

The Gift of Christmas

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Rated: PG

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Summary: The holiday season is once again upon Lois. She's determined to make it one to remember. But what if it doesn't go as planned?

Story Size: 4,136 words (22Kb as text)

This story was written for the 2008 Holiday Ficathon. I got to write for amberlea. So this story is for her. :) Her prompts are at the end of the story.

This story is set in season 2, but I put my own take on the holiday season. And I might have taken a liberty here or there with canon, but it suited me better. :)

A huge thank you goes to my GE, Tricia.

No copyright infringement was intended. I'm merely playing with a few really lovely toys. :D

"Clark, what are you doing for Thanksgiving?" Lois asked her partner as they were walking home.

"Well, I had hoped to visit my parents. My Mom makes the best turkey, you know."

Immediate visions of a delicious turkey and Martha slaving in the kitchen made Lois drool. "I bet she does. That would be a true holiday dinner."

"Trust me, it is," Clark replied. "Unfortunately, I won't make it this year."

A little sadness sounded through in his voice. Lois could understand with such doting parents as Martha and Jonathan Kent. He must have had a wonderful childhood growing up in Smallville, celebrating the national holidays with proper meals... So if it were her, she would surely be sad over missing such quality family time.

Instead of wallowing on all she had missed, she asked Clark why he wasn't going home.

He smiled at her as they rounded a corner. "Work. Perry asked me to cover the Thanksgiving parade this year. Something about my talent for making a standard boring story come alive. And there was something about Elvis as well."

Lois giggled before replying, "No story without Elvis. I thought you knew that by now."

"We have to be very thankful for his music on Thanksgiving," Clark joked along with her.

"All joking aside, do you mind terribly?"

"Not really. I don't mind doing my share of working on holidays, and this will be a fun story. It will just be... different."

Lois noticed a wistful tone in his voice. It affected him more than he was trying to make her believe. Shame he was working, maybe she could have... No, that would be a bad idea.

"So what are you doing with Thanksgiving, Lois?" Clark asked gently, probably to give another, more comfortable, direction to their conversation.

"Oh, you know, the usual."

That comment only got her a raised eyebrow.

"Fine! I'll spend it alone at home. Probably with a few movies and some Chinese."

Clark stopped walking and she immediately missed the warmth and safety of his arm, which had been around her waist. "Please tell me you're joking," he said matter-of-factly.

"It's what I always do with holidays if I'm not working. What else is there to do? Holidays are lost on me and my family."

"If only you could see the magic in it, Lois. If only..." His voice drifted off as they reached her building.

"Don't these people have anything better to do?!" Lois was exasperated with all the people on the streets who were constantly getting in her way. Christmas time was always busy with people shopping for food and gifts, and somehow that made them more careless in traffic.

Right now Clark and she were on their way back from an interview to the Planet. Lois was driving her car carefully through traffic, complaining constantly.

"I think I get the idea now, Lois." Her partner sounded annoyed. "Can we please talk about something else?"

Maybe he was right. Clark already put up a lot with her frustrations about Christmas. And it wasn't as if there was nothing else they could talk about. Like why he kept disappearing on her.

"All right. What do you have in mind?" she asked.

"Well, ehm... How do you think the interview went?"

The interview? He wanted to talk about that lame conversation they'd had with one of the mayor's advisors where they had learned nothing new at all? What could they even say about that?

Tentatively, she replied, "We did our job, heard what he had to say, tried to coax him into saying more and failed. Not much of a story for the famous Lane and Kent duo, but it'll do."

"Right."

Silence filled the car. Neither was really sure what to talk about, then. She valued his friendship dearly, but she was still upset with him for his recent disappearances. They'd argued about it a lot lately, and it hadn't exactly left them on good speaking terms. It also explained some of her frustrated mutterings.

She could, of course, break the ice and ask what had been on her mind for some time now. Yet she didn't want to be the one to cave in, as he kept being very evasive about those disappearances.

A glance over at Clark showed that he was leaning against his car door, simply staring ahead. She couldn't see his expression, but his posture said enough. He was just as miserable about the situation as she was. He probably didn't know how to make amends when he obviously wasn't ready to tell her the truth.

Deciding her curiosity had been tested enough, she asked him the question she'd been pondering over for some time.

"So, Clark, what are your plans for Christmas?"

He looked at her, a gratifying smile forming on his lips. "Since I didn't get a chance to go home for Thanksgiving, I'm going home now. Mom's meal, celebrations in town, and some quality time with my parents. They're even predicting snow for Christmas Day, so it will be a holiday to remember."

Once again, she was struck by his enthusiasm for the holidays. How different they were at that point. Sometimes, she really wished she shared his feelings about those days. Spending such time with a loving family sounded special, but it was far beyond her reach.

"What about you, Lois? Not another holiday with a movie and a take-out meal, surely?"

"Actually, I have plans of my own. I invited Jimmy and Perry over, and I'll prepare a meal for them," she explained.

"You're going to cook a Christmas dinner?" He sounded unbelieving.

"Hey, I can cook when I follow a recipe!" At least, she hoped

she could. Only one way to find out.

"I'm sorry I'll be missing that event. That would be one of the highlights of the year."

She was sorry, too. If he hadn't been going home, she would have invited him as well. She just hadn't mentioned that Jimmy and Perry had other plans already and weren't coming. She didn't want him to know that she'd be alone for Christmas. He'd bugged her hard enough about Thanksgiving; she'd rather not go through all that again.

She wasn't sure what to with Christmas now that even Clark had plans already, but she would make it a memorable one. She wasn't going to wallow in self pity and aloneness this year.

Music drifted up to her window. Somewhere down in the street were carolers singing.

"We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas..."

Lois stood by the window listening for a while. If only it really was a merry Christmas.

But no, she had promised herself no maudlin thoughts tonight. Instead, she walked to the kitchen to see what she could do about dinner.

Checking the contents of her fridge, Lois still didn't know what to do about dinner. It was Christmas Eve; she had a turkey and plenty of other ingredients for a fine meal.

There was only one problem. Well, two really, but what did it matter if you didn't know how to prepare a holiday feast meal when there wouldn't even be guests to enjoy that meal? Against better knowledge, she had hoped somebody would show up. But Perry was with his family, Jimmy was with his latest girl, and Clark... Well, Clark was simply home.

Home. As in Smallville.

While she would have loved for him to be there, she also didn't want him to miss out on this special family time. Whenever he had mentioned a holiday, or related a story from his childhood, he had seemed so happy. Like he still was that kid who'd simply enjoyed being young.

Lois didn't begrudge him his experience, but she couldn't help but wonder why she had missed all of that. Why she hadn't gotten to experience a bit, just a little bit, of that same magic.

Despite her still being upset with his lies, she also missed his company. Christmas was all about forgiving and forgetting, wasn't it? Well, she was very much capable of that. It just left her all alone still.

With a sigh, she closed her fridge again. Nothing really appealed to her. Not with the prospect of her having to prepare it first, probably mess up and still be left without something to eat. Maybe she should just call for something to be delivered.

Just then, she heard a slight whoosh and the fluttering of her curtains.

Superman was here? On Christmas Eve?

Rushing out to the living room to see if she was dreaming, she was greeted by the flying man in tights. He turned to her with a smile. "Merry Christmas, Lois."

"Merry Christmas, Superman," she replied while trying to sound upbeat. Much as she preferred company, it wasn't really him she had in mind. "So ehm, what brings you here tonight?"

"I get to play Santa Clause tonight for you."

Was that a twinkle in his eyes? What was going on?

Upon seeing her confused look, Superman explained. "Clark asked me to fly you over to Smallville so you can celebrate Christmas together with him and his parents."

She stared at him, flabbergasted. Neither he nor Clark could possibly know that she'd been thinking of that just moments before. This couldn't be real.

"That is, if you'd like to go," Superman said as he regarded her carefully.

"Are you kidding me? I'd love to go!" she exclaimed enthusiastically. "Give me a moment while I pack some things, then we can be off."

"Sure thing. Don't forget to pack some warm clothes. It's cold out there, and there's snow in Smallville."

Snow. Christmas. Clark. What more could a girl ask for?

As soon as Superman had gently landed her on the Kent's front porch, he took his leave and flew off again.

With a deep breath, she took the final steps to the front door and knocked.

For all Superman said this was Clark's idea and she really would be welcome, Lois was nervous. Spending Christmas with the Kent's was so far from her own experience that she had no idea what to do. She didn't even have gifts! Well, except for Clark, she'd had that one for ages already.

Her flow of thoughts was interrupted as the door opened and she was greeted by the sight of Martha with a warm and welcoming smile. "Come on in, honey. You must be freezing out there!"

She stepped past Martha into the warmth of the farm house. As she looked around, Lois noticed it looked even more welcoming than she remembered. All the Christmas decorations must have something to do with that. They had done a great job to capture the atmosphere without overdoing it. She even spotted a lovely decorated tree in the living room.

"Merry Christmas, Lois."

She looked up just in time to see Clark emerge from the kitchen to envelop her in a hug. When he released her again, she smiled at him and wished him a merry Christmas as well. He looked good, very relaxed and happy to see her.

"Dinner is ready, guys, so let's get started," Martha said. "Jonathan is starving after his hard work today."

The three of them walked into the kitchen, where Lois received a warm welcome from Jonathan as well.

"Hmmm, this smells really good," she commented as they sat down and looked at all the food. "I'm actually quite hungry."

"That's great, because there is more than enough for everyone to have a second meal of this tomorrow," Jonathan replied with a mischievous smile for his wife.

His comment made her and Clark laugh, and it set a good mood for the rest of Christmas dinner.

Lois and Clark had settled in front of the living room fire after the elder Kents had gone to bed. Clark had grabbed a bottle of red wine, which they were enjoying over a quiet conversation.

Dinner had been amazing for Lois. She had enjoyed herself immensely. It hadn't taken long for her to simply relax and join in the good moods of the others. Conversation had flowed easily, and she had felt at home. Clark really was lucky to have grown up with such loving parents. If she ever got a family, this was how she wanted it to be for her children as well.

She felt happy, and that was all because of Clark. Lois figured she should let him know she was grateful for his invitation and that she really was having a good time.

"Thanks for asking Superman to fly me over. This is the best Christmas I've ever had."

Clark looped up in surprise. "I knew you didn't like Christmas and that your experience was a far cry from mine, but has it always been that bad for you?"

She shrugged. "When I was young, it was okay. But it was never this warm and loving as you have with your parents. I can see why you still see the magic in the holidays."

After a pause as he pondered over that information, he asked, "What was a typical Christmas like for the Lane family then?"

Lois closed her eyes briefly to disguise the pain as the memories surfaced. She always did her best to hide them this

time of year, but somehow they always came back to haunt her. She swallowed, before she related her tale to him. It wasn't easy to talk about it, and this was the first time she mentioned it to anyone besides her sister. But this was Clark, and he was genuine about his concern. Besides, she knew he could be trusted.

"If Lucy and I were lucky, there would be something extra on the table for Christmas Eve. But most years, it was just a regular dinner or even a take out. In later years, my father wasn't even present anymore. My mother was often drunk and didn't much care for Christmas. Christmas decorations were out of the question. After much begging, we did get a tree each year, but we didn't have much to make it look pretty. Lucy and I would go to bed as if it was a regular evening. There would be some presents under the tree the next morning, but nothing we really wanted. I never did get that Barbie that looked like a fairy..."

She swallowed away her tears.

"My parents didn't know what we really wanted, and they didn't even bother to find out. So during the rest of the day, Lucy and I had to keep ourselves busy. So it wasn't all bad, but I never saw why Christmas was all it's cracked up to be."

Clark set down his glass and pulled her into his arms. "Oh, Lois," he softly murmured into her hair.

She clung to him as she slowly regained her control. While it felt good to finally talk about it, it didn't make the pain any less.

"If you want to, you can spend all your Christmases here in the future, Lois. I'm sure my parents won't mind. Actually, they were thrilled when I asked if they minded if you came over as well."

She smiled. That sounded very much like Martha and Jonathan. She was their son's best friend, and they had accepted her into their little family without a question. If her parents had been a bit more like that, maybe she wouldn't have turned into such a cynic.

Then an idea occurred to her. "Clark, why did you invite me over? I'd told you Jimmy and Perry were coming over."

"You didn't think you could fool me, now, did you? Jimmy knows better than to risk an evening with your cooking when he has a new girlfriend around, and Perry always spends Christmas with his family if he isn't working."

She should've guessed he would see through her.

"Besides, I didn't want you to spend Christmas alone," he whispered.

There was something in his tone that made her look up at his face. His eyes were focused on his fussing hands and his entire pose showed nervousness. If she wasn't mistaken, his comment meant more than her good friend looking out for her.

Strangely enough, that thought warmed her heart instead of getting her nervous and scared. Maybe the Christmas magic was working... or maybe it was just the wine.

"Clark?" When he didn't look up, she grabbed his hands.

That got his attention. "Clark, I'm really glad I got to spend it with you." She smiled shyly at him, hoping he could read in her eyes how much she meant the comment.

"Come on, I want to show you something." Clark abruptly changed the subject and pulled her off the couch with him. He guided her to the window. "Look, what do you see?"

She edged closer to the window and peered outside into the dark. With the soft light from the fireplace behind her and complete darkness before her, there wasn't much to see. Lois couldn't quite see where he was going, but she played along.

"A vast white substance on the ground and more snow flakes falling."

Clark chuckled. "There is that, now, yes. But behind it, there's just open fields and nature. Above, it's just a clear sky, covered with stars at night. That's how I grew up, out in the open, in sync with nature and natural freedom."

She thought about it for a moment, but it still eluded her

where he was going. But the thought of a young Clark out in the fields helping his father or just playing made her heart beat just a bit faster.

Suddenly, Clark held a package in front of her. "It's past midnight already. Merry Christmas, Lois," he said warmly.

Gently, she took the package from him and opened it. The wrapping paper covered a box. When she eased the lid off and saw the actual contents, she gasped. Inside was a beautiful, glowing, star-shaped crystal. Carefully, Lois lifted the star out of the box. It twinkled in the light, and its mere beauty dazzled her.

Her eyes found Clark's over the star and once again he was smiling at her.

"Thank you, Clark. It's..." She searched for the right words to describe this extra-ordinary gift. "... absolutely gorgeous."

"You're welcome. I thought it would look splendid on your tree."

Lois giggled as she imagined the star on top of her pathetic excuse of a tree. "I'm sure it would."

They both looked at the star some more before she put it away again. It was a perfect gift, and she did wonder how he'd gotten it. But that could wait until later. She didn't want to spoil this perfect evening.

Maybe she could give her gift now as well, but it was nothing compared to this. Then she noticed something above her. She quickly looked up, and it confirmed her suspicion. Trust Martha to do a thorough job of decorating the house.

Slowly, she moved closer to Clark until she could slide her arms around his neck. Probably guessing her intentions, he put his arms around her waist and pulled her even closer. Then their mouths were touching and she forgot everything but Clark. Tongues touched, hands massaged her back and her own hands were threading through Clark's hair. She never wanted the kiss to end. She tingled all over her body, and without his support, she was sure her knees would give away under her.

The kiss ended as they both drew apart to breathe in some much needed air. Yet neither moved away from the closeness of the other.

"Wow," Clark said still a bit breathless.

"Yeah." Words weren't needed. All they needed now was this.

Maybe there really was something magical about Christmas.

It was nearly midnight. Half an hour more, and the new year would descend upon them. Lois stood on Clark's balcony as he went inside to get the champagne. It gave her some time to reflect on the past week.

After that magical night in Smallville, they had spent a wonderful day on the farm and in Smallville as well. Martha must have noticed the change in them, but she had wisely let them go their own way. They had booked her a seat on the same flight as Clark, so they could spend more time together.

That's how most of the past week had been spend as well. When they weren't working or sleeping, they were simply together, enjoying their newfound closeness and seeing where it would take them. They hadn't yet talked about the change, but by an unspoken agreement, they were together.

The best part of the week had been her unlimited opportunities to kiss Clark. She didn't think she'd ever tire of that feeling. And he could kiss very well, considering he was a country hick after all. But he was her country hick.

Just then, Clark returned with the champagne and two glasses. "What's with the thoughtful look?"

She smiled at him. "I was just thinking how special this last week has been and how it all started."

"I'm very glad you decided to come to Smallville for Christmas."

"So am I, Clark. But you never told me more about that gift."

The star had found its place on top of her tree, completely outshining the entire thing and making it the central point of her living room.

“You remember what I told you before I gave it to you?”

Of course she did. She’d guessed what he had meant to say was that part of him would always belong there. For his benefit, she nodded while waiting for his explanation.

“You, growing up in the city, never got that same experience of feeling free. Like you belong in the universe and are part of the stars. Instead, I brought a star back to you. Of course I had some help with that, but let’s just say it was my idea.”

Lois simply stared at him, completely astonished. That was the sweetest thing anyone had ever said or done for her. Clark really was a one-of-a kind man, who kept surprising her. And she wasn’t planning on ever letting him get out of her life.

“Thank you, Clark. I don’t think I can really express what that means to me. But this is very special, as are you.”

Before Clark could reply, they heard people in the streets counting down. As they reached midnight, Lois and Clark both wished the other a happy New Year before sealing it with a kiss.

It was just as sweet, magical and mind blowing as the first one. Since she didn’t want it to end, she started to move closer to Clark when she suddenly noticed her feet were no longer touching the ground. She opened her eyes without breaking the kiss and saw that, indeed, they were floating several inches above the floor.

It felt like a little puzzle piece slid into place and everything she’d never understood about Clark suddenly made sense.

She pulled Clark closer to her. Five minutes into the new year wasn’t really the time to start arguing. She would enjoy this for as long as the night would last for them. But tomorrow, he would have a lot to answer for.

Clark deepened the kiss some more while the display of fireworks of Metropolis cracked above them.

THE END

The prompts:

Three things I want in my fic:

1. snow
2. a surprise
3. caroling

Three things I do not want in my fic:

1. much (if any!) A-plot
2. kryptonite
3. songfic