

Committment

by repmetsyrrah

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Rating: K

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A/N: This was written as a response to a challenge on *The Planet* forums.

"Will that be all Miss. Lane?" he asked, still as formal as ever, despite the newly revealed, 5-year-old, brown-haired, blue-eyed secret they now shared.

Lois looked down at her notes but it was a pointless movement, she already knew that they had covered everything; from the blackouts to the emergence a month ago of the island come planet now officially known as New Krypton. In truth she was trying to gather her courage.

"That will be all, thank you," her voice said, just as formally as his had. Silently she cursed herself, why couldn't she just tell him what she intended to do?

Superman turned to leave the roof of the Daily Planet.

"Wait, " she called. It was now or never.

He paused.

"I love you...and I will leave Richard, " she promised, but a promise was no longer enough.

Superman turned back slightly, "It's easy to love without commitment, Lois. People do it all the time. It's easy to give oneself for a while, but commitment is what holds it together, " he reasoned, before flying off into the night sky. Lois had some thinking to do.

Superman shot straight up until he was out of the range of human vision before altering course and heading straight for Kansas. He needed to talk to someone about this.

"I thought I heard you arrive," Martha Kent called from the kitchen as her only son opened the front door.

Spinning into his normal clothes Clark joined her. "Hey, Mom. What are you doing?"

"Baking," she answered, standing on her toes to hug him, "I've just put an apple pie in the oven, sit down and tell me what's bothering you"

Clark didn't even ask how she knew, his mother had always had a sixth sense of when something was wrong and it was no use denying it- not that he wanted to.

"It Lois," he explained. His mother was silent but gestured for him to continue. "Tonight she told me, Superman," he clarified, "That she loved me and wanted to leave Richard. I told her that... Well, I told her that it's easy to love without commitment"

"You think she's uncommitted," his mother asked, "because she plans to leave Richard or because you made her forget her commitment to you?"

"I..."

"It sounds to me like you *both* have some thinking to do"

Lois Lane stared at the blinking cursor with a gaze that could have melted steel. Or a man made of it.

The nerve... She thought that was what he would want. A chance to raise their child together, as a family.

His parting word still rang in her ears; *it's easy to love without commitment, Lois*. What did he mean by that? She could see now that she and Richard were never going to work, but that didn't mean she hadn't been committed to him. If Superman had never come back she never would've considered leaving her fiancé.

He's been your fiancée for two years and you hadn't even set a date, that doesn't sound too committed, the annoying voice in her head that sounded a little too much like her mother scolded her.

"Lois." Richard approached her desk. "Could I talk to you for a moment? Privately?" he added, glancing at two society columnists nearby who were not-so-subtly listening in.

"Sure." She got up and followed him into his office, glad that he didn't possess the same uncanny abilities as the other man in her life and so couldn't hear her pounding heart. She had planned to tell him today and he'd just given her the perfect opportunity.

The door closed behind them, muffing the chaos that preceded the coming deadline. However, before Lois could open her mouth Richard beat her to it. "Lois, Perry just offered me a job in London. I accepted and the flight leaves in a week."

Lois sat down rather suddenly. This wasn't the way she'd planned it, but she couldn't deny the feeling of relief that flooded through her as he'd said those words. It was quickly followed by a feeling of extreme guilt then utter confusion as his words sunk in.

"Lois?" Richard asked worriedly, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," she whispered faintly. *How on Earth is Jason going to take this?* She wondered. "I'm fine," she repeated, stronger this time, "this is just a little sudden"

Richard sighed and sat down beside her. "No, it's not, Lois. We've been drifting apart for months, even before Superman came back." He paused for a moment as if waiting for some sort of denial but Lois found she couldn't bring herself to lie to him again. "Lois," Her fiancée continued, "I'm leaving because I love you too much to watch and you don't love me enough to come with me. And I'm sorry, I really am."

Lois shook her head in confusion, "Jason?" She asked the only thing she could think of.

"I was hoping we could tell him together, tonight. And I want you to tell him who his real father is too, even if you won't tell me. Lois-"

"No." She shook her head. "Don't apologize, it wasn't you it was me. " She took a deep breath and looked him straight in the eye. "I love you, I really do."

He nodded in understanding. "But not in the same way you love him."

"No," she agreed, "I'm sorry."

Alfred Pennyworth was not the only permanent member of the staff at Wayne Manor because he could cook.

"Hold still," he ordered his boss as he cut the string and began stitching up his arm. "I really do wish you would let me administer an anesthetic, it would make this process much easier on the both of us."

"Anesthesia dulls the mind as well the muscles, Alfred," Bruce informed him calmly, "and right now I can't afford that." He continued typing left handed on the keyboard.

There was a gentle 'whoosh' and a small thud as two boots landed on the balcony outside. Bruce didn't turn around as the door slid open and the boots stepped inside, he already knew what color they would be.

"Hello, Clark," he greeted, without even bothering to stop his work.

"Good morning, Mr. Kent." Alfred had long since mastered the art of being polite to one's guests even as he finished his row of stitches. Tying the last one off he straightened up.

"Would you care for a drink?"

"Not tonight- um this morning," he corrected as he saw the clock on the wall which read 1: 23am. "I'm a bit busy I just need to talk to Bruce for a moment."

"Of course." Alfred nodded. "I shall be in the kitchen if anyone requires me. It was good seeing you again, Mr. Kent"

"You too, Alfred," Clark replied as the butler exited, leaving him alone with Bruce.

"What is it, Clark? I'm kind of busy myself here," Bruce asked, frustrated at another dead-end with his computer search.

"What with?" Clark asked, stalling now that he was actually here. Bruce could be intimidating, even to Superman and Clark was a tad nervous at the reception the real reason for his visit would get.

"Five bank robberies in the past fortnight. No sign of entry at all, no locks picked, no alarms tripped and no one even noticed a thing until they opened the vaults. Three of them had some of the toughest security available to man. What did you really come here to ask?" He asked without pausing.

Clark bit his lip. "It's Lois," he admitted, "she told me- well, Superman me- that she loved me and was willing to leave Richard."

"And?"

"And I may have told her that I didn't believe she could commit to a real relationship."

"Can *you*?"

"Pardon?" Clark was surprised at the turn in the conversation.

"Think about it, Clark," Bruce told him, finally looking up from the computer. "She found out who you were once and things got a bit too hot for you so you made her forget. Now she's had your kid and you still can't bring yourself to admit that when she said that all you wanted to do was tell her yes, regardless of the consequences. Now excuse me, I have a criminal to catch. I'll call you if I need help." And with that he pulled on his cowl rolled down his sleeve and stalked out, leaving a very stunned Kryptonian in his wake.

"Jason, we have something to tell you," Richard said that morning at breakfast. The little boy looked up from his cornflakes that he'd been enjoying with the enthusiasm only someone who'd never been able to eat them before could have. "I've been offered a new job in London"

"Where's that?"

"England," Lois answered, "Sweetie you need to know-"

"Cool!" He looked across the table excitedly. "When are we going?"

Lois and Richard exchanged glances, "Actually," Lois explained, "only Richard is going to England. We're staying here."

"Why?" Jason looked at his mother uncomprehendingly.

"Well," Richard took over, "Sometimes people, like your mom and I, can think they love each other and sometimes they're wrong. Jason we-"

"NO!" Jason yelled standing up and throwing his bowl across the room.

"Jason!" Lois yelled back, "Pick that up."

"No," Jason yelled again, "I don't want Daddy to go away. I hate you." With that he ran upstairs, sobbing and slammed his bedroom door.

Lois started after him but Richard stopped him with a hand on her arm, "Let me." He told her and followed the boy that used to be his son, leaving Lois alone downstairs.

One week later

Lois walked into the bullpen with none of her usual confidence. She'd just dropped Jason off to school and both of them were about to enter their first full day without Richard. It was different than the times he'd been away for work because of the absolute certainty that he was never coming back.

She managed to make it all the way to her desk without meeting anyone's eye. The rumor mill had been running at full steam for the past seven days and now seemed to have gone into overdrive with half of the *Planet* almost certain that a new man was the cause of the split and hoping he would show up today.

"M-morning, Lois," Clark's cheerful greeting broke through her thoughts. He seemed to sense that she didn't want to talk so instead just handed her the coffee he'd made her and headed to his own desk. Lois allowed a small smile to grace her lips as she blew on it. One of the first things she'd noticed when Clark went on his world trip was the absence of good coffee. Clark always made it just right, not even Richard had come close.

Clark had also been rather quiet, even for him, in the past week Lois had noticed; she mustn't be the only one with heavy thoughts. *I should ask him about his trip sometime. Maybe that will cheer him up* Lois thought, remembering the unread postcards in her desk. Five years of them. *Five years...* Something niggled at the back of her mind but she was interrupted by Clark. "Lois, um sorry to bother you, but Perry wants me to finish that story on the unsolved bank robberies in Gotham and I need that interview you got with Gordon."

"Oh, sure Clark," she rummaged in her desk and handed him the folder. "Say, do you want to have lunch today? You could tell me about your trip"

Clark couldn't have looked more stunned than if she'd just got down on one knee and proposed to him. She fought back a giggle as he pushed his glasses up, Clark had an odd way of making her feel better just by being himself "Uh, sure Lois, um where do you want to go?"

"Anywhere, you choose," she replied, "I'd just like to get out of here." She jerked her head in the direction of one Catherine Grant who was discussing Richard White in a slightly louder than necessary voice.

"Yeah, I see what you mean," Clark said, sympathetically, "um, Lois I want you to know I'm always around if ever need to talk or anything."

"Thanks, Clark, I'll remember that." It was only when she turned back that something he'd said registered with her. *I want you to know I'm always around if you ever...want you to know I'm always around...I'm always around...Clark was away for five years...*

Oh, shit

It was approaching midday when the first Superman rescue of the day came in and as usual Perry was adamant that he have an interview to go with the story. And who better to get that interview than the Man of Steel's press agent herself? Lois had fought tooth, claw and nail but Perry had refused to budge.

She stomped towards the elevator, meeting everyone's eyes this time, although all of them were insanely curious over what had caused the sudden shift in mood, everyone was wise

enough to get out of the way. Lois paused slightly at Clark's empty desk, snorting softly, before continuing on her way.

The elevator seemed to move upwards with infuriating slowness. "You'd better be there when I get up," she warned the roof, finally making a decision.

"Miss Lane," he greeted her calmly as she stalked out of the lift.

"Shut up and listen," she told him, not giving him the chance to talk, "I love you, I don't like you right now, but goddamnit I love you. And don't you dare tell me you don't love me back because I've seen the way you look at me. I can commit, I was committed to leaving Richard but he got there first so right now I'm committed to you, I don't care how long it takes because I know it takes longer than five years to forget you. So instead I'm going to get you, I don't care that you're Superman, I care that you're you. And I don't need a hero, just you!"

"Lois-" he started.

"Clark, please"

Silence followed her plea. Clark looked more stunned than he had when she asked him to lunch. "How?"

"I'm always around'," she mimicked, "I didn't realize how true that actually was until today."

"Lois..." He waited but when she didn't interrupt he continued. "You're right, I love you. I love you more than I ever knew I could love anyone, and Jason." He couldn't keep a smile off his face at the thought of his son. "But it's dangerous, if anyone ever knew-"

"You've been hiding in a room full of the top investigative journalists in the world and they haven't noticed. And in case *you* haven't noticed, we survived five years without you." That hurt him she could see but he still managed a smile. "Don't think all is forgiven," she warned him, "I'm still angry and things with Jason will definitely need to be sorted out. But-" she bit her lip, nervous for the first time since their meeting last week. "I'm willing to try if you are"

He nodded. "For you, for Jason."

"Good." She walked over to him and boldly wrapped her arms around his shoulders. "But in the meantime, somebody owes me lunch"

"At a place of my choosing?" he asked as they started to rise.

"I believe that was the agreement." She was surprised at how good it felt to be with him- all of him- that she didn't notice how high they were until they passed up through the clouds.

"Where are we going?"

"How do you feel about Chinese? I know this great little place in Beijing..."

Lois allowed herself a laugh as the wind whipped through her hair and she realised even though they had a ways to go, life was going to get very good indeed.