

# Wintersong

by Kala Lane Kent

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Rating: K+

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*I still believe in summer days.  
The seasons always change,  
And life will find a way.  
I'll be your harvester of light  
And send it out tonight  
So we can start again.  
Is love alive?  
Is love alive?  
Is love alive?  
This is my winter song.  
December never felt so wrong,  
'Cause you're not where you belong;  
Inside my arms...*

Looking out into the deep watches of the night, the dark-haired woman found herself curled up on her couch, incapable of running from the Ghosts of Christmases Past. It was only a couple of days until Christmas, the apartment mostly quiet and lit by the glow of the tree's multi-colored lights. Across the room, a radio tuned to an American station out of Le Marais, Christmas carols playing softly in the background. Her mother had only bundled the twins off to bed an hour ago and she herself should be heading there. But she just couldn't quiet the voices in her mind tonight, voices that told her that she could only run from her past for so long. Struggling with her unsettled feelings, Lois fought not to curse the call she'd just received.

It seemed that the Daily Planet Christmas Party had just begun when her phone rang at midnight, the paper having run its last edition early to accommodate the five o'clock start of the festivities. For a moment, she had assumed that the Old Man was calling her on his way down there, a tradition he had begun the first year after the twins were born. They had bullshitted back and forth for a time, their comfortable banter making her smile and fight a laugh from time to time. Life always felt normal for a time when she spoke to Perry. There was background noise, but she barely acknowledged it.

Just when she thought he was going to let her go, his gruff voice snarked across the trans-Atlantic phonenumber, "Oh, yeah, by the way, someone wants to wish you a Merry Merry and all that crap. Here." There was a clicking on the line and Lois assumed that he was handing the phone to Jimmy or Loueen. Suddenly the volume got higher and the thunder of at least fifty

voices called out, "Merry Christmas, Lane!" Her eyes had widened then, the greeting catching her completely by surprise. There were several catcalls, one from what sounded like Bill and Gil, yelling out something about "Hot Mama" and Jimmy's voice ringing in the background with "We miss you!" After a moment, his laughter proceeded his words, "Sounds like you still have a few admirers around here, kid. Not that I miss you in the least. Have a good Christmas and give my regards to your mother, okay? And think about what I said the other day. The offer isn't entirely a first-class invitation to Hell, you know?"

When he hung up the phone on his end, it was all Lois could do not to beg him not to go. It still startled her just how much the cheerful shouts of her friends and co-workers back home could make her heart ache. As a veteran of many Christmases at the paper, she could single out exactly who the majority of the individual voices belonged to. She knew that Perry had only wanted to remind her that she was family and missed, but it felt like a glimpse into a world that she was now locked out of. In the months since she had decided to make a fresh start in Paris, Perry had been her only real tether to her old life. Cat and Tobe called when they could, but they were reporters. You could never expect them to be able to keep to a calling schedule; God knows she couldn't back in the day.

She bit her lip then. Oh, she missed Cat and Tobie...and Maggie. There had been so many moments in the last year, when faced with the whispers and the nudges around the office, that she had wanted them there for back-up. Back home, in Dooley's, those pointed stares and under-breath whispers about her even now wouldn't last. Not once her girls had heard about it. That thought, just how quickly the three of them would be to defend her honor, shamed her when she realized that she hadn't been able to look any of them in the eye since before Kala and Jason were born. Frowning, it dawned on her that the only family she'd ever known was more than 3, 000 miles away and it had never felt quite so far away as it did tonight.

She had only been half-listening to the songs playing on the radio, but the familiar introduction of what was her all-time favorite Christmas song began and Lois looked up with a sigh. Only this version was new; a single gentle, bluesy female voice over a piano. There was no male single to help her carry the song, the only lyrics sung were the woman's. You could almost feel the chill at that missing set of words. She's never thought of such a sly and teasing song being so sad and beautifully poignant, just for the lack of a second singer.

*The neighbors might think*

*Say, what's in this drink*

*I wish I knew how*

*To break the spell*

*I ought to say no, no, no, sir*

*At least I'm gonna say that I tried*

*I really can't stay*

*Ahh, but it's cold outside...*

With a stunned expression, Lois took a deep breath. As many times as she had listened to this well-loved standard, it had never seemed to speak to her as it did then. The part that haunted her most was just how well it under-scored her life at this moment. It occurred to her then what had kept her here in Paris all this time. *I really can't stay, but it's cold outside.* If she were honest with herself, that was exactly the point, wasn't it? She'd never really been comfortable here; she was all too aware that she had been staying here to keep the twins out of the view of the American public and safe from any possible curiosity.

*I've got to go*

*Say, lend me your coat  
You've really been grand  
But don't you see  
There's bound to be talk tomorrow  
At least there will be plenty implied  
I really can't stay  
Ahh, but it's cold outside...*

But that hadn't been completely avoidable here, either, had it? She had run away, was still running away. Not only from the people she loved and admired, but even now, she was running away from the fact that he was gone. Still in the last place he was seen, telling herself that it was necessary to start over away from the city that had thought of her and the hero as a fairytale couple. When, in brutally-honest truth, she was still waiting, wasn't she?. Still hoping against hope that he'd come home. Kala and Jason were two years old and she was still watching the skies.

It also occurred to her then that when Jor-El's image made his pronouncement that cold January night, telling his son that he had to forsake his life as he knew it to be with her, months later she somehow had managed to share that fate. Kal-El had gotten his powers back somehow; she'd never had the chance to ask him how and what it had cost. But she wondered now ruefully if maybe she didn't know. But she was starting to see a certain symmetry. Even without knowing at first, Lois had found herself doing the same thing. She had walked away from her old life even before she had discovered the twins on the way, transferring temporarily from Metropolis to Paris on the off-chance that she could follow any clues left. Her memory still a mine-field, she had made the decision to stay in France even after she had been told of the pregnancy, even when she was scared. She had exiled herself from her friends and all the comfort of home. She had even waited until the last moment to ask her Mom to be here for the labor. What did that tell you?

It was as if she had picked up his punishment unknowingly. Of course, there had been the fear of discovery, of someone finding out whose children she was carrying, but for how long had Clark hidden in plain sight? And had it been for the twins that she had hidden or for herself? To save her from hurtful speculation from people she knew and loved, from the scathing disapproval of her critics?

She heard Kala whimper in her sleep from the direction of the twins' room. There was another miracle of the love she had lost. Before they had been born, she never would have known just how individual the sounds a child made would be. Jason's yawn even sounded different from his sister, a little heavier when the air pressure blew through his sinuses; Kala's was always huge and sounded like a high-pitched puppy dog. The same with the way they slept. Jason curled slept on his side, burrowed deeply into his covers, almost trying to hide himself. Kala, however, was now sleeping stretched out over her side of the bed, as if she were deliberately taking up every single bit of her portion for herself. Her heart broke a little more when she remembered exactly who she got that from.

It still hurt to think of that time between them, to acknowledge the situation in which the twins had been conceived. Even now, with all of the memories intact, she was torn between openly longing for him and bitter resentment. They had such little time together, a stolen few moments, and even Fate had seen fit to steal that back away from them. What made it all the worse was the remembrance of the warmth and emotion in the man she now knew as Kal-El's as they lay together that one night hidden away from the rest of the world. She had never

known it was possible to know someone so completely in so short a time. All of the missing links in both of his identities meshed even as they did. Knowing what parts of Clark were Superman and Superman, Clark. They had, in the end, made up the perfect whole. A perfect whole that had shortly after disappeared from her life.

And she was the one dwelling, holding on to a past that would never culminate in the future they had dreamed of in those few breathless hours. The last time he spoke to her before the amnesia had clouded everything, he had mentioned that she should move on. Even that she should move on romantically. At the time, it wounded her to the core. Obviously he had moved forward; maybe it was time she did as well, regardless of how uneasy she was with looking at her heart these days. Maybe not with relationships, but at least with life in general. Hiding like this was cowardice and Lois Lane was anything but a coward.

Taking a deep breath, feeling the gravity of the moment, Lois rose from the couch to head up the hallway, but not to her own room. In the dimness, she could hear the opening strains of saxophone on *What Are You Doing New Years* as she opened the door and called out to her mother. The reporter could help a small grin; after tonight's fateful playlist, for the first holiday since the babies were born, she thought she had an answer.

The light was wrong; that was the first thing he noticed. Cold, filtered starlight instead of the warm golden glow of the sun. Disoriented, his mind still fogged with dreams of what could have been - of what had been, for such a brief time - Kal-El fixed his gaze on the planet that filled his view: Krypton. He was finally home.

It would be a week before he actually arrived there, but he'd set the hypersleep timer to wake him early so he could watch as the ship approached the planet. He looked eagerly now, filling his eyes with images he'd only seen in holograms before. Though still distant, he thought he could make out the shape of the oceans, a hint of the mountain ranges. For the first time in memory, he was seeing the world where he'd been born, and it looked completely intact. His parents might be alive, Jor-El regretting the error that had sent his firstborn son across the galaxies ... the places and people Kal-El had only heard about were waiting for him, right there.

The moment was profound, stirring him to the depths of his soul. And like all such moments, he wanted to share this. Lois would be so amazed to lay eyes on another world, one that had given birth to her beloved...

Sorrow crashed down over his sense of triumph. There would be no sharing this moment, or any other, with Lois. If this world was intact and inhabited, then she was lost to his past. And it was better for both of them that way. Look what happened when they'd tried to be together. The first time he relinquished his duty, the entire world paid the price, and he and Lois had almost lost their lives.

Kal-El tried to set all of that aside, telling himself he was beyond the reach of that loss. It was no help that hypersleep, which conserved energy during the long flight, sometimes invoked vivid dreams. And those dreams, from the moment the hatch closed behind him, had been of Lois. Not just the intimacy between them during that single ardent night, but all the little moments. Her amazement when he saved her, the first time and every time; her saucy grin when she snagged his coffee in the bullpen; her fierce single-mindedness in pursuit of a story; her relaxed manner over dinner at her sister's house, the most laid-back he'd ever seen her; her fiery confrontations with old boys' club at work, yelling and swearing whenever they dared to underestimate her; her carefree laughter with her friends; and her arguments with

Perry, the two of them so alike in their determination. Every smile, every wink, every roll of those hazel eyes, every confident swagger, every suddenly tongue-tied wide-eyed stare, all of those memories had returned in his dreams.

All those recollections left him with a powerful, paradoxical yearning. Now that he had finally found the place where he'd been born, Kal-El was farther from home than ever before.

*This is my winter song.  
December never felt so wrong,  
'Cause you're not where you belong;  
Inside my arms.  
This is my winter song to you.  
The storm is coming soon.  
It rolls in from the sea.\**

\*Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson - **Winter Song**