

Living the Dream

By Mary Potts aka Queen of the Capes
<queenofthecapes@gmail.com>

Rated PG

Summary: A response to Virginia's "No Way Out" challenge. When Lois and Clark find themselves locked in a storage room, secrets start surfacing.

Submitted June 2013

Lois cursed and slammed against the door with her shoulder, muttering when that only seemed to accomplish making her shoulder hurt. Her partner, of course, was being no help at all. Typical.

Clark Kent was sitting on a crate at the far side of the room, watching her futile attempts at wrestling with the door. He peered at it over the top of his glasses for a moment, then shook his head. "Forget it, Lois," he said. "It's... probably blocked or something, on the other side. You'd most likely have better luck trying the window.

Lois snorted, glancing once again at the tiny window that let in just enough light for her to get a good look at their miserable surroundings. The storage room had seemed like a good enough place to hide for a couple of minutes; it was dusty and cramped, but at least their targets would probably never look in here. Now, though, it seemed like the two of them were going to be stuck here for... well, longer than a few minutes.

"Maybe you could try calling for your boyfriend," Clark muttered.

Lois glared at him. Even so, her eyes darted to the window, and she gave it a long look, thinking. Finally, she turned away with a shake of her head. "There's no reason to bother him about it. We can tough it out for a while; maybe we'll think of something." She turned and caught his wide-eyed stare. "Er, not that I'm acknowledging that there's anything between me and... anybody," she finished, lamely.

"Right," he said absently, still staring at her. "Do you... do you really think that rescuing you is a bother for Superman?"

She turned her back to him, distracting herself by fiddling with the doorknob again. It was still locked, and rapidly turning it back and forth did nothing to change that.

"Lois?"

She sighed. "He's a busy man," she said, reaching out to poke the base of the knob with her index finger. "He's a good, wonderful man who's very busy doing good, wonderful things. We're not in any immediate danger, so what right do I have to keep putting demands on his time?"

There was a pause, and without looking, she could tell that Clark must be gaping at her. "What *right*?" he echoed, at last. "But Lois, I—" he broke off. "I know that Superman loves you," he said in a softer voice. "Surely that gives you the right to demand as much of his time as you need. More, even," he finished in almost a whisper.

Lois couldn't help but chuckle. "Oh, Clark," she said. "You're so naive, I could kiss you." As soon as the words left her mouth, she clapped it shut; a blush spread across her face. She cleared her throat and turned her attention to the hinges of the door. "Relationships are delicate," she continued. "You have to handle them just right, or they collapse right from under you."

"What do you mean, 'handle them just right'?" Clark asked her, sounding wary.

"Oh, you know," She waved a hand in the air. "Saying

certain things, doing certain things..."

"Doing...?" Clark sounded like he was being strangled. She heard him cough. "Lois," he squeaked, "are you saying that you... uh..."

Lois froze, her face burning.

"Are you saying that you... perform for... him?" he stammered out at last.

"Perform?!" Lois echoed in surprise. "What, you mean like a strip-tease or something?" Just what sort of perverted thoughts were going through this 'innocent' farm-boy's mind? "What kind of question is that?" she demanded, finally turning to face him.

He gulped. "That's... not what I meant," he said, his eyes seeming to regain focus. "I mean..." He reached up to rub the back of his neck. "Is it all an act? Your whole relationship with Superman? Do you just... put on a show based on what you think he wants?"

She crossed the room to the window, and stood staring out at a yellowed view of a nearby patch of asphalt. "Can you keep a secret, Clark?" she asked, so low that he might not even have heard her.

"Of course," he answered.

She looked down, folding her arms across her chest and biting her lip.

He waited.

"I'm scared that he'll leave me," she admitted at last.

There was a long pause, then: "What?"

She heard a scraping sound as he stood up from the crate and came to stand behind her.

"Why?" he asked, softly.

"Because that's what men do," she whispered, having to force the words past a lump that was beginning to form in her throat. "They either take what they want and go, or they stay just long enough to decide that you don't measure up. But sooner or later, they leave."

Clark was so silent that she almost forgot he was behind her, until he finally spoke again. "I thought you believed that Superman was different," he said quietly. "Do you really expect him to just leave you?"

Lois laughed bitterly, brushing away a few stray tears. "Clark, I never even expected him to love me." At his silence, she continued. "That night, after we... talked in the park..." She felt the heat creeping up her neck as she remembered that conversation, and the stricken look on poor Clark's face as she tore his heart to shreds. "Superman came to see me," she hurried on. "I poured my heart out, asked if there was any hope for us, and..."

"And you got what you wanted," Clark whispered. "Right?"

"I... yes, I guess so... maybe..." Lois stammered. She turned to face her partner. "I don't know what I was actually thinking, Clark," she admitted. "I guess, for all my fantasizing, I didn't actually think things through. I think I just sort of figured that he'd... I don't know... scoop me up and fly me off to some castle in fantasyland, or something. I never expected it to be real."

She couldn't read Clark's expression. "Is it real, Lois?" he asked her.

Lois snorted, stalked over to the crate that Clark had recently vacated, and sat on it with her knees pulled up under her chin. "How can it be?" she replied.

She thought she heard him mutter, "How, indeed."

"When Lex was arrested," she continued, "I thought that was it. I started thinking that maybe... maybe you'd put him up to it all, just to keep me from marrying that slimeball. I started thinking that maybe, now that his big mission was over and he'd rescued me from my own stupidity, he'd tell me it was over and just... fly away."

She could feel Clark's gaze on her. "Maybe he just loves you and wanted so badly to be with you," he said, his voice sounding oddly hoarse.

Lois wanted to believe him. It would be so nice to believe that, just once, a fairytale could come true and Lois Lane could ride off into the sunset with her prince and live happily ever after. "I don't want to lose him, Clark," she whispered.

"I don't think you will," he said, cupping her face and making her look at him. His eyes looked tender and sincere. "I think he'd rather lose his own soul than lose you."

The warmth of his hand sent a peculiar shiver down Lois' spine. She closed her eyes against his gaze. "What if I've hurt him?" she asked.

"What?" Clark sounded confused.

Lois opened her eyes again, fixing Clark with a piercing stare. "What if I suspect," she began slowly, "that I did something in the past that hurt him?" She swallowed. "And what if," she continued, "if what I suspect is true, it's something horrible?"

Clark lowered his hand and stepped away from her, fidgeting under her stare. Finally, he met her gaze with the same tender expression he'd been wearing before. "Then he'd forgive you," he said.

"Just like that?" Lois asked, not even trying to stop the tears as they slid down her cheeks. "If I told him that I might be guilty of being cruel and shallow and... and hypocritical, he'd just forgive me, and love me, and we'd go on as if none of it ever happened?"

Clark's breathing became ragged. "He'd forgive you," he said, "and love you, and you'd go on with the understanding that you both have flaws, and that you love each other anyway."

Lois let her gaze drop to the floor. "I don't know if I can risk that," she said.

He quirked the corner of his mouth at her. "Lois Lane, afraid to take a risk?" he teased. His voice once again became serious. "It's entirely up to you, Lois," he said. "You can have a real relationship with no more pretending."

She eyed him warily. "Real relationships fail, Clark."

"So do fake ones," he replied.

She chewed her lip thoughtfully for a moment. "Let me sleep on it," she said at last.

He met her gaze, then nodded. "All right," he said.

"Clark?" she asked him, suddenly.

"Yes, Lois?"

She hesitated, then asked him what was on her heart.

"Whatever happens, will you still be my friend?"

Even though the sun was setting, plunging the already dim storage room deeper into darkness, his broad smile seemed to make the room itself shine. "Always, Lois," he told her.

"Thanks Clark," she said, smiling back at him a little. She yawned. "Good night."

"Good night."

THE END