

Unconditional

by repmetsyrrah

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Rating: K

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Martha Kent had had more than a few knocks in her time, and she wasn't an old woman, not yet at any rate, so her two cracked ribs were more of an inconvenience than anything. It was only really noticeable when she breathed in too deep or accidentally bumped it.

Or when Clark was around.

The usually talkative and happy boy had become so withdrawn and quiet in the past two days that if Martha didn't know better she would be wondering if it really was her son who walked in the door that afternoon after the bus had dropped him off.

"Did you have a good day at school?" she asked, hoping he'd answer her this time.

He didn't, instead walking straight past her and up the stairs. A few seconds later she heard the sound of his bedroom door closing but she didn't have time to follow before the front door opened again.

"Did he say anything to you?" Jonathan asked as he came in, wiping his shoes and looking as concerned as she felt.

"No, not yet," Martha sighed, shaking her head. "I've tried talking to him but he won't answer. No matter how many times I tell him I know it was an accident."

"*We* know it was an accident," Jonathan agreed, "but how do we convince him of that? How many eight year olds have to worry about breaking their mother's ribs when they give her a hug?"

"I'm going to talk to him," Martha decided, putting down the cloth she had been cleaning the bench with and washing the cleaner off her hands, "I've had enough of this. I understand he feels guilty but he needs to learn to talk to us about these things."

"Are you sure?" her husband asked, looking up the stairs towards his son's room.

"Yes," Martha said firmly, "I can't take this silence anymore."

"Good luck," Jonathan said, kissing her lightly before she set off, determined not to come down until she had this sorted.

"Clark?" she called softly, opening the door to his room and stepping in.

"Go away," he called back, curling up on the bed and refusing to look at her.

"Clark Kent, that is no way to talk to you mother," she told him firmly, sitting on the edge of his bed carefully. "I came up here to see you and I'm not going to go away until you talk to me."

"You're not my real Mom," he muttered. Martha didn't bother lying to herself and pretending that didn't hurt her because it did. It hurt to remember all the years she had spent trying to conceive and the doctor's solemn gaze when he told her the chances of her ever

having child were next to nothing.

But now that she, against all odds, finally had a child she could call her own, she wasn't going to let the small matter of blood stop her from being the best mother she could be.

"You know, what?" she asked him, "You can hide up here all you want, not talking to anyone and trying to push your father and me away but it won't work," Martha told her son softly, "because we'll just keep on loving you and there's nothing you can do to stop us."

Clark didn't reply, but he didn't tell her to go away again either. She reached out and stroked his head, pushing his hair away from his face and smiling when she saw him staring back at her with those unearthly blue eyes that were neither hers nor Jonathan's.

"I may not have given birth to you, young man," she told him sternly, "but I am your mother and there is nothing you will ever do that will make me love you any less."

"I don't want to hurt you," Clark said suddenly, finally opening up, his voice full of worry.

"I can get by on a few less hugs for a while," Martha assured him, "but you can't just run away from this- you have to learn to control it and your father and I are going to help you do that whether you like it or not."

"It's hard." Clark's voice was a little louder now but his tone was still full of fear and worry.

"Oh, I know sweetie, and I'm sorry," Martha told him, her heart breaking for her poor boy. No other children his age had to learn to handle their strength for fear of hurting their parents. She didn't know where her son was from and she had no idea if this was normal, perhaps it was just the start of what people where he came from could do. "Nothing worth doing is ever easy."

"How is he?" Jonathan asked when she came down.

"I think he's going to be okay," she told him, "We're going to have to come up with ways for him to control it."

"I can't see that being easy," Jonathan sighed, looking up the stairs towards his son's room. "I suppose we should have expected a few unconventional problems when we decided to raise a boy that fell from the sky though."

Martha just smiled. "Nothing worth doing is ever easy," she reminded him, and she knew, no matter how hard these strange things were too sort out, her son was worth every little bit.