Pocket Full of Kryptonite

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Summary: Lois' death takes a toll on everyone who knew her—especially Jimmy Olsen. But just how far will Jimmy go to make Superman pay for Lois' demise? Future fic, Jimmy POV. WHAM warning.

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Kids, you know your mother. You know what she's like. Her dogged determination, her not exactly above-board methods of getting information, her Kerth awards and—well, pretty much everything about her. You might think, what's left to tell? Well, trust me, there's a lot you still don't know about your mother, from long before you were born.

I remember it all so clearly. The day each of you were born, the day she walked down the aisle, so many days where she nearly didn't make it, good days along with the bad. Because there were bad days—ones where she was mean to me, would tease me, would even flat out ignore me—but then there were all the times we'd teamed up to work together, bust a story together, relaxed and joked together and just enjoyed each other's company. We've had so many good times together over the years, kids.

I've always thought her an incredible woman. I'm sure she knew it, too. I know I couldn't have hidden it very well. Even though she walked all over me, tried to ignore my presence entirely, and I was sure that she was way out of my league, I couldn't get that little ounce of adoration out of my eyes whenever I saw her. I could feel my spirits lifting, a slight spring in my step just from being around her.

Back then, I did anything I could to stay near her. I *needed* to be around her as much as possible. I'd hover around her desk, waiting for her to call out my name, even just to grab something for her or double check a fact (or more likely a spelling error). I'd grab her coffee mug off her desk, give it a top off just the way she liked it. She wasn't always super grateful, but even just a glance my way was enough sometimes to rid me of my blues.

I hope you don't think I'm talking bad about her, kids. It may sound a bit cold, and maybe it did feel that way at times, but that was never a problem with me. I craved every bit of attention I could get from her, no matter what kind, and it was enough. She was perfect, even if a little too stubborn and resilient.

Most of the time it was enough, anyway.

The worst part was that everybody could see it. Sometimes I'd catch Perry looking at me with pity, and I'd realize just how lovesick I must have looked when I gazed after her. But after a while, it was just kind of accepted by everyone.

Until *he* showed up.

Things could have gone so well, too. We were just getting to be good friends, our system worked out well for the both of us. She didn't seem to mind my crush all too much, and I didn't mind that things were moving slowly. It gave me time to learn more about her—and then we met *him* and everything changed.

It wasn't so bad at first. I certainly didn't expect anything to come of it, anyways, in spite of those hungry looks he gave her. If Perry thought I was moony-eyed over Lois, this guy was easily ten times worse. But in a way, it was good for me, because she didn't like him in that way. Or so I thought.

It was bad enough that he was taller than me and better looking and had more money and a better job and probably just a better life in general. But that wasn't even the half of it. In the course of about a week, I suddenly found myself competing with yet another guy—this one she was incredibly attracted to. And he could fly. How unfair was that?!

At least I didn't wear glasses, like her dorky partner. And Superman was an alien, so maybe I wasn't dead last.

I knew Lois wasn't the type to want to settle down and get married—she was a career woman, at the top of her field. I'd watched her accept her last two Kerths—one of which I'd even supplied a photograph for!—so I knew she wasn't really looking for anyone to date right now. Still, it set me on edge when there were so many other people vying for her attention, when I used to be her sole recipient.

It started with the little things. Instead of calling me to lean down over her shoulder and proofread that last line, she called to him. *He* was the one perched barely on the edge of her desk, *he* was the one who got to watch her short skirt sway as she walked in front of him, and *he* was even the one who started getting her coffee every morning.

And the saddest part was, Clark was a good guy. Whenever I had to talk to him, he seemed genuinely nice—I could easily be friends with him. To top it all off, your mother didn't really notice him either, and in a way I guess that made us kindred spirits. Not that I think he ever knew. I'm about ninety percent sure that he had no idea I felt anything for Lois, at least for a while, because he was as clueless as I was. We were both lost in our feelings for her, and not much else beyond that registered.

So, in spite of how much I envied him, and wanted to hate him, we became good friends. It helped that we had a common enemy, though. Because all too soon after Clark arrived on the scene, Lex Luthor made it clear he wanted your mother to himself. And if I thought Clark getting involved was bad news, then Luthor was the devil incarnate.

We nearly lost your mother to him. He was a monster, a complete villain, and he was going to end up with her. Clark and I had to team up to take him down, and that's really when we became best friends. I found out later that he'd tried to stop her by confessing his love for her, and she'd turned him down flat. That would have been a much more reassuring thought if it hadn't been followed by her crying and asking for Clark after we'd saved her from that nightmare of a wedding. The way she ran into his arms when she saw him again, buried her face into his broad chest when I was still right there—it felt like losing all over again.

I was sure that Clark had won in all this, until he told your mother that his admission of love was a lie. I saw the way her face fell; it wasn't what she'd been wanting to hear from him. And of course, it was complete and utter bull. But I was grateful, because it earned me a little extra time to work on my own relationship with Lois while theirs was dying out on the pavement.

But even though she had said no to Luthor, turned down Clark, and was turned down herself by that spandex-wearing freak she so idolized, your mother *still* barely gave me the time of day. And here I'd spent four years right there, at her side, begging for any sort of recognition at least for being there! But no. Instead she'd tried to set me up with other women, even though I made it clear that none of them were working out and she'd said that I'd find the right girl one day.

I *had* found the right girl. She kept telling me to find someone else.

And in that course of time, she'd started dating Clark. It stung like hell, but in a way I was happy for Clark. He was treading unchartered waters, trying to escape the friend zone with Lois Lane. And he was still my friend. I might have envied him, but I couldn't hate him for it.

Their relationship was rocky from the start, though. They were too similar—both journalists, hot-headed at times, stubborn and still wanting to run off and do their own separate things. I didn't understand what Clark was thinking—he was given a luxurious

opportunity here, and he was blowing it. I tried to stay friends with Lois throughout—I didn't want to be blamed for jeopardizing their relationship in the slightest. I tried to be happy for them both—and as long as your mother was happy, I could be too. Unfortunately, they had a thousand and one other things that tried to get in the way—from that stupid government agent who was determined to date Lois himself, to Lex coming back from the dead, and of course, still Superman. Because even though he'd flat out told her they wouldn't ever work out together, they both somehow gravitated towards each other.

When Clark proposed to your mother, or rather, the first time I heard of their proposal being official, I was surprised to find I was actually happy for them. It had been a long time coming, but they deserved happiness. And I trusted Clark to treat her right.

It took a lot of therapy to be able to admit that.

But the point is, things were better. I was Clark's best man, and I'd learned to put the past behind me. It hurt my heart when your mother was crying because they couldn't have kids, or whenever they came a little too close on a story and they were thrust into danger again. When the world thought your mother was cheating on Clark with Superman, I was as shocked, angered, and disappointed as the rest of the world. And when they'd finally revealed that you two were going to born, only a couple of years after that, I cheered as hard as everyone else, if not harder.

Because I loved your mom.

But then, something changed. Not right away. In fact it took a long time for me to realize it, embarrassingly long. I feel so stupid now for never having seen it. Years and years of getting to know him, becoming friends, even watching you two grow up. So much life has gone by. I found a girl I fell in love with—you of course remember Aunt Katie. And look at you two, teenagers now, mostly grown up. Or at least as grown up as two fourteen-year-olds could ever be.

Twenty years of friendship. Twenty years of sitting on the sidelines, of giving up and bending backwards and struggling on my own. Nine years of marriage.

Lies. All lies.

And that's why it's come to this, kids. It's nothing you've done. I love you two more than anything else in this world. You have to believe that. That this pocket full of Kryptonite has nothing to do with you, and everything to do with your dad.

It's not your fault your father is a liar; you can't help who he is. I sympathize, in a lot of ways. I had a kind of lousy dad, too.

This whole time, I'd thought that Clark Kent was the underdog. That he won fair and square. But turns out I had no chance at all. Not when Clark and Superman were the same person all along.

I was competing with the man of steel.

And that's not even what gets me the most. It's that we've been friends for twenty years. All the time and effort and care that I put into that friendship, and for what? To be treated like this? To lose everything?

"*Jimmy.*"

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I spin around and he's standing there, in full Superman regalia, hands raised above his head non-threateningly. I square my jaw, narrowing my gaze. "Stay back, Clark."

"Daddy?"

His eyes drift to a spot behind me, no doubt looking on his children, evaluating the situation. Surely he'd picked up on the presence of Kryptonite already, based solely on the fact that the twins weren't escaping from their somewhat thin bindings. If he felt any hint of the poison, he was sure doing a hell of a job covering it up. "Lacey, Johnny, are you guys okay?"

"Daddy, you have to get us out of here. Please, Daddy."

His eyes dart back to me. "Jimmy, what are you doing? These are my kids. Lois' kids."

What does he think I'm an idiot or something? "I'm aware of that."

"You're practically their uncle."

"I'm not here to hurt them," I sneer, watching as he grits his teeth in pain and anger. He's trying so valiantly to keep his composure, his strength and wits about him, but I can see the panic eating away at him inside. It's very thinly veiled behind his eyes.

"This isn't about them and you know it. How about you just let the kids go, and we can settle this just the two of us. No one needs to get hurt."

I shake my head vehemently. "You think I'm stupid, Clark?"

His eyes got wider, if that was possible. "No, no, no. I never said that, Jimmy."

"You sure do act like it. I know that they're my only leverage right now. Well, besides this one other thing," I pull an uncovered shard of Kryptonite out of my breast pocket, tapping the side of it. "But I don't really want to have to use this. You don't want that either, do you, Clark?"

"You're right, Jimmy, you're right. So what do you want to do? You want to talk? Let's talk."

I can hear his voice going up in pitch, glancing between me and his kids again. "I don't want to talk."

"Jimmy, please. You're killing me, here. Literally."

I glance him over once more, a bit pleased to see how his posture has gotten a little more hunched since he arrived. "You want to talk? Fine. Let's talk, Superman. Let's talk about how my wife left me because she thought I was so in love with Lois still. Or maybe, ha, maybe let's talk about how you thought it was okay to keep me in the dark about your secret for so long."

"I know. It wasn't right. It wasn't fair to keep it a secret."

"So why did you?" I can feel the spit flying from my mouth as I rage at the man I once called my best friend. It's so hard staying in control. I can feel my fingers shaking and clench them into fists as tight as I can.

"I didn't mean to. Honestly. It's just something that never came up, and we're always so busy—"

I snort at that. "You're not seriously trying to pan this off on bad timing, are you?"

Clark shakes his head vehemently. "No! Not at all. I—"

"You had nearly twenty years!"

He pinches the bridge of his nose, an odd little gesture accompanying it that seems to be reminiscent of pushing his glasses into place in spite of the horn-rims not being there. I scoff in disbelief. How could I have never seen it? "Jimmy, I didn't even tell Lois I was Superman! She figured it out on her own."

"You—" I swallow thickly, mind racing at that piece of information. How could he not? I glance back at the kids, see them cowering in pain and fear. My stomach sinks a little bit more and I try to wrap my mind around the idea. "You didn't tell Lois?! How—what kind of sick monster are you?"

He bites his lower lip. "I tried—I wanted to. So many times. But she beat me to the punch."

I can't fight back the wave of nausea that crashes over me, a coppery taste filling the back of my mouth. "She's your wife. She's the mother of your children—"

"No! Not— ugh. Earlier. Before we got engaged. That's why it took so long for her to say yes."

The timeline rights itself in my head again and the nausea passes as I swallow back my bile. "Oh. Good. So that means that my other best friend only lied to me for eighteen years."

"Jimmy."

His voice is pained now, and I'm not sure if it's the kryptonite, the situation, or the subject matter that's responsible for it. I almost feel giddy at the sound of it, the tremor that underlines every word.

"Please. Let my children go. Or at least put the Kryptonite away."

Out of the corner of my eye I see the kids, whimpering in pain

and fear. My heart somersaults at the sight of them in pain. I'm not a monster. I love them like they were my own. I don't want to hurt them. Sympathy runs through me like a shiver. But I don't know how else to make Clark listen. "All right. I'll let one go. I don't care which one. Superman's choice."

A flash of anger contorts my friend's face, and it reinvigorates me. He clenches his fists and waves one at me. "Christ, Jimmy, you babysat these kids—"

"Yeah, you're goddamn right I did! Shouldn't I have known that they were Superman's children before you left them with me?"

Superman swears and turns to pace. He clutches at his forehead with both hands and the most purely agonizing expression. It's quite a striking visual, and the photojournalist in me itches to document the moment for posterity. What an article that would make. I'd win the Pulitzer for sure.

I sober when I realize there's not a good enough reporter to write it.

Clark halts midstride and turns back to face me. There's a calculating look on his face as he glances over his kids and then back at me. When he speaks, his words come slowly. "Johnny. Let Johnny go."

My eyebrows jump up at the choice. I'm surprised he was able to choose at all, but the fact that he'd let his son go and not his daughter takes me completely off guard. "You sure?"

His eyes meet mine, pained. The same dark eyes I'd seen staring at me from behind those infernal glasses for years. "Unless you'll let them both go."

I shake my head sharply. "No."

"Then I've made my decision."

I keep my gaze steadily on his as I back towards the kids. I don't want to risk any funny business. I lean over and cut Johnny's restraints, a gentle hand on his back nudging him forward. "I'm sorry, kids. Like I said. Nothing personal."

Johnny scrambles to his dad's side and embraces him in a tight hug, while Lacey whimpers slightly at my side. My heart stirs at her response, and I rest a gentle, soothing hand on the crown of her head. I honestly am shocked that Clark was capable of making that choice.

"Dad?"

"You need to leave, John. Now."

"I don't want to leave—please. Let me help. Or let Lacey—"

"John." Clark's voice is stern, begging no argument. "I need to focus. And the best way to do that is to have one less thing to worry about. We're on Howard and Fifty-Ninth. If you walk up Fifty-Ninth about five blocks and turn right onto McKinley, you'll find a police station."

I want to protest, but the poor kid looks hurt enough, and he could really use a mission. He's still affected by the Kryptonite, so it'll likely be a while before he even gets there. Jonathan Lane-Kent gives one last pained glance back at his twin sister, before scurrying out of the building.

"And then there were two."

Clark doesn't look particularly pleased with my quip, but that only makes me grin more.

"What do you want, Jimmy? I've apologized, I've explained, I've even accepted some of your more bizarre terms—"

"I want Lois back!"

The cry wrenches itself from the back of my throat without permission, and it seems to strike Clark off guard as well. He takes a half step back from the pain of the statement and grimaces. I scrub a hand over my own face, trying to regain my composure. Because the truth is, I don't know what I want anymore.

A hand lands softly on my shoulder, and I can't. I can't even look up to see the empathy, the pity shining in his eyes. I can sense it rolling off him.

"I want Lois back, too."

Tears prick at the back of my eyes, stinging and burning me the way I deserve. I know it's the truth. I know, because if Clark loved Lois Lane anywhere near the amount I did—and I know he did—he had to be suffering as much as I am. But there's a few differences in our predicaments. He had his time with her. He got to live life with her. And yes, she was taken too soon.

But that's only half of it.

"Why didn't you save her?"

I look up into his face, waiting for the excuse, the explanation. The late video rentals and the cheesy lines he'd given over and over again across the years. His gaze is honest and unflinching, taking on the burden of his pain and saving it for later.

"Because I couldn't. I wasn't good enough. I wasn't fast enough. And by the time I'd realized she was in danger, I was already too late."

And that just socks me in the gut. I search his eyes for a few long moments, for any hint of a lie or misdirect, but I find none. I clench my eyes shut and fold forward, bending at the waist as the pain of it all washes over me anew. It's not fair. It's not fair that his reasons are sound, that he's probably right. It's not fair that the hope he instilled in everyone else—the hope the rest of the world hinged on—was ripped away from me without warning. Everyone else gets to believe in Superman, and all I get is stupid, fallible Clark Kent.

"It's just… It's been a bad year, Jimmy."

The dry laugh that pulls from my throat twists into some sort of cry. Because that's the understatement of the year. I wipe the tear forming in the corner of my eye discreetly, unable to hold it back. I can't cry right now, because if I cry right now, I'll never stop crying. And then everything goes to pot.

"Have you heard from Katie recently?"

I sink to my knees at the name, felled completely now. I shake my head fervently, and the tears start flowing freely again. "No. You don't get to talk to me like that. Like nothing happened. Like we're two buds, just catching up."

"Jimmy, I care about you. I know you're going through a lot right now—"

"No shit, Batman."

"—And I want to help. But I need you to meet me halfway on this. I can't help you if you don't want to be helped."

"I don't want to be saved, Superman."

I snap my head up to meet his gaze boldly, angrily, expecting to see grim determination—but it's the tears in his own eyes that put me off guard. Clark's brown orbs staring down at me, red-rimmed and blurred with tears. I haven't seen him so broken up since… I shake my head to disperse that memory. It's too soon to be reminded of that dreadful funeral.

"Jimmy, please." The ache in his voice is audible, like nails on the chalkboard of my conscience. "Please. You're my best friend. You need help—"

"I don't need anything from you," I spit at him, trying to pull away but losing the battle. We must look like quite the pair: grown men, crying, sobbing messes on our knees. Not so different after all, I suppose.

"I can't lose you too, Jimmy. I can't. I can't—"

"And why shouldn't you? I already lost all my best friends. It only seems fair that you lose yours."

"No, Jim. You haven't. I'm still here. Please, just tell me you can see that."

I shudder and gasp, trying to wrap my emotions back under control. I can't possibly give up like this. All the planning this took, all the hoops I've jumped through—the trauma that I've put these two perfect, wonderful kids through…

"It has to be for something," I murmur under my breath, clutching at my hair desperately, pulling. "It can't be for nothing."

Clark's heavy hands land on both my shoulders, turning me to face him completely. "It's not for nothing. It's all for you."

My eyes flutter closed. I can't believe that he could forgive me for this. I'm not worth that much. I've spent the last few weeks

since finding out his secret actively seeking out the one substance that could kill him. I kidnapped his children. I've crossed so many lines now that I'm not sure I'm redeemable. "Why?"

"Because it's what Lois would have wanted. And call me selfish, but I don't want to lose another friend right now."

Guilt washes over me, and I turn to look over my shoulder at Lacey Lane-Kent. She's whimpering still, but the fear in her eyes is slowly subsiding, determination coming over her as she watches her father try and persuade me back to the light. And god, she looks so much like her mother in this moment that it guts me.

It clicks. Why Clark chose to leave Lacey here but sent John away. Because as much as Lacey looks like her mother, Jonathon Lane-Kent is the spitting image of his father. And the only guarantee that Clark Kent has right now is that I hate him and I miss Lois desperately.

I stare back at Clark with bewilderment and almost a little bit of awe. Because that level of clarity in the heat of the moment is some next-level compartmentalizing. I don't know if it's because he's an alien or because he's spent twenty years making the toughest decisions in the city, but it's unnerving. And it teaches me a hard lesson.

I'll never be at that level. And if I ever wanted to be, I'd have to be willing to make a very tough decision, right here, right now. But that would involve crossing some moral event horizons, and that's not what I came here to do today.

I can't hurt them. I can't hurt Lois Lane's favorite people in the world, no matter how hurt I am.

"Jimmy, if John gets back here with the police, that's the end of the road. You realize that, don't you?"

I purse my lips. He's right again. It all comes crashing down around me as I realize what I've done, just how far I've gone. This is bad. This is so very bad. I feel my mind spinning as I start to spiral.

Clark shakes me forcefully, garnering my attention once again. "James Bartholemew Olsen. Please. Listen. Help me save you."

The world gets blurry and I nod. Hands shaking, I remove the green shard from my pocket and hand it over to the man of steel, trying desperately to ignore the gasp and flinch the rock elicits from him. Clark's fingers curl around the Kryptonite reverentially, and he produces a small, lead-lined bag from some unseen pocket in his cape. The moment the bag is sealed, father and daughter release a collective sigh of relief.

I, on the other hand, hold my breath. Because it could have been a ruse, a ploy to get me to give up the Kryptonite, and then they would take me in to the cops, or heck, just attack me. I brace myself for an attack that never comes.

Instead, Clark's large, warm hands pull me into him in a tight hug, and a wave of shame and comfort floods me all at once. My eyes sting with tears as I return the gesture, unable to quite fathom why I'm being given such leeway.

"Thank you."

A sob wrests itself from my chest, and I grip him tighter. "Why?" My voice is hardly a rasp against his shoulder. I'm not sure he hears me, and I'm not sure I need him to, until he answers.

"Because you're my brother, Jimmy. I'd do anything for you."

It feels like an eternity passes before we finally part. I've cried all the tears I had left. Clark leans away from me and stands only when I seem to have gotten my composure back, and goes to release his daughter. Lacey wraps her arms around her father's waist like lightning, peering around him cautiously at me. I grimace. This was going to be a long road, repairing these relationships, but Clark was right. Again. I need help. Psychiatric help. I'm not thinking clearly. I need my sanity back.

It really has been a bad year.

The wail of sirens in the distance echo through the abandoned warehouse, and Clark gives me a reassuring nod over his daughter's head, clutched tightly to his chest. We'll get through all of it. I don't know if I can live with myself after this, but if Clark's willing to forgive me, then I have to try to forgive myself.

THE END