

The Packing List

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Rating: K+

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Author's Notes: A birthday ficlet for kalalanekent. Her prompt: "I'd love to see something Original-verse, since I'm the only one writing it. *LOL*" Thanks to mark_clark and van_el for the beta as always.

Lois scrubbed at her hair, warm, soapy water sluicing down her body - she wanted to make sure she got every disgusting bit of melon out of her hair. Every so often, another watermelon seed would *plink* to the shower floor, and she would pour another handful of shampoo onto her hair and savagely start over. To think, some people actually *purchased* fruit-scented shampoo, or squeezed fresh juice into their hair. Lois wasn't sure whether she could even stomach juice inside her *belly* at this point.

Be honest with yourself, Lois Lane, the realist inside her brain chided. *You're less disgusted with the fruit that got all over you than you are with yourself*. And it was true. She'd thrown herself out of a window thirty stories up just to get Clark Kent to admit to her that he was Superman. *Stupid, stupid, stupid*. She rubbed at her skin with Ivory soap until her skin turned pink. She'd been so sure! It was infuriating, especially since her reporter's instinct was rarely wrong...

When she felt completely scoured from head to toe - which wasn't until the water had started turning cold - she turned off the spigot, grabbed a towel from the rack and stepped out of the shower. Catching her reflection in the bathroom mirror, she studied it for a moment, occluded as it was by the steam on the glass. Was she really that dense? Did Superman blind her so much that she couldn't see the truth clearly anymore?

She spun on her heel and stalked into the bedroom. She had one hour to pack and get ready for the trip to Niagara Falls - no sense in wallowing. Still, she took an odd pleasure in yanking her suitcase from the bottom of the closet and tossing items into it more roughly than necessary.

First, a couple pairs of shoes - one dressy, one athletic, a pair of boots. She would wear a pair of work pumps during the trip to save space. Next, some outfits to wear. She needed a traveling outfit for the drive, something that screamed 'bride.' She looked at and rejected almost every suit she had, then settled on a white one with a pleated skirt. She'd forgotten that she even owned it... had she bought it for Lucy's wedding or something? With a white silk blouse, a flower pin on the breast, and oh! that white hat with an upturned brim she had hidden in a hat box on the top shelf, she would pass. But she made sure to pack a couple of pantsuits to change into once they were there.

But she also needed something dressy to wear to the dinners at night. Her fingers brushed

across the dress she had worn when she interviewed Superman. She had never felt more like a desirable woman as she had that night on the balcony, and later in his arms as they soared through the clouds. Her eyes closed in memory of that feeling, and she started to remove it from its hanger... Then she stopped. No, it would just feel wrong to wear it in the presence of any other man, especially Clark! Her face heated again with embarrassment and the flimsy material dropped from her fingers.

Another dress caught her eye then, a blue chiffon number with ruffles at the collar. *What is it with you and blue, Lois?* She shook her head at her unconscious choices. But neither Clark nor Superman had seen her in it, so it was probably the best selection. Clark would probably get all choked up, trying to keep his crush to himself, but she knew his true feelings would be shining out of his blue eyes anyway. She might as well feel like a woman adored at the honeymoon banquet, it would make her job of acting just that much easier. With a nod, she slung it over her arm with the other articles of clothing.

The anger was finally starting to dissipate. Lois had never been one to let emotions get in the way of her job. With brusque efficiency, she gathered up her toiletries, made sure she had her reporter paraphernalia such as her notepad, tape recorder, etc... and did a quick check around her bedroom for anything she might have missed.

Her eyes fell on the nightstand, lingering there for a long moment. *Should I take it...?* It was a crazy thought. Why would she need it during a perfectly harmless exposé on honeymoon scams? She shook her head, dismissing the thought. Lois closed the latches on her suitcase and slid it off of the bed. Carrying the suitcase to the foyer, she set it beside the door, and then looked at the time. Clark would be here to pick her up in about fifteen minutes - she'd been more efficient than she thought.

Grabbing her purse from the bar, she took it outside to the balcony. Unzipping the top, she pulled out a pack of cigarettes and her lighter. She tapped one cigarette out into her hand, set the pack down on a table, and strolled over to the railing. Lighting the cigarette, she took a long, slow drag. Idly, she wondered whether Superman had heard about her little stunt this morning. She chuckled. *Of course he has, he always knows about everything that happens to me...* If not for that awning, she would have been a Lois-shaped smear on the pavement - would he have mourned for her? Or derided her stupidity?

Yep, that awning was my superhero today... But suddenly a thought struck her, and she removed the cigarette from between her lips. That awning - at the rate she had been falling, she should have ripped a large hole through it, or at the very least, broken several limbs. Time had seemed to slow as she was falling - but what if it had really been her speed? Especially if *someone* had wanted to make sure that the only thing she bruised was her pride...

The doorbell rang. Lois' eyes narrowed. Grinding out the cigarette quickly, she shoved everything back into her purse, and went to the door to press the intercom button. "Yes?"

"Uh, L-Lois? I'm here to pick you up. Are you ready?"

"Not quite. But I'll be down in a minute or two, all right?"

"O-okay. Don't be long."

"Sure."

Lois walked quickly back to the nightstand, pulled the drawer open and looked at the object which gleamed inside. As clear as day, she realized her mistake. It wasn't *her* life she needed to put in danger, not at all.

Lifting the silver pistol from the drawer, she spun the barrel to be sure there was no live ammunition inside. Then she placed the gun and the box of blanks at the bottom of her purse.

The buzzer sounded again, and she smiled grimly. "I'm coming, Clark."