

The Dance

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Rating: K+

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The Daily Planet Christmas party was in full swing. The fifth floor ballroom was decked out in evergreen swags and silver balls, mistletoe and spruce trees. This year a stage hypnotist would be putting on a show for them but currently a DJ was playing a collection of old dance tunes. Richard White knew he wasn't going to be making it out onto the dance floor, at least not with his fiancée.

Lois Lane, queen of the Daily Planet, was holding court on the far side of the room. Jimmy Olsen and several others from the newsroom were listening, nodding sagely as she spoke. No doubt she was filling them in on her latest successful investigation. It was either that or Superman. It didn't matter in any case. Chances were that none of them were sober enough, even this early in the party, to remember any of this tomorrow. The one exception was a tall, gangly man named Clark Kent - Queen Lois's court jester.

Kent was watching Lois and her court with a bemused expression as he nursed his one drink of the evening. It was something Richard had noticed early on about Kent. The tall Midwesterner never let drink go to his head. Richard considered that one more item on his list of reasons why he didn't like Kent.

Richard grabbed another drink from a passing tray, ignoring his uncle's warning glare in his direction. Richard White hadn't even heard of Clark Kent until Perry White had announced the man was returning to the Daily Planet after a near six year absence. It was Jimmy Olsen who had filled Richard in on the particulars concerning Kent's previous career at the Planet. In fact, Jimmy's praise had been so effusive that Richard had wondered which team Olsen was batting for.

Lois said nothing about the man, although she seemed pleased enough to see him when she finally saw him at work the day after Superman's triumphant return four months ago.

"Richard's an assistant editor here who's basically saved our international section. He's also a pilot and he likes horror movies..." Lois had told Kent after introducing him to Richard. "Clark is... well, Clark..."

Kent had seemed innocuously inoffensive. He was a good solid writer who accepted the assignments handed to him with few comments or complaints and who rarely missed his deadlines. But that described nearly every journalist working at the Planet. Then Richard started reading Kent's previous work and discovered one of the reasons his uncle had invited Kent to return to the Daily Planet's family - the Midwesterner wasn't simply a good writer. He was a great writer.

Then Richard read the pieces that Kent had written in partnership with Lois Lane and

realized he could easily come to hate the tall man. Lois Lane was probably one of the best investigative reporters in North America. But with Kent by her side, the best became even better. "Together they were magic," his uncle had told him when he asked about it.

For the sake of the newspaper, Richard said nothing when Lois chose to team up with her former writing partner to investigate the blackout that hit Metropolis followed by Lex Luthor's mad attempt to destroy the world. Richard said nothing when Kent disappeared for two days and Lois lied to cover for him. If it had been anyone else, himself included, Richard knew that Lois would have left them hanging out to dry. But Kent was Lois's spear carrier, confidant, personal editor, gofer, clown - at least while at work.

She had told Richard that she had never loved Superman. At the time he hadn't asked what her feelings had been about her co-worker. Now he was afraid to.

Richard didn't want to think about the many late nights that she and Kent were spending together on stakeouts. More reason to hate the man. Lois had stopped going on stakeouts until Kent had come back.

She still said she loved him. She still slept in their shared bed. But now there was something missing. The fire that had been there in the beginning was fading away. The passion was all but gone, all but her passion for work.

Richard suspected Kent had more than a little bit to do with Lois's change. He had even gone so far as to suggest to his uncle that Kent be transferred to someplace like Lifestyle, or even one of the Planet's sister papers. Perry simply looked at Richard like he'd grown a second head.

Later Richard would wonder why he did what he did at the party. But at the time it seemed almost rational. It was probably the drink. One thing Richard knew about Lois was that she loved to dance. She and Richard used to go dancing at least once a week. Kent didn't dance. Hell, the man could barely make it across the floor of the newsroom without bowling someone over.

Richard watched as Lois tried to cajole her co-worker into going out on the dance floor with her. He watched the disappointment and resignation flicker across her face when Kent refused, nodding in Richard's direction.

Finally the show started and Lois led Clark and Jimmy across the floor to Perry and Richard's table. The Amazing Novak put Ralph under and the audience was treated to a painful rendition of *Blue Suede Shoes*, complete with gyrating hips. Polly became Shirley Temple on the *Good Ship Lollipop*. Richard could almost see the golden curls and dimples.

Finally the entertainer came to Richard's table. "Any volunteers here?"

Richard grinned. "Clark, how about you?"

Clark shook his head.

"Go ahead CK," Jimmy coaxed drunkenly.

Richard caught the cold look Lois gave him but he was too far gone to care. "Go ahead, Clark. Show us your stuff..."

"I'll do it," Lois volunteered, already half out of her seat.

"No," Kent said. "I'll go ahead. Hopefully I won't hurt anyone." Kent said it lightly but Richard could tell Lois wasn't mollified.

Kent seemed to go into a trance quickly then Novak asked for suggestions from the audience as to what his victim should do to entertain them. A couple of the older women yelled out for a striptease but Novak ignored them.

Then Richard called out "Dance like Fred Astaire."

Novak smiled and nodded. "Dance like Fred Astaire," he instructed.

"Hold on," Lois yelled before the DJ could put on a suitable dance tune. "Don't you need Ginger Rodgers?" With one last cold look back at Richard, Lois strode to the small stage, a naval destroyer in a burgundy gown. She murmured something to the DJ as Kent removed his tuxedo jacket and dropped it on the edge of the stage. Then she moved to face the tall man and loosened his bowtie.

Now I've had the time of my life

No I never felt like this before

Yes I swear it's the truth

and I owe it all to you

'Cause I've had the time of my life

and I owe it all to you

The music started and Richard's heart sank. *Dirty Dancing* was one of Lois's secret pleasures. There had been times he had come home and found her dancing with Jason in her arms, the movie running in the background. It was always after covering a disaster, one that Superman might have prevented had he not vanished without a trace.

But that was before Superman's return.

Lois was melting into Kent's arms as they did a credible take on Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey in the final dance number from the movie. Richard's gut clenched as Lois's arms rose above her head to caress the back of Kent's neck and his hand skimmed her side like a lover's.

I've been waiting for so long

Now I've finally found someone

To stand by me

We saw the writing on the wall

As we felt this magical

Fantasy

Now with passion in our eyes

There's no way we could disguise it

Secretly

So we take each other's hand

'Cause we seem to understand

The urgency just remember

There was no sign of the clumsy oaf from the newsroom in Kent's movements as he and Lois went through the choreography as though they'd been dancing together for years. They twirled together in time with the music, every step practiced, professionally flawless.

It had been a very long time since she had looked at *him* that way. She threw her head back and smiled wantonly at her dance partner, grinding her hips against his. Lois knew exactly what she was doing and she didn't care that she had an audience.

You're the one thing

I can't get enough of

So I'll tell you something

This could be love because

I've had the time of my life

No I never felt like this before

Yes I swear it's the truth

And I owe it all to you

Richard looked around at the audience, his co-workers, his subordinates. A few looked back at him, sympathy in their eyes. The others were watching the show on the dance floor with rapt attention. Except for the music, the room was silent.

Kent lifted her and swung her around with ease and it looked like Lois was enjoying every moment of his undivided attention.

With my body and soul

I want you more than you'll ever know

So we'll just let it go

Don't be afraid to lose control

Yes I know what's on your mind

When you say, "Stay with me tonight"

Just remember

In the movie Swayze was joined by the other dancers as he did his 'solo'. There were no background dancers here. Instead, Kent waltzed through the audience, taking selected women by the hand and twirling them around as Lois waited on stage watching him through narrowed eyes.

Richard started to get out of his seat and found his uncle's hand on his shoulder. He settled back in his chair to watch, aware that Perry and Alice were both watching him instead of the floor show.

You're the one thing

I can't get enough of

So I'll tell you something

This could be love because

The lift. The defining moment of the film when Baby overcomes her fear and leaps into the unknown. It was one dance routine that Lois had never even tried, even though Richard was certainly strong enough to pull it off.

Lois *flew* into Kent's hands without any sign of hesitation and he hefted her above his head. She looked exultant.

I had the time of my life

And I've searched through every open door

Till I've found the truth

and I owe it all to you

Richard watched as Kent effortlessly set Lois on her feet and she reached up to pull her writing partner into a kiss.

I had the time of my life

And I've searched through every open door

Till I've found the truth

*and I owe it all to you**

The audience, Daily Planet employees all, broke into riotous applause. Lois whispered something to Kent and he ducked his head, giving her a sheepish smile. Then she hooked her arm in his and led him away - away from Richard. Away from the life they had together.

"What..." Richard began, feeling stupid.

Perry just shook his head. "I thought you were smarter than that."

"I don't understand what happened," Richard protested. He started out of his chair to follow her and again felt Perry's heavy hand on his shoulder.

"You made her choose. You lost."

*Lyrics by **Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes**