

# What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?

by RouthFan

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Rating: K+

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A/N: This is general Superman-verse, it doesn't proceed any particular film or television show. It does, however, transpire fairly early in their relationship. They've probably known each other slightly more than a year or so. And be warned, it's total fluff!

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Clark's hands automatically adjusted the neckline of his white tuxedo shirt and bowtie as he entered Metropolis General's main entrance. With a gust of dry sterile air from inside, the electric doors swished open. Unlike most of the people in the abnormally crowded atrium of the hospital, he didn't need to search the dizzying list and arrows that pointed in various directions for his destination.

He had just performed multiple flights to rush many party guests from a gas explosion at the Met Natural Museum, with any luck, this trip was his final one of the evening and this time, he blended in incredibly well with the majority of individuals who were clad in tuxedo and evening gowns. Like him, they were there to locate and take home a friend or family member who were the less critical of the injured from the evening's major disaster.

He retrieved a folded piece of paper with the bed number and made his way to short stay, just down the hall from the emergency department. Clark didn't need to look particularly long, as he easily found the bed he searched for, with its curtain partition flung back. Lois's legs swung back and forth in an anxious rhythm.

"I told you, I don't need a sling, I'll be fine," Lois grumbled.

"Ma'am, it's to keep your hand slightly elevated and prevent swelling in your fingers."

"It gets in the way."

"The weight of the cast and build-up of edema in your hand might cause a lot of discomfort," the nurse added. "You don't need to wear it all the time."

"Um, Lois?"

Lois looked up from her argument with the nurse and sighed.

"Clark, I never thought you'd get here." She managed a weak smile despite the irritation apparent on her face.

"Yes, well," he cleared his throat as he felt his heart accelerate. "Traffic near the hospital is a bit heavy."

Lois brushed her now limp hair from her face. Clark marveled that even the soot streaks across her cheeks and forehead didn't hide her strong features and natural beauty.

"At this time of night?" She winced as her left arm was placed into the sling.

Lois slid off the bed. She turned her attention to looking for her purse and coat instead of toward the man who came to take her home. Lois rolled her eyes at the habit; her coat had been left in the coat check. It was probably destroyed.

"It was a large party, not to mention fire; a lot of people were hurt." Clark held his long wool coat, slipped it over her non-affected arm. "You can borrow mine for now. "You weren't

the only one who needed to go to the hospital."

He attempted to brush aside the horrific images of those who were his first priority to send, those who had third and second degree burns over more than fifty percent of their bodies. Clark was beyond relieved Lois only suffered a broken arm and smoke inhalation.

"Speaking of which, how did you remain injury free?" She snatched her purse from the stand and proceeded to the nursing station to sign herself out.

"A fire exit was near the men's room."

"Ah," Lois paused to cough. She frowned as her left elbow propped the discharge papers on the desk; it failed to prevent them from sliding beneath her right hand as she signed them. "I see."

Clark's hand steadied them as he leaned close to her from behind. He swallowed as her back grazed his chest.

This evening had not gone as well as he had hoped. Both partners were assigned to the Mayor's New Year's Eve event; however a gas leak, the subsequent explosion and fire dampened any romantic prospects he had wished for.

"I suppose you'll sleep well tonight," Clark commented as they made their way through the numbers of people toward the lobby. "I don't know about you, but this evening was a lot more than I'd bargained for."

"I guess so, those pain killers should numb my arm *and* put me out, but I'm not going home yet. I've got work to do."

"It's ten-thirty, you've just broken your arm and had smoke inhalation bad enough that you needed to be sent to the hospital."

Lois huffed in frustration at Clark's mothering.

"For your information, smoke inhalation is a frequent occurrence for me...I *smoke*."

"You need to get home and rest. Where on Earth do you think you're going?"

Lois ignored her partner's protective nature. "The Planet. Where else do you think I'd be? The latest Superman story's *not* going to write itself. You're coming with me."

"Don't you ever let up? Personally I'm tired; I'd rather go to bed."

"I've got a broken arm and as much as I hate to admit it, your typing skills would be rather useful. Besides, it is New Year's Eve. As sad as the concept is that my plans went to hell in a hand basket, the only more depressing scenario would be spending it alone." She turned her head and began to search for Clark's car. She frowned as a gust of icy wind cut through her coat. "Now, where did you park again?"

"I didn't."

Her face contorted in confusion. "What?"

"I took the MTA line."

"Are you kidding? To pick a gal up from the *hospital*?"

"Lois, I don't have a car. I thought you knew that."

"No. I did not." Lois's expression soured at the thought of taking public transportation on this particularly sub-zero night. "Great, you're just full of surprises Kent," She mumbled as they made their way to the train line. Another blustery shot of wind caused her to tighten her coat as snow on the platform was picked up with the blast. "Some knight in shining armor *you* turned out to be."

Muted sounds of blowing horns from the streets below indicated the rapidly approaching midnight hour. The rapid clacking of keys refrained as Lois hunched over her partner's

shoulder. She frowned and sighed. "I guess that will do." Lois patted her good hand in gratitude on her partner's shoulder.

The tinny music from a small desk radio echoed through the otherwise empty and still Daily Planet bullpen.

"Not exactly a masterpiece but Perry will print it," she commented. Clark nodded as Lois slipped her shoes back on her feet. "Good thing I got a few words with him then." She gazed out the darkened windows with a far away lost gaze. "I just wish he wouldn't fly away so fast, you know?"

The warm brass horns sang on beneath the singer's romantic musings.

*Maybe it's much too early in the game, ah but I thought I'd ask you just the same. What are you doing New Year's? New Year's Eve?*

Lois paused and sniffed in bitterness at the song.

"I'm sitting at my desk," She commented to the small speakers. "The romance of journalism is never dead, and the news never sleeps." A twinge of disappointment in her voice was more than noticeable.

She turned to face Clark who had returned to his desk after picking up the freshly printed story from the printer tray and addressed him directly. "Sorry I had to keep you so late Clark."

He smiled. "I didn't exactly have any other plans. We were supposed to be someplace else." His head nodded in the direction of the museums along the bay. "Remember?"

*Wonder whose arms will hold you good and tight. When it's exactly twelve o'clock that night, welcoming in the New Year, New Year's Eve.*

Her shoulders fell. It was clear that the pain had increased in her right arm since they left the hospital. With the adrenaline surge of a breaking story past its peak, Lois showed signs of fatigue.

"So much for ringing in the New Year in style," She rubbed soot from her chin, looked at the charcoal smear on her palm and laughed, "or any chance of a handsome mystery man that I could plant one on at midnight," she added with sarcasm. "Cinderella bites the dust."

Clark abruptly stood as multiple emergency sirens caught his attention. There was a massive pile up on an iced over exchange between two interstates. "I've got to go. Happy New Year Lois." The chair remained spinning as he abandoned his partner.

"Sorry Smallville, I didn't mean you weren't...." she trailed as Clark ignored the apology for her foot-in-mouth moment and he continued walking. "...handsome." She stated to his empty chair and now equally empty room.

*Maybe I'm crazy to suppose, I'd ever be the one you chose out of a thousand invitations you'd receive. Ah but in case, I'd stand one little chance, here comes the jackpot question in advance. What are you doing New Year's? New Year's Eve?*

He hadn't taken his coat, perhaps he'd be back for it.

She stood and made her way over to Perry White's office and began to rummage his belongings after picking the lock. Perhaps he had stashed a flask of scotch, leftover rum, vodka, *anything* from the Christmas party in his desk. Her hands fell upon the cold steel of a flask.

"Thank you." She exhaled in relief.

*Out of a thousand invitations you'd receive. Ah but in case I stand one little chance, here comes the jackpot question in advance. What are you doing New Year's? New Year's Eve?"*

She looked up at the ceiling, and then wandered to the window. "Any chance things have calmed down big guy? Got any plans at midnight?" She laughed to herself and softly added, "Well, you know where to find me."

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Superman's attention had been called to a large car pile up on the icy interchange between I-290 and I-294 in Chicago. As he assisted the emergency personnel to evacuate the critically injured to Loyola Hospital, he hoped that when he returned to Metropolis, that there was some chance of salvation of the evening with Lois.

He rocketed through the clear night sky toward the east. Within seconds, the familiar grids of lights from Metropolis's streets were below. Superman paused over the Daily Planet as he found Lois Lane pilfering through her superior's office and smiled. He continued east over the black waters of the Atlantic.

Maybe he still could.

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As Lois rinsed out the remains of her stale coffee from the morning, the door to the break room groaned on its noisy hinges. She turned in question of who else was so equally dedicated to their career that they chose to forgo any year end celebrations.

"Clark!" she exclaimed. Lois was relieved she wasn't completely abandoned. "You came back."

"I had to." He smiled and leaned on the doorframe. The bowtie had been untied, the top button of his tuxedo shirt unfastened.

Lois raised an eyebrow of curiosity at her partner's uncharacteristically relaxed body language. Her stomach flipped slightly at his appearance. There was something familiar and attractive about him.

"You forgot your coat?"

She picked up the flask and unscrewed the cap.

"Sort of, that and something else."

He entered the room and took the flask from her hand. Lois looked up in protest.

"*Hey*, I was going to drink that..."

He exited the break room with Lois's hand in his. He ignored the confusion on her face as he led her to their desks. On her desk sat two slender glasses and a frosted bottle of Champagne.

"I found something you might want to share. If you like Champagne, that is...."

Her eyes widened as she inspected the label. "Clark..."

"I *know* it's not the museum--"

"This is Philipponnat...."

"I know I'm *not* exactly a handsome stranger or your date--"

"It's a 1998 Clos des Goisses--"

"--but you can't celebrate New Year's alone."

"Clark, this stuff is over \$200 a bottle. We *can't* drink this. Someone will notice it's missing. Besides, where did you find it?"

He grinned impishly. "I have my sources."

*Out of a thousand invitations you'd receive. Ah but in case I stand one little chance, here*

*comes the jackpot question in advance. What are you doing New Year's? New Year's Eve?"*

Lois looked at the large clock on the wall. "It's five minutes until Midnight."

The loud pop of the cork echoed across the quiet office. After Clark filled each glass with the shimmering gold champagne, Lois accepted one of the flutes and sipped it. Her eyes closed in pleasure.

"Do you want to watch the fireworks over the bay?"

"Forget it. We can't see them from here. This floor is too far down. The buildings across the street block it." She sipped the champagne again. The dry liquid danced across her tongue.

"I bet we can from the roof," he commented as he held the bottle in one hand the open door to the stairwell in the other.

Lois's shoes shuffled across the snowy and somewhat icy rooftop. She paused as her legs abruptly splayed on an ice patch. Clark moved to support her but she held her broken arm in front of him in protest. "I'm fine. Really."

"Looks like you're not fine."

She recovered and shivered. The winter air was sharp. Her hand snatched the half drunk glass of champagne. She turned to the east and waited for the fireworks. "I'm fine."

"It's nearly Midnight, New Year's Eve, something the entire world celebrates and you're at work."

"I thought we were talking about my difficulty with keeping my butt off the ice patch," she bristled, then added in defense, "I wasn't at work; *we* were at what *was* to be a nice evening, at a party."

"Which our boss insisted on us attending."

"Fine Clark, if you want to call me a workaholic, go ahead, but don't exclude yourself. You've been with *me* all night. Just keep that in mind."

"Touché."

A single bright red ember shot into the starry sky and left a trail of shimmering embers in its wake over the water of the bay. With it, others burst into a fiery bloom above Metropolis.

"It must be midnight. Happy New Year Lois." Clark clinked his glass with hers. The two took a sip from both their glasses in unison.

Lois sighed and leaned backward against her partner's chest. "My invasion of your personal space is strictly for warmth reasons only."

"I don't mind." His chest rumbled with his low timbre.

Fireworks continued to pop and sizzle overhead. The fragments glimmered along the water below.

Clark felt a sigh heave from the woman who rested against him. Both continued to watch the fireworks. "Maybe I should start making New Year's resolutions," she mused aloud.

"Like quitting smoking?" He asked hopefully.

"That," she answered slowly, "and a few other bad habits. Do you ever make any?"

"Bad habits? I'm perpetually late for starters--"

"I mean resolutions."

"Usually I don't, but this year I've made an exception."

"Oh?" Lois turned in close proximity to Clark and looked up at him.

Clark swallowed as he fidgeted with the remains of his bowtie. He felt a wave of electricity ricochet through his frame as Lois's torso remained against his.

"But you first."

"Alright, since we're having a *moment*... I've resolved that I'm going to try to be more honest with myself. That I *do* work too much, I *don't* have a personal life and I'm just kidding myself that flirting with danger's going to lead me someplace significant with the man of steel."

"So you weren't just after the story?" He teased.

"Zip it. Do you want to ruin it or not? Anyway, what woman wouldn't be attracted to him? He's not exactly hard on the eyes; he's smart, and all those abilities... kind of hard to find someone out there comparable." She smiled faintly as her eyes glazed over. She blinked and stiffened. "But it doesn't matter, because for all those fantastic qualities, he's distant and usually pretty busy. Yes I've kissed him, but that was ages ago, since then it's been a pretty professional relationship."

"Gosh Lois, I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I had stars in my eyes. I thought I was special," she snorted. "Pretty ridiculous huh? And if you breathe a word of this to anyone you know I'll deny it," she added for extra insurance.

"I think you're special, if that counts for anything," Clark commented, then the two were silent and observed the fireworks display.

For a brief slip in his better judgment he had kissed her, and it was quite some time ago, shortly after they had met and he failed to realize the consequences of his actions. He hadn't allowed him to complicate things any further considering Clark knew how much he cared for Lois. If anything serious had developed without her understanding who he really was, it would just have lead to a disaster. Not an exactly a foundation for a healthy relationship.

"You know Clark, somehow I've grown sort of attached to you. Like a golden retriever. And it's *not* because we share articles, lunches and work together. You're my friend Clark. There, I said it. I like having you around."

He grinned, looked down at her and his glasses slipped. His finger pushed them up the bridge of his nose. "You do?"

She nodded. "Yup. I do. I like the fact that I get to see you every day, that I look forward to the coffee you bring me that only you can seem to get just right. That often times your voice is the last one I hear at the end of the day, and if you weren't around, it would leave a big hole."

Lois stood on her tip toes, leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek.

"Happy New Year," she murmured and patted him affectionately along the sash of his tuxedo jacket. "I guess I did have someone to plant one on at midnight." Lois looked up at the moon that provided the periwinkle glow along the snow beneath their feet. She cleared her throat. "So your resolution Clark...it had better be good."

"Well I suppose that depends," he sighed, his timbre lower than normal as he shoved his hands into his jacket pockets. His palms had grown clammy with nerves.

He had to tell her. Clark loved Lois, nearly from when they had met. He couldn't ignore the signals that persisted between them was more than just the foundation for a strong friendship. He felt it with every fiber of his being.

The sporadic booms and pops of the fireworks persisted with flickers of glowing light.

"It depends on what?"

"On if you think it's healthy that I happen to lead a double life." He swallowed as his mouth had grown dry. "Lois, how well do you want to know someone you work with?"

"You're my friend, my best one I think. You're not just a coworker Clark; I think more

information goes with that type of territory."

"Then I need to be more honest with you..."

"Clark I know you had a crush on me when we started working together. It was pretty obvious. In fact, it's flattering and I'd hardly call that a double life."

"Not exactly." His blue eyes shone brightly in the moonlight. Despite Lois's inability to hear his heart rate, he knew his was racing. "Here's the thing Lois, I don't want to be your friend. It's not just an office crush. It's been far more complicated than that."

She began to nervously pace along the rooftop. It was fairly clear she was scared of what he was saying. "I don't know Clark...I agree," her racing heart betrayed her. "This is complicated, we work together." Lois shook her head. "We're friends, I can't imagine my life without you but I just don't think--"

Lois's feet slid from underneath her again, stunned, she landed with a definitive thud on the roof. She winced as her right arm's cast smacked the surface. Clark bent down, knelt at her side and gently picked up her arm, looking at it intently for any indication that the break had dislodged. He looked up at Lois whose breathing had grown rapid. A flush blossomed on her cheeks.

"It's never going to be simple; life just doesn't work that way." He wrapped his arm around her waist. "I don't want to miss a thing with you Lois. I made a mistake awhile ago, I had let you go." Her eyes searched his in confusion.

"You never had me..."

The breath between them formed a haze in the cold air. She didn't attempt to remove herself from his embrace.

"Yes, I did. Every time I've been close to you since then, I just couldn't find a way to tell you everything."

He paused before hoisting her onto her feet again and bent forward to kiss her. His lips swept across hers that inhaled sharply. His hands cradled her chin as their lips mingled; what was a chaste kiss grew more sensual. Clark pulled away as his thumb traced along her neck. Her frame melted into his as he looked into her eyes.

Clark kept her body close to his as he stood, swept her in his arms. Her feet swung in the air as the shoes fell from her feet. The corners of Lois's mouth turned upward in a smile at the gentle display of strength and grace.

"*That* is how you should be kissed at midnight," he whispered.

As he still held her small frame, her hand trailed up the nape of his neck and moved to his face. Her fingertips traced along the lips that had just kissed her. She searched his eyes.

"Just to clarify, this... this changes what I said before. I don't want to be your friend either." Her smile grew as she looked at him with a new found fondness.

Her hand slowly slipped the thick framed glasses from his face. "Clark... where did you get that Champagne..."

The glasses clattered to the ground. He kept her in his arms as her fingertips traced along the slightly open neck of the shirt and found the top of the blue suit that had remained concealed. Lois's eyes traveled his frame as her heart accelerated.

"France. About ten minutes ago."

She wrapped her arms around him firmly. Her eyes narrowed as she eyed him with suspicion. "So you take public transportation do you?"