

Christmas Times Five

by htbthomas

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Rating: K+

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A/N: This story is set in the future of the same universe as *Déjà Vu*, but some details are left intentionally vague to avoid spoilers. However, it's not necessary to have read *Déjà Vu* to understand this one. I hope you enjoy my bit of Christmas fluff!
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Another year, another Christmas at *The Daily Planet*. Normally Lois Lane was just annoyed by all the holiday cheer and well-wishes from fellow staffers. A common thought she'd had most years: *Either go ho-ho-home and celebrate or get back to work!*

It wasn't as if she had that many happy memories of Christmas as a child. Although they'd lived all over the world, they'd never stayed in one place for long. And her father barely paused in his duties as a general long enough to help them develop any traditions. Once she struck out on her own, she never had much use for holidays, especially not family-oriented ones.

But then came Jason, her unexpected blessing. With no traditions of her own to draw upon, Richard had picked up the slack so that at least *Jason's* Christmases would be happy. Even then, she had felt like an outsider - a spectator at her own festivities.

Not this year. This Christmas, she returned the happy smiles of her co-workers. Her secret Santa (yes, she really participated this year) had given her a Christmas mug... and she was actually *using* it. She hadn't gone so far as to display the Christmas wreath yet (it was sitting in a back corner of her desk drawer), but hey! She was making baby steps at least.

"Oh, uh, thanks! Merry Christmas to you, too!" Lois looked up with a warm smile at the reason for her newfound holiday cheer. As Clark Kent reached her desk, she stood to give him a kiss on the cheek. "Are you almost finished with your article, Lois?" he asked as they pulled apart.

"Nearly. There's just this one sentence that's bothering me..." She tapped her pencil against her mouth and frowned at the screen for the tenth time in as many minutes.

Clark sat in his nearby desk chair, and rolled over to sit beside her. He leaned forward to stare at her computer screen, hand under his chin, studying what she had written.

Lois took a moment to sit back and study him, unable to suppress a small grin. The man in front of her, her partner in more ways than one, was changing. Sure, to everyone else he was still mild-mannered Clark Kent, but he had begun to display a bit of confidence. Most people probably attributed it to his 'new' relationship with her... but it was more than that. It was like he finally was free to express the true aspects of his personality, instead of suppressing them.

A moment later, Clark turned his vivid blue eyes back to her. "I think if you changed the

words around a little right here, it would flow better." He pointed to a spot on her monitor.

Lois squinted at the part he had changed. *Damn, he's good. I was about to scrap that whole section. My hero...* she thought with amusement. She scooted him over taking control of the mouse again, and with a few clicks, the article was signed and off to copy-editing. "Thanks, you're a life saver," she told him, her tongue only *partially*-in-cheek.

He grinned back, head tilted in that adorable way of his. "Anything for you, Ms. Lane."

Okay, if anyone walks by and sees us looking at each other with these silly grins on our faces, I'll never live it down... she chided herself. Even if she was feeling like a giddy schoolgirl inside, she had a carefully cultivated reputation. But somehow she couldn't keep the goofy smile off her face this year.

"So..." Clark offered into the silence. "Do you think *tonight* we could try to get the Christmas tree?"

Lois groaned and ran her hand over her face. "Oh, crap. I forgot we still don't have the damn *tree* yet. Jason is going to be so *mad* at me..." *It's December 22nd, for God's sake! There's not a single strand of tinsel sparkling in our apartment! But we've both been so busy...* She sighed. "I really wanted to make this Christmas special for Jason... Our first Christmas together as a family..."

Clark placed his hand on hers. "Just being together makes it pretty special for me," he said in a low voice.

Lois looked up at him, heart suddenly in her throat. "Oh, of course it is... I just meant that..."

"I know what you meant," he assured her, warmth glowing in his eyes. He glanced up at the clock. "Tell you what. It's Friday, and your story's in. I'm all finished up, too..." He paused for a moment, listening... "And it looks like you-know-who isn't needed this minute." His face took on an eager cast, making him look more like his young son than the world-famous superhero. "Why don't we take the afternoon off? Pick up Jason right after school and go get that tree together."

Boy, that sounded good. In fact, she'd like nothing more... She risked a glance over at Perry's office. Inside, their editor-in-chief was pacing the floor briskly, speaking sternly into the receiver of his desk phone. It didn't look like Perry was in the mood to grant any favors. "Clark, I'd love to. But do you think we'll be able to?"

He smiled enigmatically and patted her hand. "Leave it to me." Standing quickly, he strode over to Perry's door and poked his head in. Perry removed the receiver from his ear to ask what Clark wanted. The scowl Perry had been wearing during the phone conversation only deepened as he listened to Clark's request. To Lois' utter surprise, Perry waved his hands in dismissal and returned to the telephone.

Clark turned to her, smiled, and gave her a goofy thumbs up.

"What did you say?" Lois asked, more than a little curious, when Clark reached her side again.

He winked and replied, "Gotta have a few secrets."

"Are we going to get an actual *real* tree?" Jason asked, hope and doubt warring in his tone. Of course, an artificial pre-lit tree, hastily-assembled and gracelessly-decorated, was all he'd ever known.

Lois held out Jason's jacket for him, and he slipped his gloved hands into the sleeves. "That's the plan, kiddo. I think I saw a lot not very far from here."

"Um..." Clark interrupted, as Jason zipped his coat. "I was thinking that we could pick out a fresh one ourselves."

"Really?" Jason's eyes went wide with wonder, and he began to bounce on his toes.

"What? You mean, like at a tree farm?" Lois asked with surprise. She had been thinking this would be a quick errand - and they would have to drive quite a distance to get to the nearest tree farm... wherever the heck it was. "Is it far?"

Clark ran his eyes over her clothing. "A bit. You might want to wear your heavier coat and put on some gloves and a scarf."

Lois stifled her sigh. *Remember, Mommy, this is for Jason...* She started to trade her jacket for her overcoat. Thank goodness she was already wearing her snowboots.

Jason and Clark waited for her patiently. Neither one of them had any reason to change, since Jason was starting to show an increased resistance to cold and heat. His father, of course, was used to wearing the thinnest of spandex no matter the temperature...

"All right, boys," she announced, "I'm ready. Just give me directions."

Clark opened and held the door for her, and they all stepped into the hallway. Only a moment after Lois had turned the key in the lock, she felt Clark's strong arm around her waist. He quickly looked to his right and his left... "No need for directions. I'm 'driving.'"

With a blur of red and blue and a rush of speed, the three of them were suddenly sailing down the hall, up the stairwell, and out of the roof access door. Lois barely had time to catch her breath, as the wind whipped about her face. Within minutes, they were among the clouds, misty droplets of moisture spritzing her face.

"Woo hoo!!" Jason called out, now that they were high above the city where no one could hear them.

Lois felt the same exhilaration as her son, but her curiosity overwhelmed any other emotion. "Where are we going?"

"I know a place," he said with a smile, once again inscrutable. "Hang on tight, both of you." Gently, he wrapped his cape around the two of them, and then set his face toward the east.

They broke through the clouds, and began to travel faster than she had ever flown with him before. She felt a rush of adrenaline as the clouds whizzed by beneath them, speeding past at a rate faster than her brain could process. The time he had taken her to the Fortress, they had flown pretty fast, but this... this seemed faster than the fastest jumbo jet. *Just how fast are we going?*

It was an amazing feeling. She would have thought this impossible, that the friction of the air would lacerate her human skin, or that the freezing cold air of the upper atmosphere would send her into hypothermia in seconds... but somehow, she was protected and warm. Jason rested in Clark's other arm, his eyes bright, his smile wide. The three of them shot toward the horizon, the sun sinking ahead of them with almost the same rapid pace of time-lapse photography.

About a half an hour later, when they slowed and drifted back to earth again, it was completely dark. Only a small sliver of moon lit the night sky, glimmering faintly on the snowy landscape.

They touched down lightly at the edge of a dark forest. "Where are we?" Jason asked excitedly.

"I would guess somewhere in Europe by the direction we headed, but after it got dark I couldn't tell anymore." Lois' breath fogged the frigid air as she spoke.

She thought she could see just the barest of impish grins on Clark's face. "I figured if we were going to get a Christmas tree," he looked down at his son, and ruffled the boy's hair, "A *real* one..." Jason returned his father's twinkling smile. "Then we might as well get one from the place where the tradition started."

Lois looked around them, at the rolling hills of white dotted with pines. "Germany? Is this the Black Forest or something?"

He shook his head. "No, most of the trees there are too tall, mostly green only around the canopy... and I wouldn't dream of defacing a single branch of that venerable place. We're in the southernmost tip of Germany. Close to Berchtesgaden National Park."

An instant later, Clark was standing before them in casual winter clothing, complete with stocking cap, coat and gloves, though only they knew he had no need for them. He pointed toward a small crest of snow. "Come this way. Over that rise is the farm of a friend of mine."

Jason shouted happily and took off at a dead run, snow flying in his wake.

"A friend... of Clark's?" Lois asked curiously.

"I *do* have friends, you know," he teased her gently as they followed Jason. "Other than Jimmy." Lois started to stammer an apology... but he gave her shoulder a squeeze to let her know it wasn't necessary. "I spent a few weeks here the summer before I started working at the *Planet*."

When they crested the rise, a warmly lit farmhouse came into view. The sound of shouts must have alerted the occupants of the house, because the door was opening. "Grüss Gott, Herr Kent!" the farmer called out to them. He looked unsurprised to see them.

"Grüss Gott, Herr Bauer! Fröhliche Weihnachten!" Clark called back cheerily. "Wie geht's euch alle?"

As they got up to the doorway, a wide smile crinkled the man's weathered face. "Danke, gut! Seid ihr alle bereit, den Weihnachtsbaum auszusuchen? Oder möchtet ihr euch erst beim Kamin wärmen? Vielleicht auch etwas essen?"

Clark turned back toward Lois and Jason. "How are you two doing?" Clark asked. "Too cold to pick out a tree?"

"Not at all!" cried Jason, not even shivering. These days, the winter jacket was just for show. He seemed less and less affected by the weather as the months passed.

"I'll be fine," Lois assured him, still pretty warm from their close contact during the flight.

A couple of hours later, feeling mellow from the hot mulled wine they'd shared with the farmer and his wife post-tree hunt, Lois sat on the comfort of her own sofa admiring their selection. The scent of the fir tree was already filling the air, and the soft glow of the lights on the tree made their cozy apartment seem even cozier.

Jason, worn out after an exciting day, was fast asleep, his head in her lap. She idly smoothed his unruly hair and sighed contentedly. Clark came from the kitchen a moment later, a steaming cup of cocoa in his hands. "You outdid yourself, Dad," Lois complimented him as he sat beside her and set his cup on the coffee table.

"Thank you, Lois," he said, clearly pleased, noticing the contented grin on his son's sleeping face. Then his expression slowly turned regretful. "I missed every one of these Christmases when I was away... I wanted to make it up to you somehow."

"Oh, I think you did, and then some. He'll remember this for the rest of his life." Lois snuggled into the crook of his arm, and closed her eyes. "I don't think I could imagine a better Christmas gift."

Just before sleep overtook her, she thought she heard him mumble quietly into her hair,

"Oh, but *I* can."

Which explained why she found herself standing in line, not a little astonished, in front of a snow-covered lodge in Roivaniemi, Finland the next afternoon. Families from all over the world swirled around them, speaking in dozens of different languages, although the happy chatter of the children had a very universal sound. *Of course*, Lois thought bemusedly, *what child wouldn't be excited to get to see Santa... in his own hometown!*

Clark and Jason stood a little bit in front of her, Jason asking Clark question number 378 of approximately one thousand questions. "Does Santa really have to take a nap twice a day?"

"Yes, Jason. He's a very busy man, you know. And don't forget, tomorrow is the busiest day of the year for him. With all the preparations he has to make today, we're lucky to get to see him at all."

In just a few minutes, 'nap time' would be over, and Santa Claus Village would be open for business again. Yesterday, she thought nothing could top getting a Christmas tree in the German Alps. But she was beginning to suspect that this Christmas was going to be filled with one surprise after another.

Lois remembered that by the time she was Jason's age, she no longer believed in Santa at all. And, like the quintessential older sister, she had ruined Lucy's belief in Santa long before her time. *Maybe if I'd had a Daddy like Clark Kent, things would have been different.* She smiled again fondly at father and son, amazed at how much the Christmas spirit was really taking hold inside her.

The line finally started forward, and the excited chatter suddenly increased in volume. "Here we go," Clark announced.

"Are we going to visit the Elves' Toy Factory next?" Jason asked, question number 379.

"Sure. Whatever you want to see. We have all day here." Clark looked at Lois, bundled up but beginning to feel the chill again. "Lois, are you feeling warm enough? You look like you're starting to shiver." He touched a hand to the earpiece of his glasses, quietly suggesting another 'super-warm-up' with his heat vision.

"I'll be okay until we get inside the lodge. You don't have to coddle me, you know. Lanes are tough. Maybe not as tough as Kents..." A blast of arctic wind knocked the words right out of her.

He tried to apologize. "I know, I just want you to be-"

"But I wouldn't mind a little tropical climate right about now." She cut in with an over-dramatic shiver.

Clark began to respond, but Jason tugged at his sleeve again. "Do you think that Santa uses some kind of magic to get to all the houses in the world in one night?"

Clark's face suddenly wore an odd expression. Up until now, he'd been able to play along enough that he hadn't exactly lied to Jason about the whole 'Santa Claus' thing. And she could understand his hesitation. In a few more years, Jason would be past this magical age when anything was possible.

Lois tried to help him out. "Well, it's either that, or he'd have to be pretty darn fast."

A look of 'Oh' came over her son's features. He was silent for a few minutes. Then just before they got to the front of the line, he announced, a little too loudly, "That's probably it. His home *is* in the Arctic. Santa Claus must be from another planet."

Twenty-four hours later, she got her wish for a warmer climate, though she never would

have dreamed Clark would come through like this.

Jason ran out ahead of them, this time kicking up sand instead of snow. "Christmas Eve... on the beach?"

"Bondi Beach, to be exact." Clark shook out a large blanket and laid it on the sand. "Best place for a Christmas picnic." He began to unpack the basket he had brought along, setting out sandwiches and sodas.

The weather was gorgeous. The sun shone brightly, and a light breeze lifted her hair back from her face. As strange as it seemed to her to have Christmas in the middle of summer, she realized that this was normal to everyone here in Australia... or really, in the whole Southern Hemisphere.

Lois watched Jason run in and out of the waves. Metropolis was on the water, but didn't have any beaches to speak of. As she looked around at the other families and couples, she noticed a lot of hats. Suddenly she could feel the sun shining strongly on the crown of her head. *And me without my sunscreen...*

"Clark..." Lois turned to him to see if he wouldn't mind running just a *tiny* errand.

But right there on the blanket was a bottle of SPF 30 and a white ball cap. "Yes?" he asked.

"Thank you." She slipped the cap over her hair, leaned over and kissed him lightly on his cheek. His skin felt so good against her lips, warm and smooth. She kissed him again, a little closer to his mouth. "You thought of everything."

"Well, I've been planning this for a while now..." he murmured against her lips, before capturing them in a tender kiss. It didn't matter how many times he had kissed her, it always sent a visceral thrill through her, all the way to the tips of her fingers. She reached those same fingers into his thick hair and pulled him closer, deepening the kiss. Clark snaked his arms around her waist, pulling her even closer, until she was nearly in his lap. She groaned softly with the pleasure of being in such close contact.

Taking a quick breath, she opened one eye to make sure Jason was all right, and then when she was satisfied he was, she closed it again and asked idly, "For how long...?"

Their lips met again, melding together. Lois suddenly wished that they were alone on this crowded beach. Although at that moment, the world was fading to a small dot in her mind...

Clark moved away from her finally, and she made a sound of protest. He tilted his head toward their son, who was ambling across the sand toward them. "I think I've been planning this since the first decorations went up in the stores," he admitted quietly, a blush staining his perfect complexion.

"What...?" Lois frowned, as she picked up the sunscreen and squirted some into her palm. "That long?"

"Uh huh." He smoothed down a spot for Jason to sit, not meeting her eyes.

"Since before we were even... together?"

The blush crept all the way up to his forehead. Lois didn't even know that Kryptonians *could* blush.

At that moment, Jason plopped down on the blanket beside them. "This beach is so cool! Can we do this every Christmas?"

Clark cleared his throat, but even then the words came out a little squeaky. "Sure! If you really want to. Australia's beautiful this time of year."

Lois chuckled softly, knowing he could hear her amusement. He was so sweet, so romantic, but sometimes so unsure of himself. It was absolutely adorable. She slipped her hand

into his and gave it a squeeze.

Clark looked back up, his azure eyes meeting hers. The love blazing from them made her light up inside brighter than the tree in their living room.

Christmas morning dawned clear and cold, and instead of the steady rumble of morning traffic, she was hearing... chickens? Lois opened one eye, looking out of the window, where the sun was rising at the edge of the snow-covered cornfields, which stretched as far as she could see.

Oh, that's right, we're in Smallville. They had arrived late last night, and she had definitely been feeling the 'super-jet-lag' after three days of various time-zones messing with her circadian rhythms. Lois closed her eyes, and turned over sleepily, not really expecting Clark to be there. It *was* after dawn, after all. Clark was usually awake almost before the sun rose, and he was often in and out all night long. Luckily, Lois was a heavy sleeper.

"Merry Christmas," came a quiet rumble from the side of the bed.

Lois' eyes flew open in startlement. Clark was sitting in a chair by the bedside, a steaming mug of coffee in his hands. "Oh!"

"Sorry... I know you like to sleep in when you have the chance. But there's a certain someone downstairs who is trying *really* hard to wait for his mommy before opening his presents."

Lois sat up and stretched, holding her hand out for the coffee. She didn't know if the coffee was fresh, or just reheated, but the fact that he had it ready for her was the first present of the day...

Much later, long after all the presents were opened, and the most wonderful Christmas dinner she could ever remember eating was settling in her stomach, Lois sat on the couch with Martha. Ben had gone upstairs to take a post-feast nap, and the two women were contentedly watching their two boys play in the snow outside. Lois smiled at their seemingly boundless energy - their day in the sun yesterday seemed to recharge them both.

"I know I've told you this before, Lois dear, but Jason's really a darling boy," Martha spoke into the comfortable silence. "So bright, intuitive and happy."

"Well, he gets that from his father, you know."

"Oh, sweetheart, you sell yourself short. You were the one who raised that little boy while Clark was away. It's not *all* in the genes, believe me." Martha turned her face toward the game outside, but her eyes were focusing on a point far away. "I firmly believe that Jonathan and I had a lot to do with the man Clark is today. He received all of these amazing powers from his birth parents, but I'd like to think that we provided the heart."

Lois placed her hand over Martha's. "And the world thanks you." Lois laughed. "What am I saying? Heck, *I* thank you."

Martha's other hand came around, and she clasped Lois' palm between her weathered and age-spotted hands. "And I thank *you*, Lois. You and Jason have made him happier than he's ever been in his entire life. He's stronger, more confident... and no matter what that Jor-El told him... without love, saving the world means nothing."

Lois felt warmed deeply from the inside at Martha's kind words. As they continued to stare out of the window, chatting and sipping tea, Lois thought she finally was beginning to understand what all the Christmas hoopla was about.

Lois tapped her gloved hands on the steering wheel, absolutely dancing inside with

excitement. In about an hour, Clark was going to meet her at home for a special Christmas celebration, just the two of them. She had no idea what Clark would come up with this time... but after four amazing days she could only *imagine* what he might have up his tight blue spandex sleeve.

Jason was spending the day with Richard, who had asked if Jason could spend a second Christmas with his family. And she was happy to oblige. Most of their friends, family and co-workers thought Jason was Richard's son anyway. The three of them had agreed it would be safer to let everyone continue to believe that in the long run.

Lois vaguely noticed that the snow, which had been falling lightly ever since she left Richard's house, was getting stronger and stronger. *God, I hate driving in the snow. Not because of me, really...* She glared at the red taillights flaring ahead of her as the traffic started slowing to a crawl. *...but because snow turns the rest of the drivers of Metropolis into panic-stricken lunatics...*

Her hand itched to reach into her purse for her cell phone. *Just one call, and I could be home in minutes, instead of...* She glanced at the speedometer. Traffic was officially moving at 10 miles an hour.... *God knows when.*

But she suppressed the urge. Lois had long decided that she wouldn't abuse Clark's abilities for selfish reasons... not that she hadn't slipped a time or two, especially at the beginning of their relationship. But, she was getting better about it, she *was*.

Lois flipped on the radio. Maybe she could catch the traffic report... see how far the traffic was backed up. *"Meteorologists are reporting that the winter storm expected to hit tomorrow has struck the city much earlier than predicted. This same storm has dropped several feet already to the north, and is accompanied by strong winds of twenty to thirty miles an hour. Motorists are warned to stay off the roads if at all possible, and delay holiday travel. Planes are already being grounded at Metropolis Airport..."*

The warnings droned on as she lowered the volume. The cars ahead came to a complete stop. By the looks of the lights, most of them were turning off their engines to save gas. *Well, it looks like I might be stuck here a while.* Following suit, Lois pulled over onto the shoulder, turned off her engine, grabbed her laptop from the seat beside her, and hoped that the battery would last until the traffic started moving again...

Lois blinked awake and glanced at her watch. 5:30pm. The sun was almost totally down. She shook herself. *I can't believe I fell asleep! Clark would have throttled me if I had died of hypothermia or something... Of course, I would have been dead anyway, so there isn't much he could do by then...* Lois shook herself again. *Even my thoughts are messed up right now...*

For several hours, the traffic had been dead still. She had run her heater for a few minutes every hour, just the way she had been taught, and listened to the news reports during that time. Superman had been busy digging people out all along the path of the storm. With so many people in greater need, Lois had felt terrible even *considering* calling for his help.

What was foremost in her mind now was not fear for her safety, or guilt over wanting to be rescued, but... disappointment. *Whatever Clark was going to do tonight... it's probably too late now. And Jason's due to return tonight, although with this storm, he should probably just stay with Richard. I should have sent an overnight bag with him just in case...* Lois bit her lip, thoughts swirling afresh.

Lois snuggled closer into her coat, drawing her knees up. "Oh, Clark. Merry Christmas, anyway," she whispered. She fought the sleepiness that was overtaking her, but her eyes were beginning to flutter closed...

Seconds, minutes, hours later, she felt herself being lifted up out of her car. A voice broke through the haze: "Lois? Lois! Wake up!"

Her eyes cracked open as she swam back to consciousness. "Clark...?" she creaked out.

Suddenly she felt herself warmed from head to foot, unlocking her rigid limbs. "Oh, my God, Lois, are you all right?"

"Mmm?" she mumbled. She felt warm, but still so sleepy...

"Lois...? Lois!" He gently slapped her cheeks, trying to wake her from her nearly comatose state. In a lower voice, he murmured, "I swear, Lois, if kryptonite doesn't get me first, you are going to be the death of me..."

Lois couldn't help but chuckle through the fog in her brain, as she finally started to come awake. "Stop being so dramatic, Super-Dad... I'm okay."

He gave her a short laugh - if she was awake enough for sarcasm, he must know she was out of the woods. She felt him gather her into his arms. "Why didn't you call out to me?"

"You had more important things to do," she explained weakly, snuggling further into his arms. "I'm just sorry we won't be able to do whatever you had planned today. I was really looking forward to spending some time alone...."

He tilted her chin up to look at him. Only now could she see that he wasn't in his Superman uniform, but dressed in flannel and a jacket. She looked up and down the highway. All the other cars were gone, the road freshly plowed. Somehow she had completely slept through all of that. Her car was completely covered with snow - people must have thought the car had been abandoned. *No wonder he was so worried about me...*

"If you're up to it, Ms. I-don't-need-anyone's-help," he chastised her in his best Superman tone before softening, "It's *not* too late to salvage the evening. We could improvise..."

"I like improvisation."

He gave her a knowing smile. Directing her to get back in her car, she felt him lift it easily, and she was soon sailing through the air. A few minutes later, she felt the car slow and set down again.

"Hang on a minute - I'll tell you when it's okay to come out," Clark called from outside the ice-covered windows.

When he let her emerge, she saw before her a perfect little snow igloo built into the edge of a wooded area. Smoke was already drifting lazily through the ventilation hole. Lois raised an eyebrow, but she let him lead her inside. He had constructed a little fire pit in the center, with fleece blankets around the edge.

"Wow..." Lois marveled.

He pulled her to sit beside him. "I'm full of surprises, aren't I?" Clark handed her a cup of rich-smelling cocoa.

"You have no idea." Lois kissed him tenderly, and then took a small sip of the drink. He pulled her into the circle of his arms, and they sat together silently for a while, sipping cocoa and watching the firelight play on the slick walls of the igloo. "Clark?" she asked suddenly, curious.

"Yes, Lois?"

"What were we going to do before your plans got cancelled?"

"We were..." He trailed off and instead told her, "Do you really want to know?"

"A little bit..."

"Well, it was going to be spectacular." Clark set his mug to the side, and plucked her empty cup from her hand as well. Then his voice dropped several pitches, and he leaned over

to kiss her just under the jaw line. "But I think I like this better." His kisses began a slow trail to her ear.

"Clark..." she said teasingly, although she wasn't complaining. No, not at all.

He pushed her slowly down onto the blankets, beginning a slow exploration of her neck. Lois shivered in response. The last thing he murmured before they both lost all track of time was, "I'll save it for next Christmas."

A/N: For the curious, here is the translation of the Bavarian German:

"Grüss Gott, Herr Kent!" Greetings, Mr. Kent! - *Grüss Gott*, 'greet God' - is a traditional Bavarian (and Austrian) greeting.

"Grüss Gott, Herr Bauer! Fröhliche Weihnachten! Wie geht's euch alle?" Greetings, Mr. Bauer! Merry Christmas! How are you all doing?

"Danke, gut! Seid ihr alle bereit, den Weihnachtsbaum auszusuchen? Oder möchtet ihr euch erst beim Kamin wärmen? Vielleicht auch etwas essen?" Good, thanks! Are you all ready to pick out the Christmas tree? Or would you first like to warm yourself by the fireplace? Maybe something to eat as well?

Merry Christmas everyone!