

Unusual Talents

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Rated: PG

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Summary: Lois discovers that someone unexpected has an unusual talent. . . Part of Queenie's Pick 3 Challenge. Takes place at the fundraiser in the episode "Whine, Whine, Whine" but instead dropped into Season 1. Enjoy!

Lois caught herself staring on more than one occasion at the Man of Steel. She couldn't help herself — he was a god in tights and he saved the city on a regular basis to boot. And now, there he was, strolling casually along through the booths at the fair with the mayor.

He seemed to be a bit distracted though, by all of the wares being sold. Lois found it adorable — he tried so hard to mask his enthusiasm, stay aloof and pay attention to whatever the mayor was trying to tell him. She could see the struggle on his face, but every now and again, his excitement would slip through, and he'd stop briefly, talk to the vendor for a minute, and then go on his way. Some of the people offered him something, feeling star struck. Most times he refused, merely stating he was just curious. Other times, he'd accepted.

His joy at the simple things was infectious.

"Lois! I lost another nail! What in the Sam Hill are you doing just standing around out there? You're supposed to be helping me!"

She rolled her eyes and turned around to find her boss in a get-up that couldn't keep her from laughing. The colorful robes were swirling every which way and the turban was barely sitting atop his head correctly, sliding off to the left in a way which revealed a bit of gray hair.

Lois held it together. "Perry, if you'd stop gesturing so wildly, maybe the glue would have time to dry."

"Lois."

"Chief, I don't have any more! You get what you get— remember me saying that the last time I re-glued another nail? *Madame?*"

Perry huffed indignantly and returned to his tent with a flourish. She definitely couldn't contain her laugh this time.

When she turned back around, she saw Superman looking her way with a smile on his face. Lois felt her cheeks warming, and got flustered. He seemed to notice his mistake then, and busied himself in the small bowl of fresh fruit he'd at some point acquired as he pretended to listen to the mayor again.

Lois however went back to watching him. He was so intriguing. He picked through the fruit, sampling different things. He took a bite out of a strawberry— and oh, that made Lois moan — carefully setting the stem aside inside his bowl instead of carelessly tossing it to the ground like a normal person would have done. Like *she* would have done.

She watched him carefully chew some more as they slowly made their way closer and closer to the Daily Planet booth. He popped a whole cherry in his mouth, stem and all, and Lois briefly found herself wondering if he knew not to eat the stems. She supposed it didn't matter, he was Superman— she had watched him eat a bomb the first time they met.

Then a second thought hit her. How did he know not to eat the stems? He was an alien. For all intents and purposes, he was foreign to the customs and habits of humans. And yet he knew

better than to eat the top of the strawberry earlier.

She brushed the thought aside as Superman and the mayor approached the Daily Planet's booth. He'd been here for almost a year now, surely he'd picked up on some things.

"Step right up, folks, step right up!" Jimmy's voice boomed. "One dollar, one measly dollar to learn your future! Madame Blavatsky knows all, sees all, tells all— Mr. Superman! Would you like to hear your future told? No charge for the Man of Steel, no charge at all! In fact, I will graciously donate a dollar of my own! What do you say, it's for a good cause!"

Superman glanced between the mayor, Jimmy and Lois herself before smiling. He lifted a hand to his lips, took the stem from his mouth and set it down on the table. "Sure, Jimmy. It's for a good cause, after all."

He entered the booth, followed by the mayor's chuckles and Jimmy's elation. Lois, though, could not take her eyes off of the cherry stem he'd set on the table. Her pulse quickened, her pupils dilated, and there was no denying the evidence before her.

Superman tied a knot in a cherry stem.

The object baffled and confused her. So not only did he know not to eat the stems off the fruit, but he knew how to do the most common bar-trick-slash-pickup-gag known across the country. And she couldn't explain it away. This wasn't something he'd have picked up randomly in the last six months or so. It was something that would have taken knowledge, practice and experience, and it just wasn't something an alien from outer space who also spent most of his time saving the world would have the time or care to learn.

Unless.

Superman walked out of the tent with a smile on, Perry's booming laugh chasing him out. They all smiled, laughed a bit, and Lois tried to pay attention. But she found herself analyzing the Man of Steel in a whole new light. Where did he learn that trick? When? From whom?

Somehow, that last thought stuck out as the most important question in Lois' brain. A flare of random and completely unreasonable jealousy sparked through her veins. The thought of her hero and idol learning from some hussy in a bar made her flush — and wonder, not for the first time, how good a kisser he would be.

She had to get a grip on herself. Superman's eyes cut over to hers questioningly, as though he'd picked up on her discomfort. Lois flashed him a quick smile and it seemed to satisfy him, though he kept one eye on her, as she kept an eye on him.

The more important question of course was *how*. How could he possibly have the time, in the last several months, to learn it, how would he learn unless he wasn't with someone in a rescuing-capacity? How would he go unrecognized if that was the case? Sure, she could invent a scenario where he created an alternate persona in which he practiced human customs so as to come across as normal, or that he spent his off time hanging out at bars or with questionable associates. But there was Occam's Razor. So, the simple answer to the question of how Superman, given his short time on this earth, would have the time and ability to learn such a peculiar talent?

He wouldn't.

Lois peered at him once more while he was engaged in conversation with the mayor. That opened up a whole host of other possibilities. It meant he hadn't arrived only a year ago, that he wasn't *just* Superman. He had other experiences, another life that enabled him to learn human things, to live a normal life. To be a human.

That struck her like lightning. She bit her lip. He was a human. Somewhere, in some scenario, he was more than a superhero. He was a man, with a life, with friends, with hobbies, with a job.

A job!

“It was good talking to you Lois, Jimmy,” the object of her thoughts nodded to both of them, following the mayor’s lead, and then trailing after him.

Lois couldn’t even be sure she’d responded to him before he’d walked away. Her brain was miles ahead of her, firing on all cylinders. She quickly moved to grab the forgotten cherry stem before anyone else noticed it. “Perry,” she called out to her boss, poking her head inside the tent. She found him adjusting his fake breasts and bit her lip to quell her laugh.

“Lois! What do you want?”

“Something’s come up, I’ve got to head out. You and Jimmy can manage the booth, right?”

“What in the Sam — Lois, this is a required—”

“It’s for work,” she pleaded.

“*This* is for your work!”

The picture he created, red faced, turban sliding off his head, and slamming his palm down on the table so hard that another one of his acrylic nails flew off was too much for Lois to handle. She burst out with laughter. His scowl only darkened.

“I’m sorry, Chief! You should see yourself right now!”

He waved her off with a roll of his eyes. “Get out of here.”

Laughing, she exited the tent and left the fair, the thrill of a new story buzzing under her skin.

Superman was a regular person. And Lois Lane was going to find out just who that person was.

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