

# Obsession

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Rating: K+

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**Obsession:** A persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling, a compelling motivation

Lois sat at her desk chewing on the tip of her pen. She had her monitor turned so she could peek around it and see Clark's every coming and going without being noticed for several days. Either that man had a weak bladder or he was up to something. She had had a gnawing feeling ever since his return that something just didn't add up.

Even when she was 'Johnny on the spot' catching a tip for some hot lead he would somehow beat her with the story. No one ever bested her when she was at the top of her game. No way was she going to let that farmboy keep her off the front page. Perry was trying to get the two to team back up but Lois was not having any of it. Surprisingly Clark had seemed just as against it.

He should have been rusty coming back after what, five years on the road roaming the world. *Wait, five years roaming the ...naw, it's just a coincidence. Superman was gone much longer than Clark. Wasn't he? It seemed much longer.* She bit down so hard on her pen that the mechanism sprang back up causing her to bite her tongue. "Ow!" she yelled out in surprise throwing the pen down as her hand went up to cradle her jawline.

Clark immediately turned around looking in her direction. Seeing the pained look on her face and the way she was cupping her jaw he got up and approached her concern etched on his face. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. I just bit my tongue, it happens. You can relax." Getting up annoyed she headed to the ladies room. The last thing she wanted was him fawning all over her. As she came back into the far corner of the bullpen she saw Richard arriving with Jason who was already making a mad dash for Clark's desk. Her son for some reason thought the world of Clark. Just like Jimmy did. At first it had seemed cute but why would Clark want to baby-sit her kid in the office day after day? And how did he manage to get all his work done with that distraction added to all his random disappearances? It just didn't seem possible. Again, something just didn't add up and she was haunted with the feeling that she was missing something big, something important, alas something just out of sight.

Richard noticed her standing off by the kitchen and joined her kissing her cheek. "What's up?"

"I was just watching Clark. I don't understand why our son wants to spend his whole afternoon at that man's desk or why Clark lets him."

Richard followed her gaze. "He's harmless. Jason just likes him because he doesn't shoo him away or treat him like a baby like the other reporters. I guess it's his laid back small town upbringing."

"Hmmm, maybe." The two parted and each headed back to their respective desks. Lois

smiled as Jason came running up to her.

"Mommy, look what Mr. Clark got for me. They're sparkle glitter glue pens. I can make my stars *really* shine now." He held up a package of several glittery colored glue pens smiling happily.

Lois tried to smile back but the frown was hard to keep from showing as she considered the mess he was sure to make. "Just don't get any of that stuff on your clothes."

Jason's smile was irresistible. "It's alright, Mr. Clark helped me read the words and this says they're washable. See?" His little finger pointed to a caption as he sounded out the new word on the package of glue pens. "Wa-shhh-a-ble."

"Why don't you come on over to Mommy's desk, I think I can find you some paper to draw on."

"Can I stay at Mr. Clark's desk? He's got some construction paper for me. Please."

Lois sighed. "Alright, but don't get in his way. I'm sure he has his own work to do just like the rest of us."

Jason quickly nodded then smiling ran back to his place sitting at the corner of Clark's desk.

As he climbed up in his seat Lois watched while Clark helped the little boy get settled, the two talking back and forth momentarily before Clark turned his attention to his computer screen and started typing.

Lois went back to her own work, an exposé on the government corruption in the aftermath of the crystal quake. She had figured out the title earlier. *Government Corruption In the Aftermath of the Crystal Quake*. Looking at the otherwise blank screen she added, By Lois Lane. She looked over her notes for several minutes then looked back up to the computer screen and added after the title - *An Exposé*.

She was almost immediately distracted when she noticed in the corner of her vision, thanks to the repositioning of her computer, that Clark was just standing up. She watched as his hand moved to Jason's back as he bent down to the little boy's level and spoke pointing to Richard's office at the same time. She was surprised when Jason nodded and trotted to Richard's office without complaint as Clark walked away surreptitiously looking around the bullpen until he was out of view. Why would he feel a need to sneak out?

Lois got up and walked towards Richard's office by way of Clark's desk. She noticed the unfinished artwork still on the desk top. The computer screen was on the Planet Desktop. Continuing on to Richard's office she pretended to stretch as she entered. Smiling at Jason she asked, "Are you tired of coloring already?"

Jason shook his head. "Mr. Clark had to do something. He said he would be right back."

"Do you know what he had to do?"

Jason shook his head 'no'. Lois' instincts made her think otherwise. He had answered too urgently and he had that wide-eyed innocent look to boot.

Richard looked up from his work. "He's probably just checking on a source or something. You know how protective some reporters are with their sources. They don't want anyone overhearing them. So how is your story coming along?"

"Slow." She sighed. "I guess I had better get back to it."

Lois settled back at her desk and once again stared at the title of her current assignment. She erased the '*An Exposé*' from the title. "That's better." She looked back at her notes and a few minutes later back up at the title. "Sheesh, I'm going to need a strong cup of coffee to finish this dog before deadline." She looked over and noticed Clark had still not returned. It

had been a good ten minutes that he'd been gone. She went back to work finally getting part of an actual paragraph on the page.

A few minutes later she heard someone coming up behind her but ignored whoever it was. "Ah Lois. I was just passing by your favorite coffee shop and thought you might need a pick-me-up."

Turning around she saw Clark standing with a tall cup of what looked like just might be her favorite brew. She gratefully took the offered cup. "Clark, how did you know I needed this?"

He shrugged, "You just seemed like you could use a little something this afternoon."

She tested the coffee through the sippy lid finding it the perfect temperature. *How does he do that?* "You are just too good to be true, Clark. How come some cute young thing didn't set you in her sights and sweep you off your feet during your travels?"

He shrugged, looking embarrassed, then pushed his glasses back in place, "I guess I just wasn't in one place long enough. Well, I should get back to work."

Lois held the cup up smiling sincerely as he started to turn away. "Thanks for the coffee. I'm feeling better already."

He smiled back at her and she was sure she saw a wistful look on his face. *He still has that crush on me.* She sipped her coffee considering that. *Maybe I know someone I can introduce him to. Hmmm, someone who is as naive romantically as he is, too bad all the women I know are complete sharks. He is definitely too much of a lightweight to handle a shark.*

Lois went back to work but continued to keep her eye on Clark. She saw Jason run back to his desk before the reporter had time to sit down. *How could he always be so happy to have someone else's child taking up a third of his desk? Sure Jason was the most adorable and smartest and most well behaved kid since, well ever. Of course I would believe that but Clark seems to feel the same way. Was it because Jason was her child and his crush for her extended to her son?*

As she pondered this she was once again fiddling with her pen and without thinking brought it to her mouth as she so often did to chew on the end. "Eckkkk!" She made a face dropping the pen on the desk. "What is wrong with me and pens today?" She had accidentally put the writing end of the rolling writer in her mouth. The ink was evident on her lips and chin.

Clark and Jason both turned to see her standing up trying to wipe her mouth with a tissue. They were both trying to contain their amusement. Jason covered his mouth with both hands while Clark wisely turned away entirely but not before Lois saw him snickering with her son. Grabbing her lipstick and a second tissue she once again headed for the ladies' room reconsidering the idea of introducing Clark to a known shark. It would serve him right for laughing at her.

The rest of the afternoon proved no better as Lois continued to be distracted by Clark's every move and disappearance. Finally Lois gave up on finishing her article and suggested to Richard that they needed to get Jason home. On the drive home Lois asked, "Do you know any women we could perhaps introduce to Clark?"

Richard glanced over at Lois. "What's this sudden obsession with Clark? You've been asking questions about him all day." He liked the guy but he had certainly had enough of Clark for one day.

"No I haven't. I've been busy all day working on that exposé Perry assigned to me yesterday."

"Lois, you pitched that story yourself and if you were working on it so hard why weren't you able to put it to bed?"

"There just wasn't as much there as I thought there was. I haven't been able to tie down my corroborating sources."

"Lois, if you had spend even half the time you spent watching Clark today you could have finished that and two other stories."

"What do you mean watching Clark? I wasn't watching Clark. I was keeping an eye on our son, Jason. Remember him? He was at Clark's desk all afternoon, again! You would think he was Clark's son instead of yours." She half whispered as she looked over her shoulder at the little boy to verify he wasn't listening.

Richard saw her glance back and looked in the rearview mirror wanting to make sure for himself that Jason had his earphones in place and was busy watching a DVD. She had hit a sore spot and he was too tired from a trying day to let it go. It seemed they had a lot of sore spots especially since the splashy return of the 'other man' in his fiancée's life.

"How do I know he isn't Jason's father? I've even overheard some of the people in the office gossiping about how much they look alike and it certainly makes more sense than the other option so many of them speculate about.

Lois sighed loudly. "Not that again?"

"Well, with the way you're acting I don't know what to believe. Lois, you were watching Clark all morning *before* I picked up Jason. Every time I looked at you, you were watching *him*."

Lois turned away looking out the side window, not wanting to get dragged into another fight.

He sighed exasperated. "It's no wonder you didn't get your article finished. Do I now have to compete with Clark along with Superman? How many others are out there? Will there be more?"

That comment riled Lois and she turned back to face him and struck back hard. "And I suppose I am *your* first love? Richard, you knew I had a past. Leave it there or we're done."

They pulled up into the driveway and Lois jumped out running into the house. Running upstairs she changed into jeans and a sweater then came back downstairs stopping in the living room to kiss Jason on her way out. "Munchkin, Mommy needs to go out for a little while. You are going to stay here with Daddy so be a good boy and I'll be home in time to tuck you in alright?"

Jason nodded, sadness and confusion showing in his face and eyes. "Are you mad at Daddy? Is it because of me?"

"Oh no, baby, mommies and daddies just have disagreements sometimes. That's all."

Not willing to let it go so easy he asked, "Is it because Daddy is not my real daddy?"

Lois caught her breath, not knowing how to react. How did he know that? He must have heard them fighting. Not knowing how to respond and not wanting to admit the truth to her young son she hugged him. "Everything will be alright. You don't need to worry." She hesitated but felt if she didn't get out of the house she would blow up at Richard and she knew he wasn't the real problem. She needed time to calm down and think before saying anything else to Richard in the heat of the moment that couldn't ever be taken back.

Continuing to the door she looked back at Jason one more time blowing him a kiss. She repeated, "everything will be alright, sweetie." As she reached the door she called out to Richard who had headed directly for the kitchen. He had always found solace tinkering in the

kitchen of all places. "I'm going out for some fresh air."

Seconds later she was racing down the street in the Audi, the windows open and the radio blasting. How had her life gotten so messed up? Richard was right. Their relationship hadn't been the same since Superman had returned. After the hero's near death Lois had thought about trying to reconnect with him but it didn't seem possible. When she thought he was dying she had finally admitted to herself that she still wanted him but was now afraid to make a move to let him know. What made matters even more difficult, Superman had been all but avoiding her except for when he was visiting Jason. Yet somehow she could sense it was not what he really wanted in his heart. She could see it in his eyes every time he looked at her. He was letting her go because he thought that was what she wanted. After all, she had said as much that night on the roof before all hell broke loose.

Then there was Clark. Why was he affecting her the way he was? Why now? Was Jason turning to Clark as a defense to the conflicts between her and Richard? Where did it all tie together and why did she keep having that vague feeling just beyond reach that she should know the answers?

Several minutes later, as she raced around a corner way too fast, she swung wide hitting the curb. She managed to gain control of the car as it swerved back but it was too late. A tire blew out and the car once again went out of control. She over corrected and the car went careening into a guardrail and then vaulted towards the dark bay a couple hundred feet below. She braced expecting to hit the water hard.

What had she done? Images of Jason and Clark went through her mind. "No, I'm not ready. SUP-ER-MAN HELP!" She screamed before she realized the car was no longer going down but was literally flying back up in the air.

Soon the car was being lowered back down to the ground safe, even before she could clear her mind of the fog of fear. The door opened and she jumped out almost falling into the warm comforting arms, sobbing uncontrollably. She buried her head in his shoulder as her left hand caressed the crest on his chest. The day had just been too much.

"Are you alright?" he almost whispered.

"Clark" she sobbed. "I thought I was dead." She felt him stiffen in response. Looking up, her mind finally cleared as she realized what she had just said. "I don't know what made me say that. I..." she stammered as she stared into his questioning eyes. Not wanting to add to the lies that had kept them apart she spoke up. "I have been obsessing about him all day. I'm not sure I understand why."

Superman pulled away, his heart racing wildly but he managed somehow to maintain his composure. "Miss Lane, you should get back in your car, I'll fly you home. It's not safe for you to be driving in your current confused state."

Richard looked out the window at the dark night. He and Jason had finished dinner and Jason had gone up to his room. Dinner had been unusually quiet. He had tried to reassure the little boy that there was nothing wrong, but kids were so perceptive to domestic discord. He was beginning to wonder if they were doing more harm than good staying together. The other man wasn't even competing yet it seemed that he was winning the battle. Now it seemed Richard was placing third in the race for Lois' heart. *How did this happen?*

Turning to look at the driveway, worrying about Lois out driving when she was so angry, he was surprised to see the Audi already parked there. Stepping outside he walked towards the car, immediately noticing the smashed fender. Running to the driver's side he quickly opened

the door and verified the car was empty. Even more worried he ran around the side of the house to the patio where Lois loved to sit where he finally found her sitting alone in the dark.

Totally forgetting their spat he ran to her bending down so he could put his hands on her shoulders to pull her close. "Lois, I saw the car. Are you alright, what happened?!"

Lois allowed his embrace for several seconds then pulled back to look him in the eyes. "I'm alright, but we need to talk."