

A Photographer's Eye: Christmas Parties

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Rating: K+

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A/N: Written for the 2008, 12_days_of_Clois Xmas Challenge



The Daily Planet bullpen holiday party was in full swing. The bar was open on Ralph's desk - nearly everyone had contributed at least one bottle of something that was against the rules of the newsroom. Ralph and Gil were in one corner, cheerfully belting out Christmas songs and inviting others to join in. Pity neither of them could carry a tune in a bucket.

Jimmy didn't really want to know how much the men had already had to drink. Enough that their dates/spouses were less than happy with them. Nothing new there.

Snap. Another one for this year's photo album.

Lois and Clark hadn't made their appearance yet but Jimmy knew that Lois didn't like the schmoozing and boozing that went on at these kinds of things. It wasn't that she was a prude - she wasn't and there had been times when Lois had cheerfully, and quite competently, drunk every one in the newsroom under their desks. Jimmy knew Lois still kept a bottle of tequila stashed in the back of her desk. But Lois had no patience for drunkards and she didn't suffer fools gladly in any case.

Jimmy fondly recalled his first *Daily Planet* Christmas party. He wasn't even out of high school and was working as a gofer. He hadn't even qualified as a copy boy but Perry White had hired him anyway and Lois Lane took him under her wing, showing him the ropes of the newsroom. She encouraged him to take up photography and gave him his first good camera as a Christmas present that year.

"Anybody can write about what happened," Lois confessed after a few too many drinks. "But to take that perfect shot, that picture that really is worth a thousand words... that's something special, Jimmy Boy. Don't disappoint me. You're taking me to the Gold Room when you win your first Pulitzer."

"Sure, Miss Lane."

His first photo with his new camera had been of Lois Lane dancing on her desk. Jimmy

still had it in his collection, even though he knew it was probably worth his life if she ever found out about it.

But from that day on, Jimmy Olsen was the new chronicler of life in the newsroom.

Snap. Ralph was regaling one of the new girls with one of his improbable stories and Jimmy caught him with his hands in the air and mouth open like a fish.

Snap. Jenny and Mark Cogsley were sharing a dance in the middle of the cramped aisle. Jenny was pregnant and due in the summer.

Another *Daily Planet* Christmas party. Clark Kent had left to travel the world, the international section of the paper had been given over to Richard White, Perry's nephew, and Lois Lane was four months pregnant. Jimmy knew that most of the staff hadn't noticed the slight thickening of Lois's waist, but it was only a matter of time before they did and the rumor mill started up in earnest. And chances were that they *would* notice that she wasn't drinking.

Jimmy handed her a glass with amber liquid and a cherry.

"Jimmy, I'm not..." she began.

"It's ginger ale," Jimmy said. "I figure the vultures will figure it out soon enough, but why give them any hints."

"You're a good man, Jimmy Olsen," she said.

"So, when are you due?" he asked quietly.

"Mid May."

"Is that why Mister Kent left?"

She gave him a surprised look. "No," she said after a moment. Then her date, Richard, came over to claim her.

Jimmy got several shots of Lois and Richard together, but he noted that Lois's smile wasn't as bright as it had been at the previous year's party, when she was teasing Clark Kent.

"So, what are we doing after the party?" Lois asked Clark, loud enough to be overheard. Jimmy didn't know how much she'd had to drink.

"Would you like to go to dinner?" Clark asked.

"You never did take me to the Gold Room at the Park Towers," she said.

"Have you been a good girl?" Clark responded with smile.

"Ask Santa," Lois said, grinning. "Of course, we could still have Jimmy take the pictures if I'm not."

"Lo-is."

"Just kidding," she said.

Jimmy didn't know if Clark had believed her or not. But he did know they hadn't gone to the Gold Room after the party. It hadn't mattered in any case. That was the last office Christmas party Clark attended until his return from *wherever* just last year.

Jimmy missed one newsroom Christmas party. He was embedded with the troops in Chechnya. While Gil, Ralph, Polly, Eduardo and the others were drinking themselves into stupors, Jim Olsen was photographing a church that had been bombed in the middle of mass. He'd seen horrors covering crime scenes in Metropolis. He'd photographed the dead and dying, the old and the young, the innocent and not so innocent. But nothing had prepared him for the carnage he was seeing through his camera lens. One shot, a Pulitzer winner for sure, showed the broken altar and crucifix and a pristine little girl's white shoe with lacey socks peeking out - the foot was still in the shoe.

He spent that night getting drunk with the unit he'd been assigned to. Oblivion didn't come easy, but it did finally come. The bottle became his solace, his safe place, anesthetizing him

against the terror of sudden gunfire waking him in the night, the horror of the carnage in the day.

Jimmy was better by the time of the next Daily Planet Christmas party. At least he didn't make a complete fool of himself, even though his life had disintegrated on him. But he was putting things together. Life was getting better.

Snap. Perry was watching the festivities with a fatherly smile, which vanished as soon as he realized Jimmy had snapped a picture.

Eduardo Valdez came out of the assistant editor's office. He waved at Jimmy and Jimmy snapped another photo for the Christmas album. Eduardo had been given the assistant editor's job after Richard White's death last year.

It had only been three months after her fiancé's death. Lois was still wearing black. But Clark was trying valiantly to bring a smile to her face. Most people in the newsroom considered it a lost cause. Lois would recover in her own time. It had taken her a long time to get over Superman's abandonment nearly six years before.

"Clark, I'm too busy for this nonsense," Lois complained. The office party was just starting. Jimmy assumed Jason was at his grandparent's house.

"Lois, it's just a Christmas party," Clark said quietly. He didn't seem to notice Jimmy standing there. "We say our hellos and take off," Clark continued. "We can grab dinner, if you want."

That elicited a smile from her. "Gold Room at the Park Towers?"

"I was thinking more in terms of Dooley's," Clark said. "The Gold Room is booked out past New Years."

"Richard always talked about the Gold Room, too," Lois said softly. "But we never did."

*Jimmy felt like he was intruding. Lois hadn't had an easy time after Richard's murder. And neither she nor Clark seemed anxious to move too far beyond being writing partners and friends - at least not where the newsroom wags could see. Not that it would stop the gossip-mongers. It was obvious to everyone with eyes to see that Lois Lane's son's father was Clark Kent, not Richard White. And the wags were just waiting for the fallout of **that** to hit the fan. Most were surprised it hadn't happened already.*

Jimmy saw the elevator doors open and two late-comers step into the corridor outside the glass newsroom wall.

The princess and prince of the newsroom strode through the doors. *Snap.* At least Lois Lane strode into the room. Clark Kent was simply trying to keep up with her without tripping himself or anyone else.

Lois was wearing a royal blue empire style gown with a silver shawl. She really did look like a princess. Clark was positively dapper in a properly fitted tuxedo. They were *way* overdressed for the company party. Jimmy suspected they were going to dinner afterwards. It was hard to believe they'd been married eight months. Of course the wags hadn't thought they'd last even that long. Of course, none of them remembered their own predictions of nine years before either, when Clark was first assigned to partner with Lois. They'd all been convinced it was only a matter of time before Lois dumped Clark's body into Hob's Bay.

Snap. Great shot for the Christmas album. Jimmy couldn't remember the last party where Lois looked so happy. Clark was good for her.

To Jimmy's surprise, Clark headed for the makeshift bar and returned with three drinks, all with cherries. He handed one to Lois and one to Jimmy. Jimmy took a sip - ginger ale. Trust Clark to be looking out after everybody. Clark knew Jimmy would be driving later and Clark

disapproved of drunkenness in any case.

Then Jimmy realized that Lois's drink was ginger ale too. And the cut of her dress...

"When's the baby due?" he whispered to Lois.

Her eyes flew wide. "How did..."

"I hang around two of the best in the business," Jimmy said. "I certainly hope I've learned *something*."

"The baby's due in early June," Clark said.

Jimmy broke into a grin. "Way to go, CK. Are you guys announcing it tonight?"

Lois was grinning. "And then we're having dinner at the Gold Room," she said.

"Way to go CK," Jimmy repeated.

Snap. Another shot for posterity. Lois was glowing with joy and if Clark wasn't careful he'd be floating on air, literally.

"Hey, guys..." Clark called out. He was ignored. In response, Clark put two fingers in his mouth and whistled. It was loud and piercing and if there'd been any dogs anywhere near they would have been in pain.

That got everyone's attention. Lois climbed on one of the desks. "In case you're wondering, Clark and I have an announcement to make. You guys in sports can stop taking bets on this one. Clark and I are expecting another baby..."

There were hoots and whistles from the staff and Perry was smiling like a proud papa again.

Snap. A shot of the proud father, blushing at the excitement.

Life was good.