

# Before The Clock Strikes Twelve

by Kala Lane Kent

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Rating: T

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The New Year's Eve party at the Whites' penthouse was getting noisier as midnight approached. Lois almost spilled her drink laughing at one of Lucy's comments, and pulled away from the crowd to collect herself, still snickering. It was nice to have all the adults together for once, and still know that all the kids were safely at the Troupe house under Nana's watchful eyes. There would be sparkling grape juice at midnight for them, along with some baked Brie in pastry and a few other fancy hors-d'œuvres to make them feel like grownups.

Meanwhile, the real grownups were having a roaring good time free of cares - and free of sobriety. Lois knew for a fact that even Lana had indulged this evening, though she was sticking to wine until the champagne toast. Lois herself had had more than a couple; enough to be more than a little relaxed, but not enough to make a fool of herself. The festive and somewhat absent-minded atmosphere had even made it possible for Kal-El to slip away to prevent a four-car pileup in Atlanta a couple of hours ago without notice. It looked to be a very good New Year indeed...

"Lois." An urgent whisper, a warm hand on her elbow, and Clark tugged her away from the lights and laughter.

The almost playful way he propelled them forward made her turn to grin at him. This couldn't be a reaction to the single glass of champagne she'd seen him have on coming back earlier. The clack of her heels was loud on the concrete of the patio as they continued out into the cool darkness. "What are you up to, Kal-El?" she whispered back curiously.

"It's only a few minutes to midnight," he murmured, taking her glass and setting it down. "Want a better view of the fireworks?"

That piqued her interest all the more. What was he up to now? That gleam was in his eye... "Sure, but we're not gonna find it behind the pool-house," Lois countered as Clark gathered her into his arms. "What exactly are you up to this time ... *holy shit! Kal-El!*" She clutched his arms desperately as roof disappeared below her.

"Relax," he replied, rising higher. "We're fine."

Even after all of these years, she couldn't help the panic when he did this without warning. The cool night air breezed through her hair as they soared. "Yeah, we'll be great when someone spots your ass flyin' around in an Armani suit," Lois hissed once she had recovered from the surprise. "Are you *crazy*? Do you want to kick up the gossips again? *Lois Lane Spends Clandestine New Year Airborne With Ex?*"

"No." He chuckled at the thought. "Lois, no one will see a man in a black suit against the night sky. And besides, most of the people awake right now have been drinking."

The man did have a point, not that she didn't have one herself. "It's still a risk," Lois muttered, glaring at him. In response, Kal-El just smiled, which annoyed her further. The infamous Lane pout only made him grin more, so she tried another tactic. "So you got me up here in the middle of the night. Want to tell me what this is all about?"

Kal-El looked deeply into her eyes, and then took her hand and placed something in the palm. "Here, you'll need these. It gets rather loud up there."

It took her a moment to disengage their locked gaze, the intensity of which had not dimmed in the passing years. And then she glanced down at what he had placed in her hand. Of all the things she had thought to be there, it was not what she saw there.

Earplugs? Lois tilted her head dubiously, a faint echo of those words in the back of her mind, even if they didn't seem to make sense. "Since when do we need these?" she asked, honestly puzzled and wondering if she had been more effected by the alcohol than she thought. "We've been flying for years and it's never been loud..."

"I'd be very happy to take you back to the party, Ms. Lane, if you'd do me the honor of watching the fireworks with me," Kal-El said softly.

Her eyes widened at the use of his old address for her. *Then* she remembered. It had been Independence Day, years ago, before she even knew the secret. Their interview had run late, and Superman had taken her up to view the New Troy fireworks from above. The way he said *Ms. Lane* took her back in time the same way it always did, and memory sent a shiver down her spine. Lois smiled slowly, murmuring, "Oh my God ... you brought me up here to..."

"I love you, too," he replied with a laugh, kissing her forehead. Lois sighed and snuggled against his chest. That he should remember something like that after all these years, and take the time to remind her of it...

Below, they heard the rooftop crowds start chanting the countdown. Kal-El tilted her head back, the look in his eyes warming her in spite of the cold night air, and leaned in. He hesitated a breath away from her lips, Lois' eyes slipping closed, as the countdown rang out below. "Three ... two ... *one!*"

Fireworks exploded, but Lois wasn't looking. Kal-El kissed her, and into her response she put every ounce of her fierce and stubborn love for him. Arms around his neck, mouth eager on his, she felt the air throb with the concussions from the fireworks display, but at the moment the fireworks in her mind and heart were more brilliant.

A long kiss, both sweet and passionate, before they finally broke apart for breath. By the gentle spin of the stars over her head, Lois knew they were slowly spiraling up, out of sight of the New Year's Eve revelers below and out of range of the fireworks. That was just fine; everything she wanted was right here in her arms, and the gleam of adoration and desire in his eyes was more radiant than any pyrotechnics.

"I love you, Lois," Kal-El murmured into her ear. "Happy New Year."

"I love you, too," was her immediate response.