

Encountering Talent

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Summary: A young woman is on vacation in Metropolis with a friend. When she suffers a purse grabbing, she is helped by Lois and Clark. This woman has some special talents that provide insights into our favorite couple.

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Flo was surprised that she didn't like the big city. She had been born in Louisiana and lived in a town that was so small that most people probably wouldn't consider it a town at all. She loved her home but wanted to experience more of the world than was open to her in the green that was her birthplace. When it came time to pick a place to visit that was as different as she could imagine, what better destination could there be than Metropolis? She talked about it with her best friend Sarah and it became a two-girl adventure.

Flo and Sarah had been in Metropolis for nearly a week and today was their last day in the city. This had been a successful day shopping for clothes and memorabilia to take home. They were moving from store to store to see if anything else looked special, when suddenly Flo felt a push from behind. Before she knew what was happening, her purse and several shopping bags were torn from her hand. She supposed that she should have yelled, "Stop thief!" or at least screamed, but in that instant she was so surprised that she just stared as a man ran down the sidewalk.

The thief was already at least ten feet away and Flo was almost at the point of deciding to yell, when suddenly she didn't have to. A black shape came out of seemingly nowhere and caught the thief smack in the face. There must have been something especially heavy in that purse, since the impact lifted the thief off his feet and he went down with a crash. Flo wasn't sure whether it was the encounter with the purse or the impact with the sidewalk, but the thief found his hands empty. He barely glanced back before scampering off.

Now Flo was able to get a look at her benefactor. She was a slim woman of medium height with short dark hair. It only took an instant for Flo to label her "city" based on her clothes and the manner in which she carried herself. When this stranger moved to pick up the bags and purse, Flo realized that the woman was not alone. Her companion was an attractive man with dark features that seemed to complement those of the woman. He was still looking in the direction that the thief had fled and Flo had the clear impression that he was fighting the temptation to pursue the man. After a second, he turned to his companion and picked up one of the shopping bags while she collected the purse and the other bag.

As they approached, she couldn't help but think that they made a cute couple. He held out his hand to offer her the shopping bag he carried and asked, "Are you okay?" He had a nice voice.

As she took the bag from his hand, her fingers brushed against his. Flo felt a shock run through her and she felt her knees go weak. As she swayed, she felt the man grasp her hand to provide support. Her difficulty must have been obvious because the woman grabbed her other hand in an attempt to help. Instead of steadying her, the new contact triggered another shock to her system and her knees completely gave way. To her relief, the man seemed very quick to detect her difficulty and moved with surprising speed to grasp her arm and keep her from falling.

The weak knees weren't the result of stress or fatigue. It was something else entirely. Sometimes, but not very often, Flo saw flashes of the future. It was unpredictable, but when a vision popped into her head, it was never wrong. There was one time when she knew beforehand that one of her friends was going to win the grand prize at the county fair. Once she knew a week ahead of time that a neighbor's dog was going to be killed by a truck. She always tried to hide her talent, but occasionally her reaction to those images was so strong that people who knew her could tell when she had a vision. This was one of those times.

"Do you need to go to an emergency room?" the man asked with a look of genuine concern.

Flo managed to regain her balance. "No, thank you. I was just dizzy for a second. I'll be fine and besides, I've got my friend Sarah here to help if I need anything." She was moved by the level of concern in the stranger's face. His friendliness didn't seem to fit in with what she had encountered in the city.

She turned to face the woman. "Thank you for stopping that man. I guess I'm not used to the big city."

"Metropolis can be a rough place. You need to be careful," the woman replied.

"I will be. Thank you."

As the couple turned away, Flo turned to Sarah and asked, "Can we sit down for a minute?"

Sarah nodded and they headed for a nearby bench. When they sat, Sarah turned to her with a look of concern on her face. "Did you get one of your visions when that man touched you?"

Flo nodded. "Yeah."

"Is something bad going to happen?" If they were home, Sarah wouldn't have asked.

"No," Flo replied quickly. "It was weird. I've never felt anything like that before. It was like when I know something good is going to happen to someone but — different — and way stronger!"

"I knew it had to be something," Sarah said. "I don't remember any time a vision knocked you off your feet before."

"It was amazing, but weird. Usually, when — that — happens, there's just one image. This time there was nothing clear. It was a rush of images. I swear that I saw sky and flashes of light and... well, all kinds of strange partial images."

Sarah's mouth was hanging open. "Wow! No wonder you almost fell."

Flo shook her head. "I wish I knew what it meant."

The look of concern was still evident on Sarah's face. "So, are you okay now?"

"I'm fine. I think I've had my fill of Metropolis shopping for today. Can we head back to the hotel?"

"Sure," Sarah replied with a smile. "I was done anyway."

As they gathered their belongings, Flo was thinking about what she hadn't told Sarah. There was another aspect to Flo's talent that no one, not even Sarah, knew about.

When Flo was little, her mother never quite understood why she kept asking why some people were married and others were not. Flo didn't ask this about everyone, but it happened enough to be noticeable. What her mom failed to notice was that when Flo asked the first question about a couple, they often ended up divorced. Flo knew when a friendship was doomed to failure or guaranteed to succeed. When two strangers met for the first time,

she could tell if they had the potential for being friends. If it was a man and woman, she could feel the potentials between people that barely knew each other. As with her more erratic talent for seeing the future, this ability worked best with physical contact.

The burst she got when she touched the man was a confusing mix of image and energy. When the woman touched her as well, the feeling was amazing, and nearly indescribable.

Back home she loved to visit Mr. and Mrs. Henderson. They were an elderly couple, and most of her friends figured that her time with them was little more than an act of courtesy or kindness. What her friends couldn't realize was that Flo had her own, slightly selfish reason for spending time with the older couple. Of all the people she had met in her life, they belonged together the most. Because of her secret talent, simply being in the same house with them warmed her spirit. Occasionally they would sit together and Flo would be in contact with both of them at the same time. Those times filled her with a feeling of love and joy.

This past week, in the crowds of Metropolis, neither talent had shown itself. That was, not until she touched the strangers. Flo had thought that she had already met about as perfect a couple as she would ever encounter. Today she learned that there was a completely different level of compatibility between two people. With the Hendersons, she felt warmth. When she touched the strangers, it was like being in a room with a roaring fire. Furthermore, for the first time, there was something more. There was a sensation that felt like hearing music. It wasn't a sound, but she had no words to better describe the experience.

Who were these people? Did they know what they had together? She wished she had asked their names. She hadn't even thought to look for wedding bands.

As she walked with Sarah, and they passed the building with the funny globe out front, Flo couldn't stop wondering about the kind strangers she had met this last day of her adventure in the city. Between the strange images triggered by the man, and the incredible bond that these people shared, Flo didn't feel so bad that she had spent an entire week in Metropolis and never seen Superman.

THE END