictures of himself.

The next shots chronicled the afternoon and early evening, clouds flickering across the darkening sky. Jimmy had set the camera facing north, so as to capture sunset and sunrise moving across the field of view. For a few minutes, he was fascinated, watching the almost unbelievable sweep of color, and then the lights coming on in buildings across the street. He had set the camera so that it captured part of the parapet, and the illumination of the globe lit

the weathered stone as night encroached.

Just before full dark, the camera caught someone's arm moving into frame. Jimmy groaned; he'd have to manipulate the image or leave it out entirely, as he'd never intended this series to have people in it. The next shot, five minutes later, confirmed his suspicions about who the evening wanderer might be: Lois Lane. And she was leaning on the parapet, going through her purse. She could only be searching for one thing: a cigarette.

Jimmy frowned. Lois had been trying to quit smoking for the last couple of years. She'd almost been successful, carrying the pack of cigarettes in her purse more out of habit, but then everything had come crashing down at once. Lois nearly got killed in that *Genesis* launch, Superman returned to the planet just in time to rescue her, Lex Luthor kidnapped Lois and Jason, the kryptonite island caused blackouts and earthquakes and all kinds of mayhem, and Superman almost got killed. Somewhere along the way, Lois and Richard had broken their engagement, a cause of much office gossip and the most likely reason for her to start smoking again. Lois could handle danger and the possibility of death, but relationships, well, *those* were stressful.

Sighing worriedly, Jimmy clicked to the next shot. Hopefully, Lois had decided against smoking... no, the cigarette was still in her hand. But the camera had surprised her in the act of whirling around, her hair a blur framing her startled expression. Off to one side was a smear of color, something the camera hadn't quite captured.

Intrigued, Jimmy zoomed in, but couldn't make out anything other than a splash of red. He scrolled to the next shot eagerly, and his heart leapt into his throat. *Superman*. Of course. Who else could just appear on the rooftop, suddenly enough to frighten Lois? Jimmy studied the superhero's image carefully. He looked apologetic, hands spread, palms facing Lois. Not his usual confident stance at all. Lois, meanwhile, was in high dudgeon, half-turned away from him, the whites of her eyes showing. Her mouth was open, probably shouting at Superman for having startled her. Jimmy knew how disconcerted she could get when surprised, and he winced in sympathy for the hero.

The photos weren't perfectly clear, but the *Planet's* globe cast enough light to illuminate the pair on the roof. Much less irritated about his skyline photos being interrupted, Jimmy clicked to the next shot.

"Uh-oh," he muttered. It seemed that Lois was more than just startled; she was angry at the hero about something, and in this shot she'd stalked forward, her striking features distorted by wrath. The camera had caught her in the act of poking Superman in the chest; in spite of his invulnerability, he was flinching back.

Actually, it was probably *because* of his invulnerability, Jimmy thought. If Lois stabbed her finger at him in her usual expression of aggravation, she might wind up hurting herself. And that was sure to make her even madder. Jimmy wished for a moment that he'd left a digital sound recorder up there, but quickly decided that would be too much. It sounded like the kind of thing a crazy stalker would do, not a friend.

But friends were allowed to be concerned about each other, and in that spirit Jimmy studied the next few photos. By the time stamps, Lois and Superman had argued for twenty minutes, each successive picture capturing Lois making animated gestures, her eyes flashing. Jimmy couldn't help smiling fondly; she was one of those women who looked her best when she was angry, more dynamic and vibrant in rage than at rest. Superman, on the other hand, was trying to be conciliatory. Though a couple of the photos caught him with a stern expression on his face, he was almost always reaching toward Lois, offering her an open hand.

Finally, Jimmy came to a picture of Lois having turned her back on the hero, hands flung skyward as if to say, *I give up!* Her expression was the very definition of exasperated, and the camera had caught her in mid-stride as she stalked away. Superman had moved to catch up to her, and was reaching for her shoulder, his mouth open as if he were calling, *Lois, wait.*

Jimmy winced again. You did *not* lay hands on Lois when she was mad; she disliked anyone getting grabby with her under normal circumstances, and when her temper flared it was best to just let her be. Only Perry could ignore her stormy moods with impunity. The photographer clicked to the next shot with his eyes half-closed, dreading what it would show.

"Whoa," he gasped. That was *not* what he'd expected! Instead of furiously slapping the hero, Lois was *kissing* him! Her hands pressed against his chest, his fingers wound into her hair, and this was no first kiss. Oh no, this picture confirmed it: Superman had been more than a story to Lois before he left, something often speculated but never proven. Jimmy looked around quickly to make sure no one else in the office could see what was on his screen. Fortunately, the way his desk was arranged meant someone had to walk directly up behind him to see the monitor.

Feeling a bit guilty, he clicked to the next photo. Jimmy's eyes widened. Five minutes later, they were *still* kissing! Only now, Lois' arms were around Superman's neck, and his arms were around her waist, pulling her close against him. Lois had to have been standing on tiptoe, to kiss him so passionately; she looked as if she wanted to disappear into the kiss and never stop. Jimmy loosened his shirt collar and glanced around the office again guiltily. *Please let them have had the good sense to stop necking on the roof,* he thought, and scrolled onward.

Again? Ten solid minutes of kissing? Oh, Lois would *kill* him if she found out about this. And wait just a moment, but Superman's hand was awfully low on her hip there... Jimmy hurriedly clicked to the next shot, feeling like a complete voyeur and knowing he'd have to delete these pictures. Investigative journalism was one thing, but photos of your friend and the World's Defender in a torrid liplock just couldn't be left lying around. If there was any chance they might fall into the wrong hands...

When the next photo came up, Jimmy thought at first that the pair had finally left, and he breathed sigh of relief. But then he saw, in the very top of the frame, the tip of a black shoe, and part of a red boot. So they'd gone flying off afterward. Jimmy didn't want to speculate further, and he clicked to the next shot, glad to find only the skyline and the parapet in view.

A jumble of thoughts chased each other around Jimmy's head. This certainly provided an explanation for Lois and Richard breaking off their engagement ... but did Richard know? Lois surely wouldn't have told him. She'd mostly avoided mentioning the hero during his five-year absence. And now that made sense, too. Lois was justifiably furious at Superman for having left her, but she had enough loyalty not to lambaste him, in print or in speech. Even her Pulitzer-prize winning editorial had been something Perry coaxed her to write. Did Perry maybe know about the history between the reporter and her story, and had he badgered her into writing about it so she could move on and maybe finally marry his nephew? If so, he'd evidently failed...

"Hey, Jimmy," Lois said from immediately behind him.

Jimmy startled, reflexively hitting the ALT and F4 keys to close all windows on his screen even though he was already past the pictures with Lois in them. Even as he turned around to take in her skeptical expression, the photographer knew it was a lost cause. His grin felt pasted-on, and they both knew he had no bluffing skills. "Hi Lois," he said, trying to stretch his smile into something that appeared natural. "What's up?"

Lois gave him a speculative look, waiting a few uncomfortable seconds before saying, "That's a good question. You trying to hide something, Jim?"

Jimmy swallowed nervously, his throat tight, wondering how on earth he was going to explain this one. The habits acquired during his long stint of miserable photos - capped by getting shoved off the front page by some kid with a camera phone - hadn't left him, even though his stock at the paper was currently very high. Maybe that could work for him... "Um, nothing," he said, then looked embarrassed, which didn't require any acting ability whatsoever. "Well, okay, I was fooling around with my new software."

Lois just stared at him, and Jimmy looked down. Only a moment ago he'd seen her in Superman's passionate embrace, and he was pretty sure they hadn't flown off the roof to go hold hands and watch the night sky. *Don't think about it, idiot.*

"*Olsen!*" Perry's bellow cut across the bullpen, making the photographer jump for the second time in less than five minutes. As he scrambled to his feet, giving Lois an apologetic shrug, Jimmy reflected that he'd never been so glad to hear Perry yelling at him.