

Serial Hair

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Summary: A serial killer is fixated on women with dark, shoulder-length hair. Will Clark and Perry convince Lois to protect herself by trying a new hairstyle?

“Brunette Bob Butcher strikes again!”

Lois Lane threw the copy of the Metropolis Star down in disgust. “Who writes stuff like this?”

Her mood was foul and the inflammatory and alliteratively ridiculous headline didn't help matters. She and Clark had been working on the story for weeks and hadn't had a decent lead yet. Four young women had been killed in less than two months, and unless there was a break soon, she knew some other unfortunate woman would meet a grisly end.

“Lois?” Her head turned to acknowledge Perry's address. “Could you come into my office?”

Lois warily got to her feet and started toward her Chief's office. Was she in trouble? Why was he asking her nicely to come to his office instead of simple ordering her to hop to it?

She stepped through his door and closed it at his motion. She moved toward the desk and with a sense of impending dread, sat in one of the chairs facing Perry's desk. She clasped her hands in her lap.

“Where's Clark?”

She shook her head. “I don't know. He said something about meeting with Superman to see if he has anything to add to our investigation.”

Perry nodded. “Smart. It can't hurt to have the Man of Steel involved in looking for this psycho.” Her boss leaned back in his chair. “Any new leads?”

Lois shook her head again. “No. I talked to Henderson yesterday and the police don't have any new leads either. Other than the obvious, there is no connection between the victims. Classic serial type murders.”

Perry frowned, and nodded. “So, beyond their physical characteristics there is no common thread, nothing that ties them to each other?”

“No.” Lois sighed. “Four young women, 27, 26, 29, and 29; brunette and considered pretty. Each from a different part of town.”

Perry folded his hands in front of his face. “Didn't they share something a little more specific than just dark hair?”

Lois shrugged. “I'm not sure what you mean. I can go back to my files and check out their pictures again.”

“I thought I remembered they all had dark, straight, shoulder length hair.”

Lois shrugged again. “Yeah, I guess so. So what? A lot of women have dark, shoulder-length hair.” Lois waved her hand in a dismissive gesture. “Heck, I even have dark, shoulder length hair.”

Perry nodded. “Yes you do.”

Lois glared at her boss. “What?”

“Clark, did you read that sidebar article that I let Jimmy write?”

Lois sighed. “Yes I did. If you remember, I helped him write it.”

“Well...” Perry shrugged. “What did you think of it?”

“Jimmy still needs a lot of practice but he's getting better. He

was able to get the point of his story across without too many inconsistencies.”

“But what about the subject matter? What did you think of what the story was about?”

Lois rolled her eyes. “It was about all the young women who have gone and gotten their hair cut in fear of the recent series of murders. It's happened before. I seem to remember the same thing happened in New York back during the Son of Sam murders.”

Perry nodded. “So, what do you think of that? What do you think of those women?”

Lois shrugged. “I didn't really give it much thought. I guess if it gives them some measure of comfort and peace of mind, I suppose its okay.” Lois shook her head in disgust. “Look, Chief, I know what you're hinting around at, but if you've got something to say to me, just say it. Don't try the cutesy routine with me.”

Perry's face grew sterner. “Okay, I would like you to consider cutting your hair.”

Lois crossed her arms across her chest. “No.”

“Lois, why not? Young women change their hairstyles all the time. You've worn your hair the same way since I've known you. Why not try something a little different?”

“Look, Chief, it wouldn't matter if I was the only woman left in Metropolis with this particular hairstyle, I wouldn't change it. I will not cater to the fear and hysteria. I will not give in to this psycho. I like my hair this way, and no one is going to force me to change it.”

Suddenly there was a knock on the door, and Clark poked his head into the office. “Jimmy said you wanted to see me?”

Perry waved Clark into the office. “There you are Kent. Can you talk some sense into this partner of yours?”

“Me?” Clark sat down in one of the other chairs. “You're kidding, right?”

Lois turned toward Clark. “The Chief seems to think that I should cut my hair just because I happen to somewhat resemble some of the victims of our serial killer.” Her tone was even but undercurrents of disapproval were quite obvious. “Do you think I should cut my hair? Give in to this psycho and let him affect how I live my life?”

Clark looked back and forth between Lois and Perry. “Is this a trick question?”

Lois rolled her eyes. “Perry thinks that since I have shoulder-length, dark hair like all the victims have had, that I should follow the lead of several young woman of the city who have done so, and cut my hair.”

Perry shrugged. “It's just hair. Why tempt fate?”

Lois crossed her arms over her breasts and stared at Clark. “What do you think, Clark?”

Clark ran his hand through his hair. “Well...”

“Clark!”

Clark held his hands up in a gesture of mock defense. “Lois, you have to admit that since you and I are investigating this killer, that you are actually more at risk than the general public. What harm could there be in getting a trim?” Clark shrugged. “Besides, I think you'd look cute in short hair.”

Lois sighed and stood up. “I'm not going to sit here and listen to any more of this drivel. I'm not going to get my hair cut and that is that.” She turned and moved toward the door. She stopped when she reached it and looked back. “If you wish to reach me, I'll be at home checking over some research I left there.” She slammed the door behind her.

Perry looked at Clark. “I want you to follow her home and stay with her. If you can't convince her to cut her hair, then I want you to stick to her like fleas on a mongrel until this nut job is caught. Capeesh?”

Clark stood up. “Got it, Chief.”

Lois peered through the peephole, answering the knock on her apartment door. She'd barely been home five minutes and hadn't done more than put her coat away and set her bag on the stand by the door. Big surprise, it was Clark.

She sighed as she opened the door. "Stand right there." She pointed to a place a few feet inside the door as she closed it.

Clark looked confused as Lois approached him and executed a very professional pat down of her partner. Actually it was rather pleasant. Clark smiled.

"Honest, Lois, I'm not packing."

Lois gave him a raised brow and slight scowl. "Just making sure you didn't have a pair of scissors hidden on you." She waved him toward the living room. "I assume you're here at Perry's behest?"

Clark gave her a sheepish smile and a shrug. "He did say that if I can't convince you to get your hair cut that I should stick to you 'like fleas on a mongrel' until this killer is caught."

Lois rolled her eyes and shook her head. "Men!"

"Lois, I know you don't want to cut your hair, but is it really such a big deal? Why can't you give in to Perry this one time just to give him some piece of mind? It's only a haircut."

Lois walked over and sat on the couch. Clark followed and sat in a chair opposite. "No, Clark, it's not just a haircut. You more than anyone else know how things were for me growing up. I had parents who only ever agreed on one thing; their disapproval of me. Nothing I ever did was good enough. None of my choices were the right ones. If I didn't follow the path that they had mapped out for me, I was beneath their attention." A tear threatened to escape from the corner of Lois' eye, but she quickly suppressed it.

"I didn't want to follow them into the field of medicine and so I wasn't worthy. There was no way my dad was going to help fund an education that would prepare me for such an insignificant field like newspaper work. I left home as soon as I was legally able to and never looked back."

Lois raised her eyes and locked gazes with Clark. "I've had to fight against obstacles and attitudes all my life but I've reached a point where I can hold my head up and consider myself a success in my chosen field." She held two fingers up. "I live by two rules, Clark. One, do what is right; and two, don't let anyone else tell you how to live your life."

Lois got up and moved toward the kitchen. "Would you like a soda?" He shook his head. She continued. "It's really just another form of terrorism. If I give in to this nut ball and get my haircut, in a very real sense he's won; even if he doesn't actually find me and kill me. All serial killers feed off the terror they produce and I, for one, am not going to provide him with even the slightest morsel."

Clark turned and followed Lois' movements in the kitchen. "I understand that, Lois, I really do. And I don't disagree with you." He stood and moved toward her. "What about a wig? You've worn wigs many times. It would be just like another undercover disguise and it would give Perry a measure of comfort."

Lois shook her head causing her dark locks to swirl about her head. "Wouldn't really work. The third victim, Chris Lansing, was wearing a blonde wig when she was taken. The police found it stuffed into her mouth when they discovered her body."

Clark frowned. "So our killer knew that Chris had dark hair." Lois nodded. "That means the killer knew her before he took her?"

Lois shrugged. "Or he'd seen her."

"So there was a connection between the killer and Ms. Lansing?"

"Maybe, but there has been no connection between any of the victims with each other. You know, we've investigated that aspect thoroughly, and they have nothing common in their lives that we could find. There was no way, beyond happenstance, that the

killer could have connected with these particular women."

"If Ms. Lansing had been the first victim then we could assume that the killer knew her and she was the trigger for the victims to follow."

Lois shook her head as she pulled a can of crème soda out of the 'fridge. "But she wasn't. She was third."

"So how did our killer know she was wearing a wig if he hadn't seen her before?"

"Maybe he saw a picture." Lois stopped and set the can of soda down on the counter. "Clark, we're idiots."

"What?"

Lois was becoming animated. "Think about it. How would our killer know that his victims fit his sick profile if he'd never met them, but could still see through a disguise?"

Clark leaned against the kitchen countertop. "Okay, I see how pictures of the victims would give him the profile he needed, but it's not like the victims were models or anything. Where would he get pictures of them?"

Lois nodded. "True, and if he was using pictures to choose his victims, he would also have to know where they lived or worked in order to find them."

The two partners stood in deep thought for several moments. Clark frowned; Lois chewed on her lower lip. Suddenly, as if in perfect sync, both their heads snapped up and their eyes locked.

"The DMV," both chorused simultaneously.

The next 24 hours were hectic to say the least. Lois and Clark went to Henderson with their idea, and he jumped on it with them. It turned out that all four of the victims had recently renewed their license at the same downtown office of the Department of Motor Vehicles. A check on the employment records showed three recent hires that fit into the timeline of the murders.

After a thorough background check, they narrowed their logical suspect down to one. Tristan Chandler had begun working the counter at the local DMV one week before the murders began.

Armed with the circumstantial evidence, Henderson was able to get a warrant to search Chandler's apartment. Lois and Clark came along, but to Lois' irritation, they stayed behind in the car while Henderson executed the warrant. More than enough evidence was found to make the arrest.

As it turned out, Chandler was a textbook case. A mild-mannered, unassuming guy who was stuck in an abusive marriage. They'd been high school sweethearts and had married right after graduation.

Pictures of the couple in the yearbook showed his future wife to be a pretty, brunette who favored a simple shoulder length bob. Over the years, sloth and inactivity had turned the once attractive young woman into an overweight, slovenly harpy. She abused Tristan both physically and psychologically. Rather than stand up for himself, he continued to take the abuse because he 'loved' her.

His attacks on the other women were his way of 'protecting' other men from falling into a similar situation. He was a very sick man, and Lois and Clark got the exclusive.

Clark stepped into the bullpen of the Daily Planet amidst cheers from his co-workers. Perry White stepped up holding a copy of that morning's paper over his head. The 60 point headline said it all; "Serial Killer Caught". Perry clapped Clark on the shoulder.

"Great job, Kent. You and Lois did it again." He looked around. "Where is Lois? I expected that'd you'd come in together."

Clark shrugged. "She said she had an errand to run and that she'd meet me here."

Just then the elevator chimed its arrival and out stepped Lois

Lane.

“Great shades of Elvis, tell me I’m not seeing what I think I’m seeing?” Perry shook his head as he watched her come toward him.

“And exactly what is it that you think you’re seeing, Chief?”

Perry frowned. “To me it looks an awful lot like Lois Lane, a woman who refused to have her haircut despite the danger to herself... with short hair.”

“Do you like it?” Lois spun around to give Perry and Clark the full effect of her new short, layered do. “It was something you said, Chief. You told me that I’d been wearing my hair the same way to entire time you’d known me. I thought about that and realized you were right. Maybe it was time for a change.”

Perry rolled his eyes. “So, it was okay to cut your hair now, when the possible danger is over; but not a couple of days ago when it would have given your poor old editor some peace of mind.”

Lois grinned. “Exactly.” She looked toward Clark. “You understand, don’t you Clark?”

Clark smiled, then nodded. “Yes I do, Lois.”

Perry shook his head and put his hands up in surrender. “Well, I for one don’t understand. But then I seldom understand how that mind of yours works, Lois. All that matters is that you’re safe and the two of you got the story... again.” He walked back to his office, shaking his head all the way.

The intrepid duo made their way back to their desks.

Clark sat on the corner of her desk as Lois slid into her chair. “Wow, Lois, I never expected this from you.”

Lois frowned. “You don’t like it?”

Clark folded his arms across his chest. “The truth?”

Lois’ lower lip quivered a bit. She nodded.

Clark reached out and fingered the soft tendrils of hair that brushed against her cheek. “I like it. The shorter style suits you.”

“Really?”

He nodded. “Oh yeah, and I like how it exposes the long line of your sexy neck.” Clark gently ran his finger along the line of her neck.

Lois blushed furiously. “Clark!”

“Tell you what, Lois. Let’s skip the rest of today. We’ve earned it. I’ll take you out for lunch at a nice place where we can show off the new Lois Lane.”

Lois looked up at Clark through lowered lashes. “Why Mr. Kent, are you asking me out for a date?”

“I believe I am. Are you accepting my offer?”

Lois appeared to think about it for several moments, then she shrugged and stood up. “Oh, what the heck. It’s not like I have anything else to do, and I am beginning to get hungry.”

Clark offered Lois his arm, and together they moved toward the elevator. It was going to be a pleasant afternoon.

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