

# One Good Turn: A Haircut Challenge Story

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Rated: PG

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Description: Cat Grant, Lois Lane, and petty rivalry are a bad enough combination. Add alcohol to the mix, and you never know what might happen. Well, it's a Tank story, so maybe you do.

Back when the Haircut Challenge was going strong, this idea for a frivolous haircut story came to mind, but before I could find the time to write it up the challenges died down. So I put the idea away. But since my super secret mystery beta reader is presently unavailable (I think the poor person has been kidnapped), I have put aside my current WIP for a time. So I thought, what the heck, since this is a silly throwaway type of story, I'll resurrect it now. No beta reading necessary. With that said, here's...

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Lois was bored. Somehow the Kerth ceremonies just weren't as much fun if she wasn't up for an award. She had to admit that she was proud of Clark for winning his first Kerth. After all, she had been the one to train him, so in reality that Kerth was partially hers anyway. Besides, the way that Perry keep partnering the two of them up, neither would be in a position to win a Kerth without the other's name on it for the foreseeable future.

It was just as well that the festivities were practically over; she had a desire to go home and check out her own Kerths, just to see how they were doing. She hoped they wouldn't be too disappointed not to have another sister joining them this year.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press — " Lois' attention was drawn back to the stage and the podium, where the master of ceremonies was speaking again. "We are often accused of putting on a rather dull and stuffy awards presentation." He got the smattering of polite laughter that was expected. "But this year we have decided to add a little something to our program. We have gathered here tonight to honor excellence in reporting and news writing within our professional community. All the nominees and winners are well deserving of our praise and congratulations on their achievements. But what about some of the more overlooked aspects of the reporting game?"

"Clark, do you have any idea what the man is talking about?" Lois leaned over and whispered to Clark.

He just shook his head. "Shhh, listen, and maybe we'll find out." Lois glared at him, but let her attention drift back to the stage.

"So tonight, in order to redress that oversight, the Kerth Committee has instituted a whole new set of awards — the AltKerth Awards." The MC grinned at the sea of perplexed faces. "What exactly are the AltKerth awards, you ask? I think what they are will become quite obvious as I announce the categories and the winners." He picked up a sheet of paper and rattled it a bit for effect. "So without further ado, I will announce the first category. For the most catchy headline, the award goes to... The Metropolis Star, for their front page report on Councilman Andrew Yonkers' nervous breakdown and the headline 'Yonkers goes Bonkers'."

Lois dropped her head into her hands and groaned. How could the Kerth Committee have stooped so low as to perpetrate these juvenile gag awards on the group?

The MC continued to drone on. "For the most unique fashion accessory, the award goes to... Clark Kent, for his impressive inventory of *unusual* ties."

That snapped Lois out of her lethargy. She roared with laughter along with the rest of the group. Clark blushed as he stood and moved toward the podium to accept his small plastic statuette.

"And I see he hasn't disappointed us tonight, either." The MC laughed along with everyone else as Clark took hold of his award. "Next..."

Lois tuned out the parade of silly awards as she greeted Clark's return with a big grin. "So, I see that your distinct fashion sense has not gone unnoticed by the city at large."

When Lois finally paid attention to the speaker again, she noticed that not all the awards were gags. Some were for legitimate, if frivolous, items. One that made her narrow her eyes in repressed anger was the best dressed award. At first, Lois had smiled at Cat's insistence that she was going to win that one. After all, who dressed better than Cat Grant? Lois' rejoinder had died on her lips when Linda King had been announced as the winner. How could anyone think that bargain-basement floozy was a good dresser?

Lois let a few more awards slip by her notice as she fumed about Linda King. She finally shook it off, and the MC's voice was able to intrude into her consciousness again.

"And, now," he began. "The award for the best hair in news reporting."

"This has got to be mine." The vehemence in Cat's voice startled Lois just a bit. She really didn't care if Cat did win this one — as long as Linda King didn't.

"And the winner is... Lois Lane."

"What?" The response came immediately from the lips of both Lois and Cat.

Cat stared daggers at her, but Lois, who wasn't expecting anything anyway, suddenly found herself grinning smugly at Cat. Considering how much Cat had enjoyed rubbing her face all week in the fact that Lois wasn't even nominated this year, this was going to be worth a *lot* of ammunition in their verbal sparring in the months to come. With a last smug glance at Cat, she rose and marched up to the stage to receive her award.

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Clark watched with more than just a little concern over the actions of Lois at the party, back at the Planet, after the Kerth Awards. Not only had Clark won his first ever Kerth award, but also the Planet had garnered two others for its consistent excellence and reputable reporting. Everyone seemed to be having a good time, even Lois. But that was the problem. Lois seemed to be having too good a time. Clark knew that she was disappointed in being left off the Kerth short list this year, but she was hiding it well. Too well.

She actually seemed to be almost revelling in her AltKerth win for best hair. Well, actually, she seemed to be enjoying flaunting it at Cat. Both women had been drinking a bit more than normal and were constantly sniping at each other all evening. Clark more than once had to step in between the pair to keep the peace.

Now the two ladies were marching toward him, determined looks on both their faces. Clark closed his eyes briefly and groaned. This was not going to be fun.

Lois laid a possessive hand on Clark's chest. "Come on, Clarkie, tell Cat once and for all that you think I have much better hair than she does."

Cat slinked up next to Clark and purred into his ear. "You can tell her the truth, Clark. You really like my hair better. After all, it is longer, and I know that men all like long hair on women." Cat sneered at Lois. "Not like that Buster Brown, college girl look that Lois likes to call a style."

“Hah!” Lois retorted. “Shows what you know. My hair may be shorter, but it’s shinier, has more bounce to it, and is definitely more professional looking. I don’t consider a hooker hair style appropriate for a modern, independent woman of the Nineties.”

“Why, you...” Cat made a lunge for Lois, who was ready to answer.

Clark stepped in between the two of them. “Lois! Cat! Stop acting like children. You both have nice hair, now just...” Clark gave Cat a studied glance. “Say, Cat, is your nose shining just a bit there?”

“What?” With a shriek, Cat ran off toward the ladies room.

“That was a pretty clever way to get rid of the old kitty-cat there, Clarkie.” Lois giggled and then hiccupped. “Ohhh, suddenly I don’t feel so good.” She placed her hand to her forehead and winced.

“Maybe you’d better sit down, Lois.” Clark helped her over to her desk and got her seated. “I’ll see if Perry has something for your headache.”

Clark left Lois sitting at her desk as he went in search of his boss. The party had mostly died out by now. Only a few die-hards like Perry and Jimmy were left besides himself, Cat, and Lois. Clark came up to his boss, who was regaling Jimmy with another Elvis parable.

“Ah, Chief, sorry to interrupt,” Clark interrupted, “but Lois seems to have a headache, and I was wondering if you have any aspirin.”

“Great shades of Elvis! The way she and Cat have been drinking and bickering all night, it’s a wonder her head doesn’t explode.” Perry waved his hand toward the far wall. “I think there is some in the first aid kit. Where is she?”

“I left her sitting at her desk.”

Perry looked over and then raised a brow. “I think you’re a little late with that aspirin, son.”

Clark looked over and noticed Lois slumped over, her head down on her desk. The three men approached. Clark shook Lois’ shoulder. There was no response. He shook it a little harder.

“Lois, Lois, wake up. It’s time to get you home.” Clark looked up at his editor and shrugged.

Perry laughed. “She’s out like a light. You aren’t going to wake her up now. Just let her sleep it off. It wouldn’t be the first time Lois fell asleep at her desk.” Perry turned and clapped his hand on Jimmy’s shoulder. “Come on, Jimbo, I’ll give you a ride home.” He glanced back over his shoulder and saw Clark still standing over Lois, frowning. “You might as well go home too, son. I’ve seen Lois drunk before. There is nothing short of an atom bomb that will wake her now. She’ll be all right. We’ll let Eddie down in security know that Lois fell asleep at her desk again.”

Clark glanced at his boss, at Lois, and then back at Perry again. With a sigh, he shrugged off his tuxedo coat and, folding it over a couple of times, slipped it under Lois’ head. He glanced at her once more and then followed them up the ramp toward the elevator.

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Cat half-stumbled out of the ladies room. She couldn’t believe she had fallen asleep in there. It had only been for about twenty minutes, but it still made her feel foolish.

She immediately noticed that only the overnight lights were still on, and that the place seemed strangely empty. “Hello? Is anybody still here?” Only her own echo answered her question.

It appeared that during her short nap everyone had gone home. Of course, she thought, once the life of the party wasn’t around, there would be no more reason to stay. The others must have figured she’d had enough of Lois’ witless comments and had gone home. It was then that she spied Lois slumped over at her desk. She could tell by the gentle snoring that Lois was sound asleep.

Cat walked over and stared down at her nemesis. Just how asleep was Lois, she wondered. “Hey, Lois, wake up!” Cat nearly shouted, but there was no response. She reached down, grabbed Lois by the shoulders, and set her upright in her chair. There was still no response. Lois’ chin gradually fell forward until it was resting on her chest. This caused her hair to fall in front of her face. “Oooh, the Kerth committee should see little Miss *Best Hair* now.”

Suddenly an evil smile began to form on Cat’s lips. She began to hunt around in the nearby desks looking for something. The ironic thing was, she found it on Lois’ desk. Sitting in her pencil and pen cup was a pair of scissors. Cat pulled them out and opened and closed them a few times, all the while staring at Lois’ head. Did she dare? Cat swayed a little on her feet, and somewhere in the back of her mind, knew that she was emboldened by the alcohol, but what the heck. It would serve Lois right for giving her so much grief tonight about winning that stupid award — an award that should have been hers.

Cat played at studying Lois for a bit. “Seems to me, Lois, if you are going to go for that Buster Brown look, you should go all the way. That means you need to have bangs.” Cat moved closer and carefully slipped the blades of the shears into the hair that hung over Lois’ forehead. She caught the long strands that fell away from the blades as she snipped above Lois’ brow line. Setting the handful of dark hair on the desk, Cat turned to look over her handiwork. She originally hadn’t intended to do any more than that, but she was suddenly overcome by an urge. Cutting Lois’ hair had been fun. And it wasn’t as if she didn’t have it coming to her for all the nasty things she’d said to Cat about her own hair — and other stuff.

Cat’s evil smile turned into a barracuda-like grin. Oh, why not, she figured. In for a pound, or whatever the heck the saying was. She reached down and gathered a sizable chunk of the dark hair into her hand. Overcoming one last lingering doubt, Cat quickly sliced through the locks and set the severed hair on the desk. With the last of her inhibitions having been conquered by the alcohol, and her own desire for revenge, Cat set to her task with a devilish glee.

Within a short time the pile of dark hair on Lois’ desk had grown quite large and the hair on Lois’ head had become quite short. Stepping back to admire her barbering skills, Cat gave a decisive nod of satisfaction.

Cat carefully lowered Lois’ head back down onto Clark’s coat, and then, as a last bit of whimsy, placed the scissors in Lois’ own hand. “Good night, Lois. Sleep well.” With a laugh, Cat plucked up Lois’ award and placed it on her own desk and then sauntered up the ramp to the escape of the Planet’s elevators.

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Lois slowly dragged herself back to consciousness. It was a long and painful process. Little details began to filter through to her mind before she could muster the strength to open her eyes. She was seated, but bent over, her head lying on some kind of folded cloth. So, she was still at her desk. Her last semi-coherent memory had been of Clark leading her over and settling her into her chair in front of her desk.

Her head ached fiercely. She’d been drinking. More than she normally would in such a situation, but not enough to have wiped out her memory of the night before. It had been a nasty evening once they’d all gotten back to the Planet. She and Cat just couldn’t stop sniping at each other. Cat’s earlier digs at Lois for not being nominated had really bugged her. So of course Lois had felt it necessary to retaliate all evening using that stupid AltKerth award she’d won as ammunition to get Cat’s goat. It was all very juvenile, but then that was often what things devolved to when it came to her and Cat. They just couldn’t seem to interact on any level without there being some sort of friction between them.

Lois became more aware of herself and was beginning to be

able to focus on something besides her pounding head. Her neck was stiff. Probably from the angle her head rested on her desk. And for some reason, there was something in her hand. She finally pried one eye open to check it out. She was holding a pair of scissors.

Instantly she flashed back to the strange dream she'd been having. Forcing her other eye open, she was greeted by a great deal of long dark hair piled neatly in the center of her desk. Her eyes grew wide as she recognized the pile for what it was. She dropped the shears as her hands flew to her head.

She let out a shriek as her fingertips confirmed what her mind had feared. The strange dream had been true. Her hair was gone! Well, not all of it, but a fair portion of her normal silky page was lying on her desktop and not hanging from her head. What had happened? Slowly, so as not to have her head fall off her shoulders, she raised herself to a full upright position. Then with equal care she levered herself out of her chair and carefully made her way to the ladies' room. She had to see.

Once inside the bathroom, she apprehensively approached the mirrors on the far wall. Her breath caught in her throat as she surveyed the ruin that was her hair. How had this happened? She had dreamt of someone or something cutting her hair, but that had just been a dream. Could she have done it in her sleep? She'd heard tales of people who'd managed to do all sorts of things while apparently still sound asleep. But she'd never had any history of sleep walking. And even if she had, why would she cut off her hair?

Lois stumbled out of the ladies' room and into the graying light of the newsroom. It must be between shifts, because no one was there. Nearly all the overnight crew worked at the other end of the building, so there wouldn't be anyone in the main bullpen anyway, but she couldn't see or hear any activity going on in that direction. The only thing she could do was go home and try to figure out what had happened — and what she could do about it.

As she headed back toward her desk to get her wrap and bag, she passed by Cat's desk. A frown crossed her face as she noticed her little statuette from the night before sitting on the desk. Suddenly, like the proverbial light coming on over one's head, it all became clear to Lois. It was the only logical explanation.

Cat had also been drinking last night. A lot. The alcohol must have made the miffed gossip columnist bottle brave. It was the only way she would have been brazen enough to do what had been done to Lois' hair.

Lois knew that when she passed out after drinking too much, she could sleep through a tornado. The others must have left her to sleep it off at her desk. It wasn't like it would have been the first time Lois fell asleep at her desk. Cat must have waited till all the others had left and then, taking advantage of Lois' condition, decided to restyle the winner of Best Hair to satisfy her own need for retribution and vengeance.

Lois ran a hand through the short, ragged remains of her once nearly shoulder length locks. Nothing she could do about it now. She'd have to get in to see her stylist first thing to see what could be done to fix the mess Cat left, but after that...

After grabbing her bag and her wrap, Lois eyed the scissors that had obviously been used to cut her hair. She stared at them for several moments, her mouth pursed into a tight line as a determined look came over her face. She reached over and plucked the shears from their resting place on her desk and tucked them into her bag. Then, suddenly resolute, she made her way up the ramp to the elevators.

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It was late morning before Lois was able to make it back to the Planet. She'd managed to talk her friend Cindy into an emergency styling session that morning — but not before she had taken care of another necessary errand.

She came off the elevator and was immediately self-

conscious. All eyes looked at her. Her hand involuntarily went to her head. Doing her best to ignore the scrutiny that she was receiving, she strode down the ramp toward her desk. Before she was able to sit she was surrounded by Clark, Perry and Jimmy.

"Lois?" Clark began.

She turned and gave him a noncommittal look. "Yes, Clark?"

He waved his hand vaguely in the direction of her head and then toward her desk. "Um, I take it from your current...er...look that the hair on the desk is yours?"

She gave him a slight smile. "Why yes, it is. I really should have cleaned it up this morning." She grabbed her waste basket and with a single sweep of her hand deposited all the dark locks into the trash bin. She set the basket down and did a quick pirouette for them. "So, boys, what do you think? Do you like the new Lois? Tell the truth now, I can take it."

Jimmy looked embarrassed. "Well, Lois, I don't know. It looks okay, I suppose. But I guess I'm just a long hair type of guy."

Perry bent down and gave Lois a quick peck on the cheek. "Lois, honey, you know I think you're a beautiful young woman. Before you were a beautiful woman with shoulder length hair, and now you're a beautiful woman with short hair. It really doesn't matter to me, darlin', as long as you're happy with it."

Lois smiled at her mentor. "Thanks, Perry." She turned to Clark and her brow rose a fraction. "And what about you, partner? You willing to be seen in public with your new *butch* partner?"

Clark frowned at Lois' self-deprecating remark. "Lois, that's not funny," he admonished her. "Yes, your new hairstyle is short, but it's hardly masculine looking. Nothing on you would look masculine." Clark ran his hand through his hair. "I'll admit I was stunned when I saw you come off the elevator. It is quite a different look for you. But now that I've had a few moments to adjust to the *new* you, I think it suits you. It's casual and probably easy to care for. I would think that would appeal to someone as active as you are." He let a smile creep onto his face. "And if it's all right to say so, I think it looks quite sexy."

Lois blushed. "Thanks."

Clark spread his hands in a gesture of confusion. "So, I've got to ask." He pointed at the hair now piled in her waste basket. "What... happened?"

Lois sat down in her chair. Perry and Jimmy had started to drift off, but didn't stray too far. They didn't want to miss out on the explanation. "I woke up at my desk this morning, a pair of scissors in my hand, and a pile of my hair on the desk. Oh, and thanks for the coat, by the way."

Clark shook his head. "Don't mention it. Are you saying that... you cut your own hair — in your sleep?"

Lois laughed. "Oh, no. I suppose she just wanted me to think that."

"Who?"

"Cat. She's the one who cut my hair off last night."

"What?" Clark sounded shocked, but Lois didn't know why. Considering all that went on last night, it should be obvious. "Are you sure?"

Lois rolled her eyes. "Of course I'm sure. It was a simple and logical deduction. Besides, she told me she did it... eventually."

Perry had wandered back over to Lois' desk. Jimmy trailed behind, like an obedient puppy. "Ah, Lois, I can't help but wonder. You seem to be taking this awfully well. Don't take this the wrong way, but that's just not like you."

Lois waved off Perry's comments. "Look, Chief, I admit that I was a bit upset when I first woke up and discovered what Cat had done. But what's done is done. There's nothing I can do now but make the best of it." Lois grinned at her boss. "Besides, I kind of like it this way. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got some research to do."

She rose from her chair and began to walk toward the other end of the room. After only a few steps she stopped and turned toward the trio of perplexed men. “Oh, and Perry, you might want to send Jimmy over to Cat’s apartment — to untie her.”

“Lois,” Clark groaned. “What did you do?”

Lois affected a look of mock innocence. “Moi?”

“Lo-is.”

“Hey, you know what they say. One good turn...”

Perry just shook his head. “Just tell me one thing, Lois. Will Cat still be able to mingle with the rich and famous so she can do her job?”

“Perry,” she said with just a hint of exasperation. “Oh course she can.” Suddenly an evil smile tugged at Lois’ lips. “She has plenty of wigs.”

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THE END