

Have Some Good Cheer

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Rating: K+

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Author's Note: Written for the 2008 12 Days of Clois Christmas Challenge - Prompt #16 Caroling.



"Turn it up, Jim!"

Lois looked up from her computer as Jimmy Olsen, as per Gil's request, turned the volume up on the television, which was showing LNN's coverage of Superman preparing to destroy a meteor headed for Metropolis the next day.

"Superman tells us that he will be using a combination of heat vision and super strength to break up the meteor," the news anchor reported, "but he warns that some debris may still fall on the city. It will be harmless by the time it breaks up in our atmosphere, so do not be alarmed if it appears that Metropolis will be getting coal this Christmas Eve."

"Unbelievable," Ron Troupe breathed. "He's been around for a few years, but doesn't it just strike you sometimes that if Superman weren't here, we'd be in some serious trouble?"

Lois decided to let someone else take up this debate - she had a deadline to make. The last thing she heard was Jimmy vehemently defending Wonder Woman and the Justice League's ability to do the job before she succumbed to the blinders she put on when focused on finishing a story. When she was finally finished, she saw Clark was back from wherever he had gone this time - she had been avoiding him for the past couple of days because of the horrendous mood he'd been in, so she didn't really know what he'd been up to lately - and he was typing furiously with a look of stern concentration on his face. Lois decided she'd had enough - she had seen these moods before, and she was not in the mood to keep letting him beat himself up like this, especially since she had decided this Christmas would be the one she made good for herself and her friends.

"Say, Clark, what are you working on?" Lois perched on the edge of his desk and gave him a friendly smile.

"Story on the meteor," Clark replied curtly.

Lois tried again. "So, are you going for the public safety side or Superman's point of view?"

Have you gotten an interview with him?"

"Lois, I'm just trying to write it. You can read all about it tomorrow."

Lois was fed up with this - these were the responses she'd been getting all week, which were extremely out of character for him to say. "Kent, what is up with you? You've been acting strangely all week, and you won't open up to me! What is the deal?"

"Come on, Lois, there's nothing -"

"Smallville, I've known you since you were King of Brooding, so don't give me that. I know when you're brooding, and this is a classic Clark Kent pity party if I've ever seen one. So out with it, before I call your mother." Clark mumbled something that Lois didn't quite catch, and she shot back sharply, "Sorry?"

"I said, my mother is the problem. She's not spending Christmas in Smallville this year."

Lois shrugged. "So you spend it in Metropolis with us. I know it's not the same without your family, but any number of us will be happy to share it with you."

Clark seemed pacified by this a small bit, but he persisted, "It's not that, it's who she's spending Christmas with - our neighbor Ben Hubbard. In Florida."

Lois couldn't help whistling. "Go Martha! Well, good for her - she should be able to try to find someone. I know she loved your dad, Clark, but she should be allowed to find happiness again."

Clark looked annoyed at Lois's take on the situation. "She's my mom, and I just wish she'd talked to me about it before deciding to go off and leave me to be the only one mourning my dad at the holidays. I just... I just want to be allowed to be unreasonable for once, if this is what being unreasonable is."

Lois put a hand on his shoulder. "Look, Clark. I understand. I really do. So talk to your mom - tell her how you feel about it, ask her about Ben, find out what they're doing. You'll feel a lot better having actually talked to her rather than fuming about it on your own." Lois suddenly had an idea. "And then tomorrow you might get some early Christmas cheer if you've been good and Superman has indeed saved us all again from the Christmas Eve Meteor, and you can come by on Christmas for dinner. I'm going to try cooking, and I need someone to torment."

This earned a grin from Clark. "Mercy! You should have stopped at Christmas Eve. Now I might not be good so I won't earn that dinner."

"Impossible, Farm Boy. You're a Boy Scout, and thus you can't not be good. Finish your article, Kent. I'll see you tomorrow." Lois hopped off the desk and headed out of the newsroom, mentally ticking off the things she needed to do before the next day.

"Yes, Ma. I'll try. I love you too, Ma. Have a Merry Christmas, and tell Ben the same." Clark hung up the phone the next day, feeling much better for having talked to her. He looked across the room at his Christmas tree and smiled - he could feel his spirits picking up already.

"We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas..." There were carolers outside! Now this was more like that Smallville Christmas he was used to. He jogged to the door, and grinning, threw it open. He was not prepared for the scene before him: Ron Troupe, Cat Grant, Jimmy Olsen, and Lucy Lane all stood before him holding carol books and singing their hearts out. Lois emerged from behind them, beaming as she sang along with them. As the refrain ended, she ran up to give Clark a hug.

"Merry Christmas, Smallville, now bring us some figgy pudding, or else! Better yet, let us in - Cat's definitely not dressed for the weather," Lois tossed back to the gossip columnist.

"Hey, when you look this good, Lane, you have to make some sacrifices," Cat replied as she gratefully walked over the threshold into the warmth of Clark's apartment.

Clark walked into his kitchen, gesturing toward the couches. "Well, let me make you all some hot chocolate while you get comfortable - feel free to put some music or something on." At this, Lucy made a beeline for the stereo, with Lois hot on her heels to ensure she would pick something decent. Cat began to arrange herself to advantage on the couch, and Jimmy blushing tried to find a seat on the same couch that would not leave him open to be embarrassed by her.

Ron followed Clark into the kitchen to help. "Hey man," he began, "Is it really all right that we all barged in on you here? I know Lois said you might like the company, but I think when it comes to you she gets more than a little overprotective."

Clark's eyebrows lifted as he turned up the heat on the stove. "No, I really appreciate it, Ron. I was expecting to be alone for Christmas, and I get you guys to keep me company instead. That was really thoughtful of all of you to do this for me."

Ron shook his head. "Clark, it's not a huge sacrifice we made. You're our friend, and we all want to be there for you. You should know after these few years we'll stand by you. And speaking as her brother-in-law, I'll stand behind you when you finally decide to plant one on Lois - though I'm pretty sure you won't need back-up anymore," he grinned.

"Ron..."

"I don't want to hear any excuses or anything similar, Kent. I just call it like I see it. I know you've been bummed lately, but take it from me: a little love in your life is a great cure for the holiday blues." Strains of "Jingle Bell Rock" began to play through the speakers. "And now if you'll excuse me, I have a Lane woman to dance with." Ron sauntered out to the living room to take a laughing Lucy in his arms. Soon after, Clark brought the hot chocolate out to his friends, and their voices and laughter mingled to create a perfect scene of Christmas cheer - at least it was in Clark's eyes.

As the gang filed out of Clark's apartment, saying their goodbyes, giving their well wishes for the holidays, and extracting promises of plans for the New Year, Lois stayed behind, looking for an opening. As Cat finally sauntered out with a wink and a remark about her Christmas present at home waiting to be unwrapped and conquered, Lois nudged Clark. "So Smallville, are you up for a walk? I left your present at home, and I promise it's worth it."

Clark, of course, could never refuse such a request, and simply said as he shrugged his coat on, "As long as it isn't like Cat's present, I'll believe you."

Lois's laugh carried out into the street, and their playful banter continued all the way to the door to Lois's apartment complex. Hung over the door frame to the building was a sprig of mistletoe. Clark cleared his throat, disentangled his arm from Lois's to allow her to fish out her keys, and motioned for her to go in ahead of him. They resumed their conversation, speculating about the meteor and other events that had made the news that day as they climbed the stairs and made their way to Lois's door. As she opened it, Clark saw that the room was decorated festively with garlands of tinsel as well as a tiny Christmas tree that had been overzealously decked out with various ornaments.

Lois ran to grab a flat, poorly wrapped package from under the tree - not that the style of wrapping was any different from the other gifts there. "So let me get your present for you... and let me tell you, Smallville, it was definitely hard to choose what exactly should go into this, so I won't feel bad if you change it up after a while. Okay, I'm saying too much. Just open it,"

she urged as she pressed the gift into his hands. Unwrapping it carefully, Clark found himself holding a glass picture frame.

"Turn it on - it's a digital picture frame," Lois explained. Once he turned it on, the frame displayed a series of photos - while some of them featured highlights of the past few years and his friends at the Planet, many of them were of Clark and his family, with a special focus on his father.

Clark was so overwhelmed, he could not think of anything to say. He simply looked from the frame to Lois and beamed.

"I know you have been missing your dad lately, especially with your mom moving on, so I thought..."

Clark interrupted, "I know, Lois, and thank you so much - for this, for the caroling and friends tonight, and for telling me to talk to my mom. I called her tonight, and I feel much better. You've given me so much for Christmas this year, I don't know what I'd do without you. Thank you."

Lois took Clark's hand in hers and replied, "You're welcome. And so you know, I don't intend to let you find out."

Clark grin grew wider, and he dug into his pocket for his gift. "Great. And... here's your present." As Lois tore the wrapping paper to reveal a beautiful Christmas star, he explained, "I know your penchant for small Christmas trees, so I talked to Superman to see if he could find something special to put on your little guy."

Lois hugged him, then moved to place the star atop the tree. "So where did you two get it from?"

Clark took her elbow to guide her to the window, and pointed up. "There - no," he said, then, adjusting his arm by a few degrees, amended, "there."

Lois smiled and leaned her head on Clark's shoulder, looking up into the night sky.

"Oh!" Lois gasped, pointing out the window. "It's snowing! Would you have ever thought we'd get a white Christmas in Metropolis after that heat wave Luthor cooked up messed with the weather?" She grabbed Clark's hand and ran out the door, down the steps, and out the complex's door to the sidewalk, face turned upward.

Clark watched the white flakes falling around him and turned to her with a frown on his face. "I'm sorry Lois - we still haven't. I mean, technically it will still be white, but this isn't snow. It's ash. Those shooting stars, too - they're all debris from the meteor Superman destroyed today."

Lois's shoulders slumped as they both gazed up at the falling ash and rock. "Well, it just goes to show that even Superman can't make a perfect Christmas... even though he saved us all. Again. D'you think he has friends and family to celebrate with, Clark? Does he even celebrate Christmas?"

Clark loped his arm around Lois's shoulders, giving a last glance at the active sky before looking down at her as they turned around to walk back inside. "Lois, I guarantee you he is with the people he loves, whether he celebrates the holiday or not."

Lois chuckled, "Yeah, I bet he's out drinking eggnog with Batman and Wonder Woman, maybe trying to get under the mistletoe with Hawkgirl..." At Clark's horrified look, she stopped and explained, "I *don't know*, they both fly! Okay, Smallville, who do you think he'd like to kiss, given the chance?"

Clark looked up at the door frame they were standing in and replied, "I think a more interesting question is who *you*..." He trailed off as Lois beamed at him and put her hands on

his chest.

"Let's leave speculation for later, Kent. Right now I've got a hot lead," she murmured as she leaned up to kiss him.