

Almost Empty

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Rating: K+

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Author's Note: Written for the 12days of Clois, Clois 100. Prompt #99-Almost Empty

Lois drained the last of her coffee and rubbed her aching eyes. It had taken her almost two days to get together all the facts about Lex Luthor's New Krypton and Perry wanted the article for tomorrow's edition.

She sighed as she heaved herself up. If she was going to pull another all-nighter she was going to need more caffeine. Richard had taken Jason home hours ago and Lois was relieved he was gone, things had been terribly awkward since her visit to the hospital and the confirmation she'd received of Jason true paternity. Richard didn't know the whole truth about the last part of course, but he knew something had changed in their relationship. He'd known Jason wasn't his but how was she supposed to tell him he was raising a boy who was half-alien?

There were only a small number other people around, including some cleaning staff. A few smiled knowingly as she walked past on her way to the kitchen, another sign she'd been doing this too much lately.

Lois smothered a yawn as she pushed open the door to the kitchen. It had been an exhausting week all round, she reflected. At first the only thing to worry about had been what to wear to the Pulitzer presentation. Then Clark had returned, bringing a multitude of seriously confusing feelings. Of course his return had been overshadowed by the return of Superman who came back suddenly and publicly later the same day. As if that hadn't been enough, Lex Luthor seemed to decide he'd join in with the theme of the week and reappear after several years of keeping a low profile.

She didn't even want to think about what had happened afterwards. Lex, Richard, Superman and Jason's newfound manifestation of his heritage all made for a rather emotionally draining week.

She rinsed her mug, picked up the coffee jug and tipped it up, and up...and up. "Dammit," she muttered, putting it down and glaring at the bottom of the jug. How on Earth was she going to get through the rest of the night with no coffee?

The zip in the corner had already been switched off and the coffee maker took years to work. Lois needed coffee *now*.

Muttering a stream of insults against the unknown person who emptied the jug, she stalked back to her desk, pulled on her jacket and walked to the lift. The diner on the corner was open 24 hours and their coffee was much better than the coffee from the *Planet*.

She stepped into the lift and automatically pressed the button for the roof. She must've been more tired than she realised. "No, no, no," She muttered, punching the button for the

ground floor. The lift however didn't listen and lurched upwards, heading for the very place she'd been trying to avoid for the past two days.

"You'd better not be there." She muttered to herself, praying that the roof would be empty and she could just go back down and get her caffeine.

No such luck.

She knew he'd be there before the doors had even opened. The tall man in red and blue made an imposing figure but Lois was far too angry to be awed.

"How long have you been waiting?" She asked curtly, digging in her purse for a pen and paper. If she had to talk to him she may as well see if she could get something out of it.

"I've been up here every night," he admitted. "Waiting for you, I heard what you said in the hospital."

"Yeah?" She asked, trying to seem indifferent.

His eyes lit up and a smile spread across his face. "He's amazing, Lois."

Lois couldn't agree more, but she wasn't about to let him off just for a simple compliment. "You left me. You left *us*." This time they both knew she wasn't just referring to humanity in general.

The broken look on his face was almost enough to soften her resolve, "If I'd known," he started, "If I'd had any idea- Lois, I didn't even know it was possible for me to have children with a human."

"Superman-," Lois began before laughing bitterly, "God, I don't even know your name. I slept with a man whose name I didn't know. Great, my mother would be so proud."

"Kal-El." He spoke so quietly that Lois wasn't even sure he had at first.

"Pardon?"

"My name is Kal-El," he repeated.

"Kal-El." She nodded, "And what's Jason going to call you?" He didn't answer. "He doesn't even understand what's going on. Richard is his father, that's what he thinks and that's what he's happy with." She paused again but he remained silent. "You think you can just come back after all these years- just swoop back into my - our - lives as if nothing has happened? You were gone for five years, Su-Kal-El. Five years!"

"I know," he acknowledged quietly. "I'm-"

"Sorry?" Lois asked incredulously, "Don't you dare tell me you're *sorry*. Don't you dare tell me you think you can leave me alone for five years and think 'sorry' can make it up."

"You're upset," he noted.

"You think?" Lois snapped, "You have no idea what it was like after you went. No one knew where you'd gone or why, half of us weren't even sure you *had* gone. You left no warning, no note nothing, we only started to notice when the bullets hit home and the planes really crashed. And what do you think it was like for me? Suddenly I find myself pregnant with no idea how it happened to me. I figured it out," She paused in her rant long enough to glare at him, "I know why I don't remember, you took them, you took my memories, Kal-El."

"How?" he started, shocked at her revelation.

"My shrink said I had 'repressed memories'. I knew if we really were together that wouldn't be something I'd want to forget. You took them, I don't know how but I know no one on Earth could've." He looked down, avoiding her eyes. "Well?" she asked when he continued to be silent.

"Lois, I had no right to take those memories from you," he spoke, finally meeting her eyes. "But believe me when I say it was for the best, you couldn't cope with seeing me every

day and not being able to do anything. I did what I had to do."

"What?" Lois was too startled to remember to be angry, "I don't see you everyday."

"Yes. You do."

Lois took a step back at the sudden blaze in his eyes and the force of his voice, "You see me everyday Lois but you never notice. You're too caught up in your own fantasies of flying that you never notice I'm right beside you the whole time."

"Wha-" Lois began, her pen and paper dropping to the ground as she tried to understand what he was saying, but Kal-El wasn't finished.

"You call yourself a reporter but you can't see the biggest story is right beneath your nose, maybe if you'd just seen me properly in the first place I never would've needed to leave."

Lois was silent after he finished, still shocked by his words. Kal-El turned away, his head tilted listening to some far-off emergency. "Someone in trouble?" she asked, suddenly wanting him to stay, to explain everything he'd just said. Where did she see him? What did he mean when he'd said he *needed* to leave?

"Here," He picked up a plain paper cup that had been resting on the ledge beside him, "I thought you might need this." He gave her the paper cup and leapt into the air. A moment later a faint boom sounded in the distance.

Lois looked at the coffee in her hand for a long moment, not understanding what had just happened. Her mind was filled with questions and her heart was been pulled in too many directions. She raised the cup to her lips and sighed as the delicious liquid slid down her throat. It was her favourite, just the way Clark always made it.

Clark...Her mind drifted over to the tall, bumbling reporter, something in her chest tugged at her, there was something she was missing...You see me everyday Lois but you never notice... She saw Clark everyday... Clark and Superman had left at the same time... maybe if you'd just seen me properly in the first place I never would've needed to leave... Clark had returned the same day as Superman too... you couldn't cope with seeing me every day...

Lois fainted.