

# The Gifts

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Rated: G

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Summary: Lois and Clark find the perfect Christmas presents for each other ... Or do they?

This story takes place in season two in lieu of Seasons Greedings. The disclaimers and acknowledgments appear at the end of the story.

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As Lois awaited Clark's arrival, she hefted her present to him, taking comfort in its weight and, presumably, its concomitant sturdiness. She put the gift down on the coffee table and went to rearrange the holiday spread yet again. It was still a few minutes before the time he was supposed to arrive, but the seconds were crawling by slower than a two-legged tortoise.

The wait would have been bad enough in any event, but it was made worse by her trepidation at his reaction to her new hair cut. She didn't like it herself -- it was way too short -- but she had had no choice. Getting the bob was the only way she could afford Clark's gift.

A knock at the door. Finally! Clark was standing there, holding a tiny package wrapped in bright shades of blue and red and tied with a yellow ribbon. What an odd color choice! She would have thought him more likely to use more traditional wrapping -- perhaps white paper with red and green decorations and a big red bow.

Lois smiled inwardly when she noticed Clark's eyes were focused on the part of her black gown's bodice where it joined with the spaghetti straps. Her smile reached her face as Clark's eyes -- apparently with great effort -- climbed northward.

Clark's answering grin vanished almost immediately. Lois knew it! He hated her new hair style. All men were shallow. And now Clark showed that he was indeed "your typical male." His face drooped for a second, until he managed to plaster on another grin -- this one as phony as the first was genuine.

"Don't just stand their gawking. Come in! And it's only hair. It'll grow back."

Clark, despite his chagrin, reached up and tentatively touched a now-very-short tendlir.

"Oh, Lois. You don't understand. I...I think your hair is beautiful like this! It's just that... Well, you'll understand when you see the first part of your present. If you want, I can return it; but I had thought it was just the right gift for you. I thought long and hard before buying it." He hesitantly offered her the package.

Did he think that he could get off so easily? But then again, this was supposed to be a chance for them to spend a wonderful evening together. She'd show him that she could rise above petty hurts. And, of course, she was curious what "just the right gift" could possibly be.

She accepted the present with one hand and gestured for Clark to sit down with the other. As they settled themselves on the sofa, Clark made an intriguing comment. "I actually have two presents for you. One is this gift; the other is something I want to tell you."

Was it her imagination, or was Clark nervous? He was definitely having a hard time maintaining eye contact with her -- and this time, it wasn't because he was looking at her bodice. He seemed to be looking everywhere but at her -- at any part of her.

She knew her sofa wasn't the most comfortable, but she had never seen him so fidgety before.

Yes, he was definitely nervous. What was he planning to tell her? Was he going to say those three magic words? Could she possibly hope that? It wasn't so long ago that she had spurned his professions of love. How she wished she could take back everything she had said to him that day!

She hadn't apprehended then how much she did, in fact, love him. She hadn't fully known it until that horrible night when he had died. In the hours before she first saw his clone, she realized how much he meant to her. The thought of life without him was devastating.

And in the intervening weeks, she came to understand two things: She loved him more than she had ever loved anyone else. And she never wanted to have to live through another horrendous night like that one at the casino.

And so she determined to do something about it. She hadn't had to think long at all to figure out what she wanted to get Clark for his Christmas present. It was the perfect gift for him; something which he needed desperately, something which would relieve some of the worries she had been feeling for him recently, and something which would give her plausible deniability of her feelings, should things go horribly awry when she gave it to him. Clark could either interpret it as merely a practical gift or as an expression of how deeply she had been affected by his "death."

There was only one problem. The cost. She had had a lot of expenses lately, and she was still recovering from her loss of salary during the time the Daily Planet was out of commission.

She had been walking down the street contemplating how to raise the hundreds of dollars she would need for her present. Oh, she could have gotten what she wanted for less; but this gift had to be of the highest quality, and it would cost a lot more than she had.

Lois never did quite understand what happened next. A man approached her in the street and offered her five hundred dollars if she would have her hair cut short. He insisted that he wasn't going to take the clippings -- it wasn't as if he were into voodoo or anything like that. When Lois asked who he was and why he would make such a generous offer, he just said that his name was Tank, he passed her every morning when she was on her way into the Planet building, and he always thought she would look good in short hair. Having her cut it short would make him happy.

Normally, she would have told Tank what he could do with his money and his offer, but Lois wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. It was worth a brief interaction with this fellow and a new 'do to get the money for Clark's gift. So, when the stranger showed her the cash, Lois inspected it closely to ensure it wasn't counterfeit. She then placed a call to the Daily Planet and to the local police precinct to confirm that there had been no bank robberies of late.

An hour later, Lois walked out of a nearby hair salon with a lighter coif and a heavier wallet. The five hundred dollars was rapidly spent getting Clark the best present she could find. She was eager to give it to him.

But that was several hours ago. Right now it was her turn to open Clark's present to her. She yanked the ribbon off and tore the wrapping paper. She opened the box to find an exquisite, obviously custom made, hair clip. Inset in its large blue bar were small diamonds forming Superman's shield.

Wait a minute -- blue and red wrapping with a yellow ribbon -- Superman's colors. And now Superman's shield. Clark had always seemed jealous of Superman. Why would he be giving her Superman-related gifts?

"Clark --?" Her puzzlement must have been evident on her face. He anticipated her question.

"Remember I said that I had two gifts for you -- something to give you and something to tell you?" He took a deep breath and

let it out slowly. "Well, the two are related. What I wanted to tell you is ... I am Superman."

She might have thought his words a cruel prank were it not for one small fact -- although he remained in a sitting position, she suddenly had to crane her neck to see his eyes. She looked down to confirm her hypothesis. Sure enough, his bottom was about a foot off the sofa, and his feet were nowhere near the floor.

While she was still trying to come to terms with his levitating, he settled back onto the sofa. Only then did the full impact of his revelation hit her.

"You --! You're Superman! You didn't die at the casino!" She swatted his arm and then started pounding on his chest before she dissolved in a peculiar mixture of wailing and laughter.

Clark watched her, sheepishly at first, and then -- when Lois kept laughing and repeating, "No! Oh, no, no, no!" -- with a look of growing alarm and concern for her sanity. She eventually managed to calm down enough to retrieve a big box with Christmas tree wrapping from the coffee table. She had not yet regained the breath to speak, so she just gestured for him to open it.

Lois knew that Clark was usually meticulous in unwrapping gifts, so that he could reuse the paper. It must be the farm boy in him -- Didn't farmers reuse or recycle everything? So his tearing through the wrapping paper was further evidence of his distress on her behalf.

But when Clark lifted the box lid and saw Lois' gift, he, too, succumbed to laughter -- his first small chuckle rapidly crescendo-ing into a roar. His reaction caused her to lose her barely regained calm. He managed to put the box back down before Lois collapsed against his side, gasping, as they struggled to recover their composure. As soon as he was able, he turned sideways to hold Lois in both of his arms and leaned over to kiss the top of her head.

Their gifts, momentarily abandoned in their hysterics, lay beside each other on the table-- an exquisite hair clip for a newly shorn woman and a bullet-proof vest for Superman.

THE END

And so, gentle reader, we draw our curtain on these two lovers -- for lovers they truly were, although they had not yet professed their love verbally or physically. For what purer expression of love can there be than to gladly sacrifice that which one holds most dear for the benefit of another?

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Disclaimers: Any resemblance to O. Henry's short story "The Gift of the Magi"

(<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/magi10h.htm>) is purely intentional. But since that story is in the public domain, and since this story is a not-for-profit homage to it, I don't expect to be hearing from any lawyers about my borrowing its plot.

The characters of Lois and Clark do not belong to me, either. They belong to DC Comics and Warner Brothers. I am just borrowing them for a little not-for-profit fun. The "horrible night" alluded to was, of course, the one depicted in the episode "That Old Gang of Mine," written by Gene Miller & Karen Kavner . (Hmmm... I have not yet written the obligatory TGoM episode adaptation. I wonder whether this could qualify as such until the time I might get a novel twist on an episode that has already seen more twists than Chubby Checker?)

My thanks to Tank for letting me write him into this story.

And an extra "Thanks!" to my beta reader Corrina (Female Hawk) who, despite being even busier than usual, made time to respond as quickly and as thoroughly to this story as she has always done in the past. My stories would not be anywhere near as good without her input.