

A Lovely Smile

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Rated: G

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Summary: She is mentioned only once, during the series pilot while Clark and Lois glide across the dance floor at the White Orchid Ball. But the Nigerian princess who taught Clark Kent how to dance ballroom-style pops up every now and then in fan fiction. Here's my take ...

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As always, here is the following legal disclaimer: The characters in this story are property of DC, December 3rd productions and Warner Bros. No copyright infringement is intended. I have just borrowed the characters for a small bit of time to play in their universe.

One pleasant early September morning in Paris, Professor Abrihet Senai delicately sipped from a cup of strong, freshly brewed coffee, savoring the different notes of flavor dancing over her tongue as she opened the French edition of the Daily Planet. The headline fairly jumped out at her:

SUPERMAN SAVES SPACE COLONISTS!

She spoke aloud, "What is this? A human who possesses super powers? How can this be? Ah, he is very handsome... but such a serious expression mars the face."

The dance teacher turned Maître de conferences (assistant professor) of French Medieval history at the Sorbonne University examined the picture intensely; her inquisitive dark brown eyes traveled over his well-muscled torso and then returned to his face. There was something oddly familiar about the chiseled features. Unfortunately, the elusive thought of *where* she might have seen such a man refused to crystallize into being. She looked at the author's name of the piece: Lois Lane. The Daily Planet's reporter had always been associated with truth and decency, so this article could not be a hoax.

Abrihet thought, <The newspaper account relates how this Superman lifted the Prometheus rocket carrying the colonists into outer space after preventing it from being destroyed by a bomb hidden onboard. This reads like science fiction! But the Daily Planet has *never* been a newspaper that went in for sensationalism.>

After reading the front-page stories, she turned to another page and read several other articles. Eventually she came to one about an old theatre in Metropolis that had been razed to make space for a parking lot. The theatre had been a popular showcase for French actors and actresses traveling to the United States in the twenties. The writer's style was warm and comforting, transporting her to America and the time when Warren G. Harding was president and Prohibition began. Abrihet pondered the strange word, 'Prohibition,' and then checked the author of this piece. The by-line read: Clark Kent.

Her eyes crinkled with recognition and delight — Monsieur Kent! One of the last students she taught ballroom dancing before taking up her position in the Sorbonne's history department. The amusing memory of how gauche and nervous he was in the

beginning made her chuckle. <The young man was so nervous, he held me like I was fine china!>

Still, it had only taken a few lessons before the clumsiness smoothed out and the young man danced with confidence and a touch of style. But despite the gushing admiration his female classmates showered upon him, Clark Kent never became arrogant or boastful. He was quite different from the other young male American tourists she had met.

She remembered talking to him about his travels. He had come to Paris from Borneo after working on a small paper there. Before that, three months working with the boiler room crew on a tramp steamer, traveling from Buenos Aires to Bangkok. He had been living in a tiny attic apartment in the city's Porte d'Orléans section and working as a stringer for one of the smaller Paris weeklies. The name of the publication utterly escaped her.

Because of his warmth and candor, Abrihet had told him about her own life in Nigeria. How, at the age of twenty, she defied her family and fled Lagos rather than be forced to marry a tiresome man twice her age. She arrived in Paris with enough money to build a life of her own. It gave her immense pleasure to live here and she could not imagine having a life anywhere else.

He had stuck her as a Renaissance man ... a true gentleman, but one who was searching for a permanent place to establish a life and call a city his forever home. She suspected that although he loved Paris and was enchanted by its beauty, this was not the city for him. In the meantime, he'd enjoyed learning new things... like ballroom dancing.

Not long after Clark's final dance lesson, he'd moved to Madrid. She'd never seen him again, but his kindness and the brilliance of his smile always remained firmly fixed in her mind.

Her meditations on young Monsieur Kent had caused her to lose track of time. The wall clock chimed 7:30. If she did not hurry to catch the Metro at Odeon station she would be late for work.

Over the next few years, Abrihet read numerous accounts of Superman's exploits, both in America and around the world. He had visited Paris on several occasions, but unfortunately, she was never able to see the Man of Steel up close. Still, whenever a picture of the handsome stranger from another planet appeared, a sense of familiarity continued to nag her.

Several reporters had written about his brave deeds, but she favored reading The Daily Planet's version of the events, especially articles by the reporting team of Lane and Kent. They wrote many stories separately, but it was the articles done by *The Hottest Team in Town* that always garnered her attention. It pleased Abrihet no end that her former dance pupil was now an internationally respected journalist.

It was a fine Saturday morning in autumn. She was drinking coffee and nibbling on a fresh, hot buttery croissant from Chez Morel on her terrace. A light, slightly cool but refreshingly pleasant breeze caressed her face. The city of Paris was slowly beginning to awaken from its evening slumber. Abrihet saw a large picture of Superman on the front page; he was smiling, a wide grin, something he normally did not do. Apparently he had been visiting a Paris orphanage and playing games with the youngsters brought out the superhero's tender side. It was a good smile, pleasant and honest. She turned the page and another photo jumped out at her; it was the picture and wedding announcement of Clark Kent to his partner Lois Lane. Monsieur Kent's face glowed with happiness; his smile was brilliant as he gazed intently at his new wife.

Abrihet looked hard at the picture and then muttered to herself, "Mon Dieu! C'est impossible... "

She hurried into the apartment and returned with a pair of scissors and a black pencil. She quickly cut out the picture of

Superman and laid it next to the wedding picture of Clark Kent.
She then drew a pair of glasses around his eyes.

After staring from one picture to another, Abrihet chuckled softly to herself. The handsome, mysterious stranger from another planet and her former dance student were one and the same. Apparently he had found a home in Metropolis and someone precious to share his life with.

She touched the black and white newspaper photo with deep affection and whispered, "Your secret is safe with me, mon aimee ... you always did have a lovely smile..."

THE END