

# My Best Friend's Wish

By Katherine Kent [victoria@seekersrest.plus.com]

Rated: PG

Submitted: December, 2014

Summary: Clark knows what his wife's Christmas wish is, but a trip to the hospital has him making his own Christmas wish.

**Acknowledgements and Comments:** The year is 2005. Lois and Clark are away from home for a conference just before Christmas. Thank you to KenJ for his beta. I can't express enough how great he is. Thanks to Morgana for her comments, which always encourage me. While the idea for this has been in my notes for ages I have slightly tweaked it so that it can (possibly) fulfil the 'worst Christmas ever' challenge. You can let me know at the end of part three whether it fulfilled the challenge or not.

**Disclaimer:** Superman, Clark Kent, Lois Lane and all other character and place names are owned by DC and/or Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman. I own nothing ... except my fantasies — which frequently include Clark/Superman.

\*\*\*

## Part 1

The first pain came just as Lois was taking a bite into her dessert. "Urgh," she groaned and when the pain faded, a moment later, she swallowed the creamy chocolate mousse which had been waiting in her mouth.

"Everything all right, honey?" Clark asked his wife.

She nodded and smiled. "Just a twinge in my back," was her reply and then she dived in for another spoonful.

"Baby back ache?" he guessed.

"Mmm," came the reply from the mouth once again occupied by another spoonful of dessert.

Lois had suffered from back ache in each of her three previous pregnancies, and this one was no different. Clark usually persuaded his wife to lie on their bed, once the day was done, and he would give her a gentle heat massage. Tonight he'd get her to lay down on their hotel bed and then use a little heat vision to relax her muscles.

Clark watched as Lois cradled her six month baby bump, stroking her hand up and down, while finishing off her dessert. He knew there was a new life growing underneath her palm, and he knew that they would both love that new life, with all their heart whatever sex the baby was, but he also knew that Lois — secretly — hoped for a girl.

The previous three pregnancies had resulted in four — wonderful — boys. Jordan, the twins — Jonathan and Samuel, and Clark Jerome Jr, brought joy into their lives every day. Clark wouldn't change anything about his boys ... not one thing. But he knew that Lois wanted a girl, desperately.

He'd caught her making a wish at the wishing well in Centennial Park, the day after her first sonogram, months ago. Sometimes his super-hearing was a curse, sometimes it was a blessing. He was glad that he knew how his wife felt, but he also shared in her sorrow. And he — secretly — also wished for a girl.

Still ... he would love Baby Kent Number Five, no matter what.

Lois moaned again and he looked up into her face, startled. "Honey?" He was a little worried. That hadn't sounded like her usual discomfort.

"It's okay. I think I just need to visit the restroom." She stood up — rather slowly, Clark noticed — then looked down at him. "Why don't you settle the bill while we're gone?" She placed her hand over her growing belly and smiled, indicating that she was including the baby when referring to *we*.

Lois hadn't returned from the restroom by the time Clark had paid the bill and so he just stood in the entrance way and waited. Fake palm trees decorated the seating area where guests could wait while their table was prepared. Clark reached out a hand and trailed his finger along the palm frond. It was definitely fake, but incredibly realistic. Possibly all the other patrons thought it was genuine. The soil in the planter was real, undoubtedly to help with the illusion, but his microscopic vision could see the molecular makeup of the plastic, and his x-ray vision could see the solid metal supportive core.

A group of young 'twenty-somethings' entered, chatting away to each other, and to unknown callers on the other end of their mobile phones. Clark moved away from the palm tree to allow them access to the waiting area. Checking his watch he realised that Lois had been more than ten minutes and he began to panic. He felt his spine stiffen and his lazy, relaxed posture disappeared. He glanced warily around the restaurant and then in the direction of the restrooms. His hand twitched as he fought against the impulse to slide his glasses down his nose. Tuning in his hearing he searched for that familiar beat.

Although slightly elevated, Lois' heart beat was strong and regular. Linked with that rhythm — a double-time counterpoint — was the steady beating of Baby Kent Number Five. His own heart began to calm a little, but he kept his gaze on the restroom door, not letting himself be distracted even when the group of young woman let out a loud roar at the arrival of the final member of their group.

After a further five minute wait the door opened and Lois came striding through. Clark could tell that there was something wrong. He knew all of Lois' facial expressions, skin colouring and bodily mannerisms. Something about the way she was walking, and the pale colour of her skin, sent a shiver down his spine. Paradoxically she strode across the restaurant with her head held high, giving off the impression of complete control and confidence.

But it was just an impression. Somehow, he knew.

Lois reached his side and smiled up at him. Her eyes were glassy and her skin was extremely pale. Conversely her cheeks were bright red, along with her lips. A fresh application of lipstick was bound to be the explanation for the lips, but Clark had never known Lois to carry blusher with her.

A quick x-ray of her purse confirmed that.

She took her coat from over his arm and turned away from him. He held out his hand and helped her to shrug into the thick cotton jacket.

"Shall I ask someone to call a cab for us?" he asked, concerned.

"Don't be ridiculous, Clark," Lois answered. "The hotel is only five minutes away and it is an absolutely gorgeous night." With the coat settling into place Lois turned back to her husband and smiled up at him. He smiled back, tentatively, and then pushed open the restaurant door.

Lois was correct. The evening sky was crystal clear and the stars could be seen in the winter night sky. Although, they would be even clearer out of the light pollution of the city and up above.

Christmas was in three days. The cold weather and snow falls predicted in Metropolis were unheard of in Tampa. Clark couldn't wait to get back home. Not only did it feel wrong, to have such nice clear weather at Christmas time, but he missed his boys.

Thankfully the conference, and his closing speech, would be done by lunch time tomorrow, and then he was flying the two of them back home in time to collect the boys from Lois' parent's on

Christmas Eve.

"So, I was going over our list," Lois started, as she slipped her hand into Clark's and they began to walk. "I've changed my mind about Isabel ... I do want it on the list. But I think Gloria needs to come off."

"Oooo," Clark hissed in through his teeth. "She won't be happy about that. You know she's been hinting ever since we announced to the newsroom."

"Well, she'll just have to get over it. I don't want my daughter named Gloria, no matter how much I like the woman who she'd then be named after. And, anyway, she doesn't need to know it's off the list ... we just tell her that we debated over it, back and forth, and eventually settled on ... whatever we settle on."

"Which could be Isabel?" Clark asked, arching his eyebrows.

"Yeah. It's sweet."

"Or Leanne, or Jamie, or Ellen, or Martha ..." Clark reeled off a couple of names on the baby list.

Lois looked up at him as their arms swung and then looked away, smiling shyly.

"I know it's a long list. I just ... I need to ..."

"It's all right, honey." Clark stopped them and turned to face her. "Everything is so ... unknown ... until she decides to come. I understand." He brought a hand up and cupped her cheek then slowly bent down to touch his lips to hers.

Clark felt as Lois parted her lips to deepen the kiss and then, suddenly, she was gone. He opened his eyes to see her bending over and clutching at her stomach.

"Honey," he asked, once more concerned.

"I'm fine, Clark. Just really bad back ache." She straightened up and took his hand again, pulling him off in the direction of the hotel once more. "Plus, I think I may have had an allergic reaction to something at the restaurant ... an intolerance, maybe ..."

Not really believing her, but choosing just to go along with her for the moment, Clark continued to walk, mentally preparing himself for the gentle confrontation to come when they arrived at the hotel and he would attempt to convince her to have a massage and go to bed.

"What ... " Lois spoke quietly. "What if it's another boy?" She took a deep breath. "We do need boy names, Clark."

"I know, honey." Clark's voice was gentle and loving. "How about Perry or Jimmy." Out of the corner of his eye he watched as Lois smiled and nodded.

"That would be nice," she acknowledged. "I think that I like Joseph too."

Clark nodded. "Mmmm, yes." He gripped Lois' hand tighter and swung it back and forth. "That was my grandpa's name. I think that would be nice."

"Yeah, but ..." she paused and sucked in a tight breath. Clark turned to take her in his arms but whatever pain was in her back must have faded. "But," — she continued as if nothing had interrupted her — "wouldn't it be too similar to Jordan?"

"I guess, they are similar." They set off walking once more. "But, actually, it wouldn't have to be a problem. We've actually never shortened Jordan's name to Joe or Jor. Maybe Joseph could become Joe..." He shrugged.

Lois opened her mouth to state her agreement or disagreement, but Clark, instead, looked up to see the entrance to their hotel, and spoke before she could. "Well, here we are ... and I believe someone has an appointment with a massage." Clark wiggled his eyebrows, teasingly.

"Mmm, that would be very nice, Clark. Baby Kent Number Five is seriously squirming tonight, I think."

They turned under the entrance way and walked into the marble lobby. At the elevator Lois moaned again and Clark was suddenly very glad of his invulnerability when she clasped his

hand tighter than ever before. Tighter, even, than when she was in labour pains in three previous pregnancies.

His heart almost quit beating when that realisation hit him. "Lois, honey," he breathed out on a terrified whisper. "Are you all right?"

"Clark," she moaned and her knees buckled.

\*\*\*

## Part 2

"I'm fine, Clark," Lois tried to convince him back in their hotel room. Having swept her into his arms he'd glanced around the lobby to assess the chances of being seen, and then taken her up the stairs at a reasonable, but not dangerous, pace.

"You're **not** fine, Lois. How can you say that?" Clark knew the panic was showing in his voice. "What ... what do you think you are doing?" he asked when she started to shuffle off the bed, where he had gently placed her a few seconds after leaving the lobby.

"I need to visit the bathroom, Clark," she retorted. Reaching the edge of the bed she pushed off and strode for the adjoining washroom.

Whatever pain had sent her to her knees only a minute before was clearly gone. But ... it also, quite clearly, kept returning. He stared, blankly, at the cream coloured wall, unable to calm his heart. His wife ... his very pregnant wife ... was in pain. And it was a regular pain.

He remembered what it was like ... counting the minutes between contractions. It was ... just like this.

But, was she really going into labour? She was only six months along. And she wasn't saying anything. If anyone would recognise the pain of labour it would be someone who had been through it three times.

Forcing his heart to calm he turned back to the bed. The covers were now in disarray, and he smiled. Lois never wanted to put the covers straight anyway. It was always Clark who tidied the bedroom ... and the bed ... at home. He reached over and began to pull at the covers to straighten the wrinkles out, but a bright red patch against the light coloured silken sheet ripped all the breath from his lungs.

Blood.

Only a few, small spots. But they were still bright red. Not dried. Not old. Fresh blood. From where Lois had been sitting.

"Lois!" he called, loudly, and turned for the bathroom, reaching for the handle just at the moment that she called out his name in absolute panic.

"Clark!"

He burst through the door to find her staring in horror at the blood spots on the tile floor. "Clark," she repeated, much quieter and almost begging. Begging him to tell her that she was seeing things. Begging him to tell her that it didn't matter. Begging him to be the god-like Superman, that the whole world looks up to, and to save her. Save her and the baby.

Clark looked up to see the silent tears streaming from her eyes. The same begging was written all over her face.

A moment before panic and terror could overtake him he realised that Lois was in shock and she didn't know what to do. He pushed the panic away and took control, calmly.

Re-dressing his wife as swiftly as he could he then scooped her into his arms and, not even pausing long enough to change into the Suit, sped across the hotel room and out of the balcony window.

The swift flight, through the still, dark night, felt like the longest flight Clark had ever taken. He knew he couldn't go at super speed. He had no idea what that might do to Lois and the baby. Still, he covered the distance to Tampa General Hospital in only two minutes.

It felt like two years.

He landed just outside the doors to the emergency room and

waited impatiently for the two seconds it took the sensors to recognise his presence. The doors slid open and he ran — at human speed — into the festively decorated reception area, Lois still cradled in his arms.

“Help, please. It’s my wife,” he called, suddenly breathless. He strode over to the desk and let Lois slide out of his arms. She stood next to him, clinging onto his arm. He could feel her trembling. “She’s six months pregnant and bleeding. And it’s like she’s been having contractions. Someone has to see her right away.” He pleaded, desperately.

“Can I take her name, please?” the lady behind the desk asked, completely without emotion and focussed on her computer screen.

“You don’t understand. Someone has to see her now. The baby ...” he rushed out, half pleading, half demanding.

The clerk looked up just as Clark felt the pressure increase on his arm. Lois cried out and her knees buckled exactly as they had done back at the hotel. Her cry was so full of pain that it drew the attention of the whole room for a moment. The clerk’s eyes turned compassionate and she nodded. “Can you get her to the wheelchair over there?” Clark turned to look in the direction the lady was pointing. “I’ll get an orderly to take her straight through.”

“Thank you,” Clark breathed out and began to lead Lois in the direction of the wheelchair. She didn’t let her vice-like grip on his arm drop one bit as they began to move away from the reception desk.

“Clark ... what’s going to happen? My baby ... my little girl ...” She trailed off into almost silent sobs. Clark could hear them, though, and every single one was a knife in his heart. He was about to reply, and hopefully comfort his wife in some way, when a man approached the wheelchair and began to move it. Clark panicked for a moment, but the orderly just moved it closer for them, then waited.

Once Lois was settled she reached out to take Clark’s hand. The orderly began pushing Lois towards the double swing doors at the far end of the waiting room and Clark moved along beside her.

“Sir,” came the call from behind, and Clark turned. “I need your wife’s name and your insurance information.”

“But...” Clark said, unable to think of anything but his wife’s distress.

“Sir ...” the clerk repeated.

“It’s all right, Clark. You can come in once you’ve filled in all the forms.” Clark looked down to his wife, only to be met by an unexpectedly calm face. Her pain had obviously passed, but her worry was still present — clearly written in her eyes.

Clark released Lois’ hand and strode back to the reception desk. “Lois Lane-Kent,” he gritted out through his teeth. Now that Lois didn’t need him to be strong, now that she was being looked after by professionals, he felt himself on the verge of falling apart.

“Thank you. Now take a seat while you fill these out.” She passed over a clipboard. “You can join your wife as soon as they are complete.”

Clark made his way to an empty seat and dropped into it just as Lois disappeared through the double doors.

“*My baby ... my little girl ...*” Clark recalled Lois’ cry from earlier.

He tipped his head down and glanced over the top of his glasses, letting the doors fade away. He knew that if Lois were to get some kind of magical Christmas Wish it would be for this baby to be a girl. And up, until this moment, Clark would have wished the same thing, not only for his own sake, but because of his love for his wife too.

He watched as Lois was wheeled into an empty bay half way down the corridor on the left. His heartbeat gradually increased

the further away she got. Now, he just wished that everything would be okay.

The orderly pulled the curtains around the bay as he left and Clark released a breath he hadn’t realised he had been holding. He returned his attention to the forms in his hand. A quick look around the waiting room revealed too many people to risk filling them in the ‘super’ way. Even so, he allowed a small amount of super speed to creep into his writing.

Very soon he was able to hand over his completed forms. As he headed for the double doors they opened and a green gowned woman strode in with a clipboard in her hands.

“Susan Chandra,” called the doctor and a young woman with a large wad of surgical bandage pressed to her cheek stood just as Clark passed her.

Clark paid her little mind, and headed for his wife. As he strode down the corridor he saw another green gowned doctor heading towards him. She reached Lois’ bay and slipped through the curtains while Clark was still a quite a few strides away.

Clark listened in on the introductions as he approached. “I’m Doctor Ellesmere, but please call me Laura. What’s your name?” the doctor directed to Lois, gently.

“Lois,” she replied just as Clark arrived at the bay and pushed through the curtains, immediately reaching for his wife, still sitting in the wheelchair.

“Hi, Doctor Ellesmere, I’m Clark.” He turned to greet the doctor, but as both hands were clasping his wife’s he didn’t offer to shake her hand.

During the next few minutes Clark and Lois both answered questions, letting Doctor Ellesmere know that Lois was six months pregnant, she’d been bleeding a little, she’d not bled before, it was her fourth pregnancy with no previous problems, they’d been out for a meal, and Lois has spent a long time in the rest room before they left. Clark even remembered to pass on that Lois had felt a little ill and complained of a slight reaction to the food.

“Lois?” the doctor enquired as she finished writing down that comment in her notes. “What did you mean by a slight reaction to the food?”

Lois looked away for a moment and bit her lip. Clark immediately recognised his wife’s embarrassed look. “In the restroom ... I, uhm ...” She looked away again.

“Lois, did you have a bowel movement?” Lois nodded. “And was it loose?” She nodded again. “Tell me about these pains,” she asked and indicated that Lois should climb up on the bed.

Clark immediately assisted Lois up from the wheelchair and helped her to climb on the hospital bed. She shuffled around and then lay herself down.

“It’s like a strong aching across my back, but then it increases suddenly. If I was eight months, or more, along then I’d be suspecting contractions. But I’m only six ... and it doesn’t actually feel like contractions. It’s painful ... in a different way. And I also ... kinda ... feel like I’m on my ... you know ...” Lois shrugged and looked away. Clark took hold of her hand and squeezed it.

“All right. I’m going to examine you, Lois. Is that okay?” Laura smiled and put down her notes.

“Mm hmm,” Lois agreed.

Feeling her way gently around Lois’ growing abdomen, Laura commented on everything she found. “Well, your baby is not engaged. The head is still up here.” She indicated under Lois’ left ribs. “Legs are down here.”

Lois laughed and nodded. “I could have told you that.” Clark smiled at his, currently, happy wife. How long that mood would stay could depend on what the doctor found.

“I’d like to listen for the heartbeat. Just a moment.” Laura moved away from the bed and reached for her stethoscope. Clark automatically tuned into the baby’s heartbeat. It was steady, but

high. Babies had a very high heart rate in the womb and that was normal, so Clark didn't worry ... too much. The doctor returned and Lois unbuttoned her blouse.

"Ooooo," Lois hissed in a breath when the cold metal touched her stomach. Laura began to search for the heartbeat.

"Right, I think that's your heartbeat I'm hearing at the moment, Lois. Let's try over here." The doctor repositioned again and began to frown. After another minute she looked up, warily. "I'm, uh, struggling to find the baby's heartbeat. Give me another minute."

Lois widened her eyes and turned her head, swiftly, to Clark. He held tight to her hand and felt her squeeze it in question. He returned the squeeze and nodded with a slight smile, trying to convey that *he* could hear the heartbeat and there was nothing to worry about. When he saw a tear at the corner of his wife's eye he felt his heart lurch. She was worried. In fact, she was *more* than worried. Clark suspected that she was on the verge of panic over the fate of their fifth child. Her eyes pleaded with him, and somehow he knew what she wanted.

He took a deep breath and nodded again, then slipped down his glasses to look at the baby.

\*\*\*

### Part 3

"It's fine, Lois. Everything is fine," Clark reassured his wife. The doctor still had not found the heartbeat: Lois' kept getting in the way. Possibly, her tension had affected her blood pressure. He rubbed his thumb over the back of Lois' hand and raised his other to her cheek. "Don't worry. Laura will find the heartbeat any moment now."

Lois nodded, mutely.

Clark continued to watch in his special way. He could see nothing wrong, but his knowledge was limited to a perfectly normal pregnancy and birth. Suddenly the baby's heart rate jumped and Clark widened his eyes in shock as he saw muscles contract all around Lois abdomen. A moment later Lois cried out.

The doctor took away the stethoscope and began to feel with her hands. "This is the pain you've been having?" she asked.

"Yes." Lois could barely breath the word out.

"I think I might agree with you, Lois. If you were further along I'd be recommending you go through to delivery ..." Clark swivelled his head to look at Doctor Ellesmere. "These seem very much like contractions."

Lois let out another cry and squeezed Clark's hands. The pressure then began to lessen, gradually.

"Lois," the doctor began, once Lois was calm. "I'd like to do a sonogram. I need to see what's going on."

Lois looked over at Clark. He could see what was going on, but there was no way to tell the doctor. He smiled at his wife, in apology that he couldn't share his information. "Honey, a sonogram would be great," he encouraged. "It will prove that there's nothing wrong. Okay?"

Lois nodded.

"There is a portable machine in emergency somewhere. I'll be back in a moment." Laura left the bay, letting the curtain fall behind her.

Lois immediately turned to Clark. "What can you see? Please, tell me everything's all right, Clark!"

"It is," he spoke quickly and quietly. "It is. I can hear the baby's heartbeat, and it's fine. It jumped a little when you contracted ... but nothing to worry about." Clark really believed that ... he did. Maybe.

"Contracted? You ... you think I might actually be in labour, don't you?"

"No! No," he shouted. "You can't be, Lois. It's too early." He took a deep breath and lowered his voice again. "It's too early." He looked down at his wife's large abdomen and remembered the blood spots from earlier. It certainly seemed as if she were having

contractions. He felt tears pricking at his eyes. He couldn't see anything wrong ... but what did he really know? Something clearly **was** wrong.

"Lois," came the voice of the doctor as she returned. Pushing through the curtain she pulled a trolley in after her. "Are you feeling okay at the moment? Any more pain?"

Lois shook her head. "No pain at the moment. Well," she continued, sarcastically, "only what's normal at this stage. You know, bad back, need to pee constantly, aching ribs, swollen ankles, etcetera, etcetera."

Laura laughed and smiled. Clark felt a little bit of tension dissipate. If his wife could joke with the doctor then that was a good sign.

But then he saw her face. It was all an act. Her sarcastic retorts were hiding a deep pain.

Lois kept her eyes on Clark as the doctor squirted a large button sized blob of cold gel onto her stomach. The probe began to move back and forth and Clark found his gaze following his wife's as it was drawn away from him, and over to the monitor.

There was no sound from anyone in the room for the few seconds it took the first image to appear. Clark and Lois both held their breath.

Then the gently whooshing sound of the baby's heartbeat came through the speakers. Three people let out deep breaths. Lois let her eyes close and her head rest back in relief. Clark squeezed her hand. The doctor smiled.

"There." It seemed as if she was also relieved. "There he is."

"He?" Lois opened her eyes and looked back up.

"Well, actually it's not possible to see unless I move further down. This is the heart. I was only speaking in general terms."

"Oh," Lois replied, but somehow she looked disappointed, as if she now believed the baby to be a boy.

"Have you not been told the sex of your baby?" Laura asked.

"We wanted it to be a surprise," Clark replied.

They all sat in silence for a few minutes and just listened. Doctor Ellesmere continued to move the probe around and examine Lois and the baby.

"Hmm," came a confused sound and she watched the monitor just as Lois began to squeeze Clark's hand tighter once more.

"Lois, is this another contraction?"

Lois nodded.

The speed of the baby's heart suddenly increased. The doctor put the probe down the felt at Lois abdomen again. "Lois, I'd like to check on your cervix. I now suspect you may actually be in early labour."

"What?" Lois looked at Clark, fully panicking now.

Premature babies had a much greater chance of life these days, but it could still be touch and go at this stage.

"Let me examine you, please. One minute, that's all, and then ... well, let me examine you."

"Whatever you need to do, doctor," Clark replied for his wife. Lois was still staring at him. Her eyes were glistening, her lips were quivering.

Clark moved away as the lady doctor examined Lois a little more intimately. "*Early labour.*" The words resonated around inside his skull.

A feeling of complete and utter powerlessness came over him.

He could mend a broken bridge ... stop a runaway train ... capture a rampaging Supervillain. But this was beyond his abilities. He'd have to stand back and watch as his hopes and dreams for this baby slowly slipped away.

He turned to look into his wife's face and, as their gazes connected, tears began to spill from both pairs of eyes.

"*My baby ... my little girl ...*" Clark heard her words once more. Yes, they both wanted the baby to be a girl. But at this moment he would settle for the baby just to be healthy and alive.

That was his Christmas Wish. And he'd use up every Christmas Wish to come to keep his wife and baby safe.

"Well, it seems that you are not dilating, and you haven't lost your plug, Lois. All the indications are that you are in pre-term labour, though." Lois gulped and Clark could see her starting to hyperventilate. Laura continued. "The good news is that there doesn't seem to be anything wrong. Your body isn't trying to abort a faulty foetus, and your cervix isn't joining in with the contractions. I'm going to give you a shot of Terbutaline, which will hopefully stop the contractions."

"It will?" Lois suddenly looked hopeful. All the distress faded from her face in an instant.

"Yes. Although there is a chance that it won't stop them permanently. Some women stop their contractions completely, but some continue to contract and so need to take Procardia every 4 hours to keep them at bay." She moved away and headed for the corridor.

"For how long?" Lois looked horrified once more.

Laura stopped and turned back. "Usually until around thirty-seven weeks."

"And ... and that will keep the baby safe?" Clark could recognise the pleading note in his wife's voice.

"It should. Let's see how the Terbutaline works first. Hopefully it will confirm my diagnosis when the contractions stop." Doctor Ellesmere stepped into the corridor and the curtain fluttered behind her.

Lois turned to look at Clark. He could see both the worry and the hope written in her eyes.

"Honey, everything is going to be fine ... okay?" He smiled, letting all his love for her show. He took hold of her hands and then immediately let go with one hand and reached up to cup her cheek. "Okay?" he repeated.

Lois nodded. Clark leaned forward and touched his lips to hers. Parting a moment later he rested his forehead against hers.

"All right, Lois. I'll start with a low dose," Laura explained as she returned. "We can give you repeated low doses until the contractions stop. Then I'll write you a prescription for Procardia just in case it's necessary." Clark moved away and Lois sat herself up, swivelling her legs to dangle off the edge of the bed.

"Okay, that sounds good." Lois' voice was gaining strength, her confidence returning. She reached out for Clark and he took her hand.

Laura continued to talk as she swabbed Lois' arm. "You'll have to take it every four hours. Literally. If you miss by a couple of minutes your contractions will return. It does mean even waking up in the night to make sure you take it in time."

"Really," Lois laughed in unbelief.

"Unfortunately, yes. But it will keep labour away until a much safer time."

As the needle pierced Lois' skin Clark felt her squeezing. He smiled to himself, recognising the difference in pressure when compared to just a few moments ago. He looked up and met his wife's eyes once more. The pain reflected in them was not the same pain that had been clear only a few moments ago.

His heart swelled with relief and he smiled at her. She returned the smile. Hope was written all over her face. Clark knew that everything was actually going to turn out all right. His Christmas Wish had come true.

The doctor was explaining about some minor side effects of the injection, but Clark's concentration wandered. All he could think about was what he'd seen while x-raying Lois' abdomen. He knew that her wish would come true too, in about two months.

But maybe he wouldn't wait that long to tell her ... maybe he'd tell her on Christmas Day.

THE END