

# I Can Explain

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Rating: G

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**Author's Notes:** Written for one of the abandoned prompts for the *Planet March* fic grab. The line was, "It only has to work once." This is set fourteen years before my other fic *Limelight*, when I posted that I had a number of people ask me to write what Lois was talking about when she said to Clark, "That time you slipped in front of Perry." So here it is by popular request: The time Clark slipped in front of Perry.

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"Lois, I want that story and I want it ready for the morning issue," Perry White yelled over his shoulder at an irate Lois Lane as he walked back to his office.

"Dammit, Chief, I told you-" Lois started to yell back but Perry had already closed his door. "I *can* write about other topics you know," she muttered under her breath, pulling out her cell phone to call Clark and tell him she'd be home late.

She had barely started to dial when a hand tapped her on the shoulder, "Mom?" a voice asked.

Lois turned to see Jason standing behind her holding his two year old sister Lucy. "What are you two doing here?" she asked, pleasantly surprised as she gave them both a hug.

"I heard what Perry said and I thought seen as I've got to talk to Ron on the visit from the Korean ambassador and the kids missed you this morning we'd come say goodnight now." She looked up to see her husband holding Lucy's twin, Ella, on his hip and shepherding their other children, Sophie and Dean, towards her desk.

Lois felt her anger at Perry drain away as she stood up to kiss Clark. "Thank you," she said, taking Ella from him and giving her a hug before sitting down. "I'll watch them while you talk to Ron," she told him, drawing the other four kids into the hug as well, deciding it was worth leaving half an hour later tonight if she got to talk to her kids for a while.

"So how was everyone's day?" she asked, "One at a time," she warned quickly as five mouths opened at once.

"I got a gold star on my drawing today," Sophie got in first, "I drew Daddy saving some people from a fire - but the teacher didn't know it was Daddy," she added with a secretive grin.

"Well *I* got a hundred on my math quiz," Jason stated proudly.

"We saw Grandma," Lucy told her, wriggling in Jason's grip until he passed her over to her mother.

"We had cookies!" Ella added, bouncing with happiness and sugar.

"That sounds great guys," Lois said, making a mental note to call Martha and Ben and thank them. "And how 'bout you?" she asked Dean, realizing her other son hadn't said anything.

Dean shrugged, "It was fun," he said but Lois could tell he didn't mean it.

"Don't worry, sweetie." She reached out and ruffled his hair. "Only a few more weeks before you get to go to school too," she promised, "hang in there."

"It's not *that* great," Jason told his brother, rolling his eyes, "I can't believe you actually want to go to school."

"You should count yourselves lucky," Clark said as he re-appeared, "When your grandmother went to school she used to get the strap if she complained."

"What's a strap?" Lucy and Ella chorused.

"I'll tell you later," Clark promised them as he took them from Lois, "See you tonight." He kissed her again. "Does Perry want an interview with Superman?" he asked quietly, "because Jimmy was going to stop by for tea and I can ask him to watch the kids for a few minutes if you want."

"May as well please the boss," Lois sighed, "It shouldn't take too long."

"Uncle Jimmy's coming tonight?" Sophie asked excitedly, "Is he bringing his camera?"

"Da-addy, what's a strap?" Lucy butted in.

"I'm hungry," Ella announced, swinging her legs impatiently.

"I think we'd better be off." Clark leaned in to kiss his wife once more.

"Be careful." Lois called as Clark herded the kids towards the elevator. She didn't like it when he flew with more than two of the kids at a time. She was perfectly aware he'd sooner die himself than let any harm come to his children but it didn't stop her from worrying.

As soon as the elevator doors closed Perry's voice cut across the bullpen again. "Lane, I don't pay you to play happy families, now get back to work," he yelled before turning to tear into Jean from Lifestyle.

Lois hid a smile as she opened up a new document and started typing up her story, she was fully aware Perry had been watching her since Clark arrived and had waited until the kids had gone before letting the rest of the staff know that he was still boss.

She made another mental note to bring the kids around after school some time during the week. She would say Clark was busy and the babysitter was sick and ask him to watch them- he'd make a show of complaining of course but Lois knew he considered the kids his grandchildren in everything but blood and he loved having them around.

It was just getting dark when her phone buzzed and a text from Clark flashed up on the screen. *Meet you on the roof?*

"Be there in a minute," she muttered under her breath, knowing he'd be listening. She pulled out a notepad and pen and set off towards the elevators like she had so many other times before.

However this time she was called back before her finger had even touched the button. "Lane, where are you going?" Perry yelled.

Lois let out an exasperated sigh. "I'm going to get a quote for the article, Chief," she yelled back. "What does it look like?" she asked, turning around and jumping slightly as she realized he was standing right behind her instead of in his office holding his briefcase. "You're going home already?" she asked in surprised, glancing at the clock. It was only nine, a good hour and a half before Perry usually went home on weekdays.

"Alice has been getting annoyed with my late nights recently," he admitted. "I was heading home to surprise her."

"Oh," Lois felt a little embarrassed about her angry reaction earlier, realizing she had misinterpreted Perry's tone. "That sounds nice," she said, pushing the down button, "I was just

going up to the roof but I'll take the other elevator," she offered, holding her hand in the door while Perry got in.

"Thanks." He nodded to her, "Actually," Perry said suddenly, catching the doors just before they closed. "Why don't you join me on the way down?"

Lois was surprised at the request but joined him, her curiosity getting the better of her. "Something on your mind, Chief?" she asked as the doors closed and the car began its decent.

"How are the kids?" he asked, his voice softer than if had been all day. "I saw Clark bring them-" he was cut off as the elevator gave a violent shudder.

Lois clung to the railing to avoid being thrown off her feet. "Clark-" she started to whisper under her breath before there was an ominous groan followed by a loud crack and gravity seemed to disappear as the car plunged toward the ground.

It was perhaps a testament to how much she trusted her husband that Lois didn't actually feel afraid for the several seconds that she and Perry were in free fall. And she wasn't even mildly surprised when the elevator started slowing down until they were set down on the bottom with a small *thud*.

The doors were pulled apart with a screech and Superman stepped in, glancing quickly over Lois and Perry with the look of concentration Lois recognized as when he used his x-ray vision. "Are you alright?" he asked in his Superman voice.

"I think that put a few more years on the old ticker but nothing like a near-death experience to keep you on your toes," Perry joked lightly even though his hands were shaking.

"You seem fine to me, Chief," Superman said lightly, helping him and Lois to his feet and out of the elevator and into the underground carpark. "Although I do believe your elevators are long overdue for a service." He said it with a smile but Lois hid a grin of her own, Clark had been pressing Perry to get the elevators checked for ages but he'd just waved it away saying maintenance would've handled it.

Unfortunately the *Planet* building was over a hundred and fifty years old and the idea of replacing any part of it hadn't been received too well by those who thought it was important to preserve history. They had relented to having automatic alarms installed as a compromise. *Because that would've saved our lives now* Lois thought bitterly, glaring at the elevator car and the blinking light inside calling the emergency services. She was already planning the article in her head, *What Price For Preserving Our History?* She'd start research tomorrow, if she could find similar accidents caused by refusal to replace old machines she might even get another page one.

"An ambulance will be here in a few minutes," Superman told them both, pulling Lois out of her thoughts, as he tilted his head slightly to one side, listening to something the others couldn't hear. "You should let them give you the all clear before you leave." Lois was slightly annoyed that she'd be even later going home but she understood Clark's worry, especially for Perry who had survived one heart attack already.

"We'll wait," Perry nodded, still looking shaky as he sat down on a concrete ledge next to the elevators.

"Well, how about a few words while you're here?" Lois asked, turning to Clark as she pulled out her notebook and pen and holding them at the ready. "Do you or the police have any leads on who may have planted the bomb in the Mayor's office today?"

"The police have several leads they are looking into," he replied, "but I believe I have done all I can to help at this point."

Lois took the statement down word for word. It would make a good direct quote to put

with the other points in the investigation. She may even be able to carry it over to another article on how Superman shouldn't be expected to do everything and should be allowed to let the other emergency services do their job while he spent time with his wife and kids. Not that the last part was going to make it into the article she thought with a smile.

"Is that all?" Clark asked and Lois could hear the amusement in his voice as she snapped back to the present.

"Of course it isn't." She glared at him, trying to stay annoyed as he grinned back. "I have a few more questions, not all relating to the bomb although-" she broke off as he got a familiar look in his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Lois, I have to go," he said apologetically. "See you later." He leaned forward and Lois automatically responded, leaning in to kiss him before he pulled away and shot off into the darkness.

Lois had almost completely forgotten where she was when the sound of someone loudly clearing their throat behind her made her heart stop suddenly in her chest. She turned around slowly and tried not to look guilty as her eyes met Perry's shocked face. *Clark you are so dead* she screamed in her mind. Out loud all she could manage was, "Chief, I can explain."

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Perry White surveyed his domain as he watched the reporters arrive, most falling straight down into their chairs after they'd been forced to walk up the fifty-four flights of stairs to the bullpen. Both the elevators had to be closed off while the builders and electricians worked to replace the damaged car, he'd put in an order for the other one to be replaced as well but it would take some time to work around the protesters who'd no doubt still want their precious history preserved.

But, while it amused him to find out how fit his reporters really were, the state of the elevators was not the thought at the front of his mind. No, that spot was reserved for something far more interesting he had seen last night- Lois Lane sharing a kiss with Superman while her husband Clark sat at home babysitting their five kids.

She had promised an explanation but before she could give him one the ambulance had arrived and she'd been given a clean bill of health before running back upstairs to work on her article while Perry, thanks to his heart troubles had been forced to endure an hour of being poked and prodded by the EMTs before finally being allowed home to see his extremely worried wife.

Staff had been poking their heads in all morning to ask if he was alright but the one he really wanted to talk with had only just arrived, stepping through the doors followed closely by her husband who narrowly avoided tripping over one of the new copyboys. Oddly Lois didn't even turn around or seem to acknowledge Clark's presence at all. Perry frowned as he watched them. It seemed to him that if anyone was going to be angry it should have been Clark. *Maybe he doesn't know*, Perry mused, because surely if he did it would have had some effect on their relationship.

Finally he could stand it no longer and he got up from his chair and opened the door. "Lane!" he yelled across the bullpen at his usual volume, "I need to talk to you." None of the other staff even batted an eyelid at his command but Lois and Clark shared a look before she got up and stalked into his office.

"Chief-" she started as soon as he had closed the door.

"Lois, I'm talking first," he cut in, indicating for her to take a seat. "I know what I saw last night and I know what I've seen these past few years between you and Clark. So I'm going to

ask this once and only once and I will believe what you tell me." He placed his hands on the desk and leaned forward, looking intently at her, "Are you having an affair with Superman?"

"No," Lois cried, "Chief - I - he - we... It's complicated," she finally got out. "Maybe once - a long time ago and before Clark-"

"Before Clark," Perry interrupted her again, several strange things he recalled his eldest grandson doing springing unexpectedly to mind. "You don't mean Jason-"

"No!" Lois looked shocked at the suggestion.

"Lois, it only has to work once," he told her, "and-"

"Perry," Lois cut across him this time, looking straight into his eyes, "You said you'd believe me whatever I said and I'm saying this: I am not having an affair with Superman. All of my children are also Clark's children, yes I kissed Superman last night but it was nothing, it was the same sort of kiss I'd give Richard if he visited- yes, I do love Superman, in the same way I love Richard or Jimmy. Not in the same way I love Clark, okay?"

Perry was silent for a long time, slowly turning her words over in his mind...*before Clark... All my children are Clark's... I kissed Superman... Like I love Richard or Jimmy...*It didn't quite fit with her startled and guilty reaction last night, but he couldn't believe Lois would be so callous as to have a relationship with Superman behind Clark's back. He shook his head slightly before something suddenly fell into place with an almost audible *clunk* in his head. "Okay," he agreed, "I believe you."

Lois' relief was visible in the way her face relaxed and her shoulders dropped slightly. "Good," she said, nodding as she got up and headed back out into the bullpen.

Perry watched her as she walked over to Clark's desk and leaned over to whisper something to him. He imagined it was probably along the lines of *"Don't worry, he bought it. But you're still sleeping on the couch tonight for being so stupid yesterday."*

He chuckled softly as he relaxed back into his chair, knowing things now he should've realized years ago. Of course Lois wasn't cheating on Clark with Superman - how could she when they were the same person?