

An Award Winning Story

By Alisha Knight <ak_budbabe@yahoo.co.uk>

Rated: G

Submitted: July 2011

Summary: Lois accompanies Clark to the Kerth Awards.

A/N:

This was written as part of the 2011 Ficathon on the Lois and Clark fanfic message boards. It was written for Lynn S M and it was beta read by BJ. Lynn's requests can be found at the end of the story. The episode 'Wall of Sound' was written by John McNamara.

Standard disclaimers apply.

She stared at herself in the mirror.

What was she doing, and why was she doing it? It went against all her feminist principles; the whole thing stank. She should take the stupid dress off, put on her brown robe, and eat chocolate ice cream; that would show the stupid judging panel a thing or two.

OK, so it wouldn't. It would just prove that she really was that petty, and she wasn't, not really. And she couldn't really let Clark go on his own. She'd already behaved badly enough over this Kerth award thing; she couldn't bear to let him down now.

Her doorbell rang.

"Just a sec!" she called, straightening the creases out of her new black dress and checking her hair and makeup one last time. She looked good.

She strode from her bedroom and over to her front door. She opened it. He looked good.

He beamed a charmingly happy and boyish smile at her, and she noticed his eyes take in her appearance. She waited for the customary compliment of how good she looked. It didn't come.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Almost, let me grab my purse," she replied, slightly disappointed. She had gone to a lot of effort to put this outfit together, and now it appeared to be for nothing.

"I've got a cab waiting outside," Clark told her.

"Right. Let's get this over with then," she replied with a grin.

Her smile wasn't returned, instead he just looked a little uncomfortable. "Look, Lois, if you want to back out I'd understand."

"Who said I wanted to back out?"

"No one, I'm just sensing that you're not very comfortable with this."

She stood facing him in the doorway and looked at his concerned face. "OK, I'm not. I haven't really been out as a date in years, not counting Lex—"

"This isn't a—" Clark started to protest but Lois spoke over him.

"I know, please let me finish. I'm just saying. Tonight I am *your* date, that's what I'll appear to be to everyone at the awards. Normally when I've gone to things like this, *I'm* the important one, and the man I'm with is the date; someone to make me look a little less like someone who doesn't really socialise. I'm not used to being 'the date' for someone else."

"Especially me?"

She smiled. "You know what Clark? I'm struggling to think of someone else I'd put myself in this situation for. And in the

long run it might be good for me, you know? Character building."

A broad grin appeared on Clark's face as he helped her with her wrap. "I'd say you've got more than enough character already."

For a moment Lois just looked at him. There was more than a hint of teasing there, but was there something deeper? Was there something about her character that he really didn't like? She looked him in the eye, almost daring him to say it, to tell her what it was about Lois Lane that Clark Kent didn't like. There was only fondness and ... something else in those eyes. Nothing about him seemed to suggest that he was trying to belittle her.

"Thanks for that Clark," she told him, shooing him out of her apartment and locking her door behind them.

They walked silently out to the taxi. The driver had been reading a copy of the Planet while waiting, and as they got into the back he folded it up and put it on the passenger's seat before driving off.

"This isn't a date," Clark blurted out about a minute into the journey.

"I know. You said."

"I meant, I know how to behave on a date, and I know how to behave when spending an evening with a friend. This feels ... strange. I don't really know where this ranks."

"What do you mean?"

He took a second to gather his thoughts. "Can I tell you that you look stunning, or is that too date-like?"

"Do I not normally look stunning?"

"If I recall, last time we spent an evening socialising you were wearing sweats. Stunning was not the word I would have used to describe how you looked."

"What word would you use?"

"Comfortable."

She grimaced. "Not quite the same thing."

"No," he agreed, "but not a bad thing, either. How strange would you find it if I told you I preferred comfortable to stunning? In a date, I mean."

Lois looked at him. She swore Clark was blushing. "Any other man, very strange. You? Not so much. Although, not very flattering to think my best friend thinks I look better in some old gym clothes than an expensive new dress."

He smirked. "I didn't say you looked better that way, just that I preferred it. You're tense now, I'm tense now. We weren't when we were eating pizza on my couch in our comfy clothes. Guess I'm still a country boy at heart."

She smiled. "And I prefer comfy country Clark to award-winning tux-wearing Clark."

"Oh, I know *that*," he practically laughed, giving her a quick flash of his pearly white teeth.

And suddenly, despite his teasing of her initial reaction to his being nominated instead of her, Lois felt herself relax. "Clark, this is how you should behave. No formality, just ... you. And you can tell me I'm stunning if you like."

He looked at her. Really looked at her. Then looked at the back of the seat in front. "You know you look stunning, Lois. You don't need me to tell you that."

She felt her cheeks start to burn slightly. Why did she care that how Clark thought she looked? Why, when she had been getting dressed, had it seemed so important to her to look good for him? She'd known that he wouldn't care what she wore, that he would still have taken her if she had decided to wear her gym clothes. He still would have called her stunning. She felt her heart rate pick up.

This wasn't how it was supposed to be. She was supposed to be here begrudgingly; she wasn't supposed to be acting like his 'date', let alone feeling like it.

"You look good, too," she blurted out.

“Hmm?” He’d obviously been lost in thought, too.

“You look good. You would have been a wonderful arm ornament if . . .” she tailed off. If things had gone to plan and the members of the judging panel hadn’t been idiots who wouldn’t know a good story if it had the words ‘A Pulitzer Prize Winning Story’ written in gold-plated lettering beside it.

“Thanks. Now, let me just check, you like to be the best at everything, right?”

“You know I do. And you’re happy to be second best, that’s why we work together so well.”

“Good. So I can tell you that I think you’ll make a better arm ornament than I would have, and you’ll take it as a compliment.”

She stared at his serious face that was trying so hard not to smile. “Thank you, Clark.”

“No problem,” he replied. As she watched him, his face began to struggle to contain a laugh.

“What?” she asked suspiciously.

“I’ve just been trying to think of what to label something that isn’t a date but has date-like qualities.”

“And?”

“The best I can come up with is a raisin.”

For a second Lois tried not to laugh, but in the end she gave in and he joined her. “I’ll go along with that if you like; this isn’t a date, it’s a raisin.”

Clark was beginning to relax as they made their way to the bar to the pre-dinner drinks. He tried to console himself with the fact that, despite all her protestations, he was almost sure that Lois would have hated it if he had gone with anyone else. Still, all his efforts to get her to relax had seemed to be for nothing as they had walked into the Press Association building and were surrounded by their smartly dressed peers. She had made her way straight to the bar, leaving Clark trailing in her wake.

“What are you doing here, Lane?” Clark heard a man ask her. He had seen the man at many press conferences although he didn’t know his name. He had no idea that Lois had ever spoken to the man before. However, the man’s patronising attitude and snide comments would lead anyone to believe that he knew Lois. “I thought this dinner was only for nominees?”

She smiled patronisingly at her aggressor. “And their dates,” she told him smugly.

“You’re here on a date?” the man sounded incredulous.

“I’m here with my partner,” was her ambiguous reply, before returning to Clark’s side.

She smiled up at him, and Clark found himself smiling back as the man stomped away, stupidly wondering whether he could possibly get Lois on a real date, rather than a raisin.

“Nice to see you being a team player, Lois,” chuckled a deep voice, and Clark looked over to see Perry White and a woman walking over to them. “Now, Clark, I don’t believe you’ve met my wife before, have you?”

“No,” Clark replied, shaking the woman’s hand. “It’s nice to meet you, Mrs. White.”

“Please, called me Alice,” she replied. “Hello Lois.”

“Hello Alice. And of course I’m a team player, Perry. Why else would I be here?”

“You’re a begrudging date, are you Lois?” Perry asked her.

“Actually no, I’m not a begrudging date, I’m . . . something else,” she informed him, giving Clark a knowing smile.

“Well you see,” Clark replied with a straight face before Perry could question Lois’ strange response. “I could never have brought a grudging date with me. I prefer something smaller, sweeter, without a hard centre.”

“So let me get this straight. You’ve brought *Lois*, something smaller, sweeter, and with a softer centre than a grudging date?” Perry asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Exactly,” Lois and Clark replied in unison.

The four of them were sitting on their own table for the meal that was being served before the awards were handed out. Clark noticed Lois relax even further. Despite Alice’s presence, the fact that they were sitting with their editor did make the entire evening feel a little less like a date and more like a works outing. Lois could obviously cope with this situation. Although, he sensed that Alice might have preferred it if they were two couples. Clark supposed that she didn’t get that many opportunities to spend a whole evening with her husband; he could guess how hard it had to be to prise Perry away from the Planet, but the couple displayed no public signs of affection, other than loving smiles, to make their companions uncomfortable.

The meal itself was excellent. Clark was enjoying the food, the company and suddenly found himself realising that he had completely forgotten about the award itself. It would be a lie for him to say that he didn’t care whether he won or not; he would be disappointed if he didn’t. He looked over at Lois, enjoying her meal as his raisin. No, he felt as if he had already won.

Lois looked up from her dinner and smiled at him. As she started to speak to him, he heard a siren in the distance. No, not now. Not this evening. Not when things were going so well.

“Clark?” she asked.

“Sorry?”

“I asked if you were enjoying your meal.”

“Oh, yes.”

“Are you OK?” She asked, concerned.

<An apartment building is on fire. Many people are trapped, whole families including children.>

“Yeah,” Clark replied, guiltily ignoring what he had heard from the firemen’s radio and continuing with his meal.

<It’s starting to spread. We’ve just been inform that one of the nearby buildings is storing highly flammable materials. This is a major situation.>

Clark put his cutlery down. “I’m, er, I’m just going to the bathroom.”

“You OK, Clark? You look pale.” Perry asked.

“Yes, I’m fine Chief. I’ll be back in a minute, I’ve just got to, er . . .” he motioned towards the direction of the bathroom and made a dash for it. Just how bad could this fire be?

She was beginning to get nervous now. Clark’s award was looming nearer and nearer, and he still hadn’t returned from the bathroom. She wasn’t sure whether she was more concerned that he was ill or had climbed out of a window. She hadn’t realised he was so nervous until Perry mentioned how pale Clark looked right before his disappearance. She leant over the table to speak to Perry in a hushed voice under the ceremony that was taking place before them.

“What do we do if Clark isn’t back in time to collect his award?”

“His award? You’re certain he’s going to win, are you?”

“Well, his stiffest competition wasn’t even nominated.” At Perry’s look, she dropped the sarcasm. “I’m serious, Perry.”

“Seems obvious to me,” Alice chimed in. “One of you two will have accept it for him.”

“I’m sure he’ll be back, Lois,” Perry told her. “Not even Clark would miss his big moment.”

But time ticked by, and Clark didn’t reappear from the bathroom.

“He’d better be dying,” Lois muttered darkly, mostly to herself. “His award’s next.”

Alice nudged her husband. “Why don’t you go and check on him?”

Perry watched as the presenter for Clark’s award took the podium. “I think it’s too late for that, honey. Lois?”

“What?”

“Be ready.”

“Be ready? No, no way. I am not accepting Clark’s award. If he wins. No.”

“Why not?”

“It’ll just look like I’m stealing the limelight. It’ll draw attention to the fact I wasn’t nominated. It’ll be humiliating.”

“I think you’re being a little over dramatic,” Alice smiled.

“No I’m not. Even if no one else thinks that, Clark will. He’ll tease me about it for ... forever. How I had to steal his big moment after all the fuss I made when he was nominated and I wasn’t. No, I won’t do it.”

Before one of the Whites could respond to her, the speaker’s voice came clearly across the PA system.

“And the winner is ... Clark Kent of the Daily Planet for his piece on the retirement home scandal!”

As the room filled with the sound of polite applause, Lois felt her stomach turn. She was staring at Perry, he was staring back at her. And somehow, *somehow* she found herself on her feet, walking towards the stage as she had done in the past three years. Only for Clark would she do something like this, and only Perry could have gotten her to her feet. She ignored the surprised look on the presenter’s face as he handed her the Kerth, the uncertain clapping of the crowd as they realised Lois Lane had taken the podium instead of Clark Kent. And as the hesitant applause died down, her mouth opened.

“OK, you all know I’m not Clark Kent. Something came up and Clark had to leave suddenly, and as his partner on many stories in the last year, I’m accepting this award on his behalf. I don’t know what Clark would say if he was up here, probably something much more heart-warming than anything I can come up with on the spur of the moment. Because that’s what he’s good at, that’s what he’s won this award for. Any one of us in this room could have written a piece on that retirement home. We could have found the facts, written the story that lead to improving the lives of those residents so dramatically. But what Clark can do better than any reporter I’ve ever met, is make the reader really feel for the people he writes about. They’re more than just a story, just another paycheck to Clark. He really cares about the welfare of every single person that he writes about, and he can make every single person who reads his work care as just as much as he does. That’s an amazing talent, it’s one of the reasons I’m so lucky to be able to call him my partner ... at the Daily Planet. Anyway, I know winning this award will mean a lot to him but probably not as much as the changes made after his story broke did. This,” she held the award up, “will just be the icing on the cake.”

She smiled as they applauded her speech. She made her way back to the table, but just before she sat down, she saw a figure emerge from the low lighting of the auditorium.

“Were you there the whole time?” she hissed at him, too angry with him to trust herself not to yell at him and make a spectacle of herself.

Clark smiled broadly at her, that mega-watt smile that did something funny to her stomach. “No, not the whole time. I walked in when you were denying being Clark Kent.”

“And you didn’t think to come up and rescue me from that nightmare?”

He shook his head. “I enjoyed your speech too much. I don’t think I could have done better, especially if it was a ‘nightmare’, as you claim.”

“Well, no, you probably couldn’t.” Lois sat down in her seat, placing Clark’s Kerth on their table.

She waited for the tease. She had just praised him in front of a room of fellow journalists. He was never going to let it drop. He sat down. Lois trained her vision firmly on the podium, but from the corner of her eye she watched Clark look at his award in

awe, and she felt a sense of pride well up in her. Well, if she wasn’t going to win the award, it only made sense that it go to Clark.

All in all, it hadn’t been a bad night. He’d managed to stop the fire before it caused any fatalities, and although he’d missed picking up his award, not only had he won but he’d heard Lois’ acceptance speech. She’d deny it if asked, but he suspected that she was not only proud of him; she was also pleased for him. Perhaps not as pleased and proud as she would have been if she had won but close.

The awards had all been handed out, the speaker had given his speech, and a band had started playing. Space had been made for a dance floor and many couples were already up and dancing, Perry and Alice among them. Clark glanced at Lois. Would she want to dance with him, or would that be pushing the boundaries too far?

Clark saw Lois glance at him nervously. No, perhaps that would be pushing it too far. Still, maybe she would ask him.

One drink with one conversation and then home. That had always been the way Lois had dealt with the end of the awards ceremony. By that time her ‘date’ had normally consumed a little too much alcohol and was beginning to get a little too close for comfort. Of course, this time she was the date, and Clark was looking as sober as ever. Still, there was little else to do but dance after that one drink, and Clark was looking increasingly uncomfortable. Whether he was debating whether to ask her if she wanted to dance, or he was just not entirely sure to do with the award he held in his hands Lois didn’t know, but perhaps it was time to bring the evening to the end before one of them completely ruined it. Of course, there was a very-slight possibility that *not* dancing with Clark might completely ruin the evening.

“Do you want to stay and dance, or are you ready to go?” she asked him.

He shrugged. “I’m not that great a dancer.”

“Neither is Perry, but that doesn’t seem to be stopping him.”

There was indecision in his eyes, but there was something in his reply that made Lois think that maybe he did want to dance, and well, she had to admit that there were worse things in the world than dancing with Clark.

“Come on, Clark. We both know that you can dance. And after all, you dragged me here on a raisin, you ought to at least try to show me a good time.”

He considered this for a second, then a mischievous look appeared on his face. “You’re right, Lois. I owe my raisin that much. Hang on a moment.”

With that, Clark vanished into the mass of moving bodies. Seconds later Lois noticed him speaking to someone, then he returned to her side and held out his hand.

“Ready?”

“What was all that about?” she asked, taking his hand.

“You know what curiosity did to the cat, don’t you Lois?”

“You know that I always find out everything eventually, don’t you Clark?”

And with that retort, Lois was in his arms. She almost gasped at the swiftness of that movement.

“Of course,” he murmured quietly into her ear, the vibrations from his voice sending shivers down through her body. For a moment she felt that the only thing keeping her knees from melting was holding onto his sturdy shoulders.

Just as quickly as it had come, the moment passed. The current song had an upbeat tempo, not suited for close dancing, so Clark pulled away from her again so they could dance properly to the rhythm without fear of treading on each other’s feet. Lois supposed that this was a better way for two people on a

raisin to dance together, friend dancing rather than romantic dancing. Still, she could still feel his arms around her, still feel his warm breath on her cheek, still smell the clean masculine scent mingled with aftershave that was 'just Clark' filling her nostrils.

His heart beat fast as he returned to her side. He didn't want to push this too far, but Clark feared that this was as close to getting on a real date with Lois as he was ever likely to manage. She was right; he really did owe her a good time.

"Ready?" He asked her, holding out his hand, hoping that Lois didn't notice that his nerves were making it shake ever so slightly.

He closed his hand around her small and dainty one as soon as he felt the weight of it in his palm, barely hearing her question. "What was all that about?"

"You know what curiosity did to the cat, don't you Lois?"

"You know that I always find out everything eventually, don't you Clark?"

Banter, but almost a threat as well. Lois always finds everything out eventually. It was no more than a truth, one he should accept. Eventually.

In a movement far too swift for Clark Kent, he pulled her into a close embrace. She was everywhere, her body tight against his. Her perfume filled his world. And in a petty moment he realised that it was all one-sided. However much Lois' proximity was affecting him, he was sure that his had no effect on her.

He bent down so that his lips were almost touching her ear and said in the quietest voice he could that he knew she would hear, "Of course."

For a second more he held her in his arms, wishing the moment could continue forever. Then he lengthened the distance between them, not trusting himself to look at her as they started to dance together.

Needing a distraction from his current thoughts, Clark looked back over at Perry and Alice, grimacing at the sight of Perry's 'dancing' skills. They had been decreasing in acceptability all evening, and the dancing had only just begun.

"I don't know which is worse," Clark sighed, nodding towards the editor so that Lois could see who he was talking about. "His dancing or the fact that every time a song finishes, he demands they play 'Jailhouse Rock' next."

Lois smiled. "I don't know. It's nice to see him having fun; he's normally a lot more stressed out at work."

"I think that's mostly your fault."

"At least I don't keep running off at the worst possible moments."

"No, of course, you just keep nearly being killed."

She considered this for a moment, and in that moment, all of Clark's attention was drawn back to the way her body was moving to the music, in perfect timing with his own. "I suppose we can share the blame."

The music died down for a second, and a voice filled the auditorium. "This next one has been requested ..."

"Jailhouse Rock!" Perry called out joyously.

"... by the hack for his partner!"

Clark felt Lois' eyes on him as the baseline began to fill the room. For a second he felt incredibly embarrassed, then Lois began to laugh as the people around them started dancing to 'I Heard it Through the Grapevine'. Feeling a bit braver, Clark began to mimic the dance moves to the California Raisin commercial, and Lois quickly fell into step beside him, both of them chuckling through the song.

It was only after Lois had to sit down for a breather that she realised how long she had been dancing with Clark. At least half the nominees had left, although Perry and Alice were still going

strong on the dance floor.

"Admitting defeat?" Clark asked her with a grin.

She glared at him. "I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm wearing stiletto heels and you're wearing flats. It's not defeat, it's painful."

"Come on then, let's go home before you completely lame yourself," was his reply, holding out his arm for her.

Lois accepted it without thought and didn't think about how it might appear until she realised that it felt nice to step out of the press building with Clark. Her feet also didn't seem to hurt quite so much, almost as if she was no longer putting the whole of her weight on them.

"So," she ventured as they walked along the sidewalk. "How did I rate as a raisin?"

"A-plus," he told her. "The best raisin I've ever taken to the Kerth awards."

Somehow this statement made her smile but not from the silliness of his statement, more from the pure affection that was evident in his voice.

"And you gave the best acceptance speech I've ever heard."

Lois planted her brightest smile on her face. She had almost forgotten about the speech, in fact, this was the first time he'd mentioned it since the event, and he still didn't sound as if he was teasing her. Still, she wasn't going to let him off lightly. "Oh, yes. There was your little disappearing act as well, wasn't there? I tell you what Clark, if you make me go through another night like this, I'll rip out your spleen."

Clark laughed. "I don't doubt it for one second, Lois."

fin.

THE END

Here are Lynn S M's requests:

Three things I want in my story:

1) Lots and lots of WAFF between Lois and Clark (in either or both of his personae)

2) Word plays and other silliness

3) A happy ending

Three things I don't want in my story:

1) WHAMs

2) Anything otherworldly. (By that I mean both that I do not want an elseword/alternate universe story and that I don't want anything with ghosts, magick, or anything else supernatural.)

3) Villains

Preferred Season:

Season 1 or 2