

It Would Never Have Happened Like This

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Summary: A different take on what happened when Lois and Clark met.

Clark sat nervously in the office of Perry White, the editor-in-chief of the Daily Planet, the greatest newspaper in the country, if not the world, and he was interviewing for a job.

Perry glanced at Clark's cover letter as he set the story samples provided on his desk. "Ah, yes, Professor Carleton gave me a call regarding you. He was very complimentary."

Perry began to shift through Clark's samples, a frown deepening on his face as he flipped through the pages. A confused look came over the venerable editor. "The Mating Habits of the Knob-tailed Gecko?"

Clark blushed with embarrassment. He knew he shouldn't have put that story in his folder. "Ah, well, I thought it would show my versatility."

Perry closed the folder and looked up at Clark. His expression said volumes. "Look, Kent, I'm sure you're a nice guy and all, but this is the Daily Planet. I can't hire someone without the proper credentials."

"I know I don't have a lot of experience Mr. White, but I'm a quick study, and I'll work real hard."

Perry shook his head sadly. "I'm sorry..."

Suddenly they were interrupted by the door flying open and a whirlwind of energy disguised as a beautiful woman came bursting into the room. "Perry, I think there is something to this Platt guy. I want to follow up on his claims of sabotage."

Perry sighed. "Lois, can't you see I'm in the middle of something here?"

Clark watched, mesmerized, as the woman turned toward him. She was incredible looking. Her dark hair hung to her shoulders and was smooth and glossy. She was of moderate height, somewhat slender of build, but with all the proper curves in the proper places. High cheekbones supported a finely chiseled nose and large brown eyes that would be so easy to get lost in. Clark couldn't believe his reaction to the woman.

She glanced at Clark and gave him a quick once over and smiled in a somewhat predatory manner. "Hi," she said extending her hand. "I'm Lois Lane."

Clark stumbled to his feet and clasped her hand clumsily. Both looked surprised by the sudden seeming electric shock that passed between them when they touched. "Uh, hi, I'm Clark Kent."

She turned back to Perry. "He's kinda cute. You going to hire him?"

Perry rubbed his temples. "Lois, I make my decisions based on a person's talents and abilities. Not so you and Cat can ogle the poor man all day."

Lois grinned. "Too bad." She stepped closer to Perry's desk and noticed the folder. "Is this his stuff?"

She quickly flipped through it. "The Mating Habits of the Knob-tailed Gecko?" She glanced back at Clark. He blushed. Lois laughed. "Well, it does show he has versatility."

Perry frowned at the woman. "Why are you in here, Lois?"

"Oh, right, I was telling you that this Platt guy might be on to

something. Apparently he was one of the top scientists on the Messenger program. He claims the launch vehicle is going to explode. I need a task force to investigate."

"Lois, I don't have anyone I can spare to help you with that crazy man."

"What about..."

"On assignment."

"Okay, how about..."

"In Spain."

Lois frowned at her boss. "Why don't you hire Kent here, and I'll take him."

"Lois... hey, what happened to that old theater mood piece I assigned to you."

Lois shrugged. "I wasn't in the mood."

Perry opened his mouth to respond to Lois when another Planet employee stuck his head into the office. "Hey, Lois, you have a call. Guy says it's important."

"Gotta go, Chief." Lois turned. "Nice meeting you, Clark." She quickly exited. Clark was left dumbfounded.

Perry grumbled. "If that woman wasn't the best investigative reporter I've ever seen." He shook his head. "Anyway, I'm sorry, Kent, but I just don't have anything for you."

Clark stood up and reached out and shook Perry's hand. "Well, thanks for seeing me anyway. I appreciate you taking the time."

A disconsolate Clark left the editor's office and headed for the bank of elevators. As he reached them, Lois sidled up next to him.

"Didn't hire you?"

Clark shook his head. "No, he said I don't have enough experience for a paper like the Daily Planet."

Lois patted him on the arm. "Too bad." She glanced around them, then lowered her voice. "You know what Perry likes even more than experience? He likes initiative." She gave him a wink as the elevator chimed, and the door slid open. Clark stared at the retreating form of Lois Lane until someone in the elevator called out to him.

"Hey, you getting in or not?"

Clark shook his head then stepped into the waiting conveyance.

Lois leaned against the door jam, a smile on her face, as Perry finished reading Kent's story about the old theater demolition. He'd done a great job combining the humanity and pathos of the aged stage actress saying her goodbye to the grand old theater and the hard facts of the old making way for the new in the name of progress. It was actually better than she had guessed it would be.

When she'd spoke to Clark before he left the other day she just knew that he was going to go and investigate the theater story. She couldn't explain it, but ever since she'd shaken hands with the man she'd felt some sort of connection to him. It suddenly became important to her that Clark Kent get a job at the Daily Planet. If Perry reacted like she was sure he would she'd now get her wish.

Jimmy piped up. "Smooth, real smooth."

Perry stood up. "You know what I value more than experience, Kent? I value initiative." He extended his hand. "Welcome to the Daily Planet."

Clark shook Perry's hand. "Thanks, Mr. White."

Lois walked over and stood next to Clark, but she looked to Perry. "So, is it official? Does Kent now work for the Daily Planet?"

Perry gave Lois a curious look. "Except for some paperwork, yes, he's been hired."

Lois nodded. "Good." She grabbed Clark's arm. "Come on, Kent, you're with me."

She began to pull Clark toward the door but Perry halted her with an outburst of his own. "Now just a blue suede minute there, Lois. What in tarnation do you think you're doing?"

"I told you I needed help on this Messenger story, Chief, and you told me you didn't have anyone to spare. Well, now you do." She turned to Clark. "Come on, Kent, Jimmy will set you up at the desk across from mine, then I'll fill you in on the story we'll be working on." Lois placed her hand on his chest. "That is, of course, if you don't mind working with me."

She smiled as Clark seemed to have trouble working his mouth. "No... no, it would be an honor working with a reporter of your caliber, Ms. Lane."

"It's Lois, and you remember you said that when we have to work an all-nighter pouring over endless boring files and the tedious legwork of checking out bad leads and dead end tips." She grinned at him. "It should be fun." She turned and left Perry's office, fully expecting him to follow. He did.

Lois sensed, rather than saw, Jimmy turn toward the Chief, but she easily heard Perry's response. "You heard her, go set Kent up at the desk across from hers." Her grin widened.

Lois was pouring herself a cup of coffee while Jimmy explained the Planet's computer system to Clark when a shadow fell across her. She looked up to see Catherine Grant, the paper's society/gossip columnist standing next to her. She wasn't looking at Lois.

"Who's the new tight end?" Lois almost laughed at the tone of the woman's voice.

"Hands off, Cat, he's mine. I've already claimed him. I need him to partner up with me on my latest story and I can't have you distracting him."

Cat frowned at her. "That's not fair, Lois. You took the last cute guy that came through."

Lois shook her head. "Yeah, but Claude was a scumbag."

Cat laughed. "That's not my fault."

"Besides," Lois countered. "I let you have Ralph."

"Oh, and thank you so much for that, Lois." Cat's sarcasm was hardly disguised. Lois grinned. "So what's the rookie's name?"

Lois took a sip of her coffee, grimaced, then poured it out in the sink. "His name is Clark Kent and he's off limits. You can look, but no touching."

"Spoil sport."

Lois laughed as she left the break area and headed for Kent's new desk. When she arrived she sat on the corner. She caught his furtive glance at her exposed leg before he remembered to look her in the eye. She held back a giggle.

"So, Kent, tell me about yourself. Tell me what your strengths are and if there are any weaknesses that we have to work around."

Clark leaned back in his chair. She could see him trying to size her up before answering. The poor boy didn't know what he was in for and she certainly wasn't going to tell him, but it was going to be fun 'training' the farm boy. If his brain was even half of what his body was, it would be golden.

"Well, as I told Mr. White, I'm a quick study and a hard worker. I've done some traveling since college and I can speak eight languages and read and write six."

Lois nodded, duly impressed.

Clark continued, "I may not have a lot of actual newspaper experience, but I've done a lot of writing and..." A sly smile curved the corners of his mouth. "I take direction well."

Lois laughed. "I like the sound of that. Anything else I should know about? Any deep dark secrets you're hiding?" A momentary look of panic flashed quickly across Clark's face. It passed so fast that Lois wasn't even sure she saw it.

He schooled his features. "Ah, well nothing you'd be

interested in."

"I'm a reporter. I'm interested in everything."

Clark shrugged. "We all have are little mysteries, don't we Ms. Lane."

"It's Lois." She didn't know what it was about this guy that seemed to speak to her, but she was determined to find out everything there was about him. Even his deepest secrets.

"It's Clark."

She grinned as she slid down from his desk, reached over and grabbed her chair. She wheeled it next to Clark. "Okay, Clark, here's where we're at."

Lois had been bringing Clark up to date on her encounter with Dr. Platt and the information she'd been given by him. She was pleasantly surprised that Clark seemed to understand some of the things that Platt had been raving about more than she had. Maybe this hunk from the farm wasn't only about his looks. He also seemed like a pretty nice guy.

She was just about to suggest they move into the conference room where they could spread out all the scraps of paper Lois had gotten from Platt when she was interrupted by her phone.

She picked it up. "Lois Lane. Oh, hi, Mitchell. What? What do you mean you can't go tomorrow night? The sniffles? Are you serious... the sniffles? No, I understand, I certainly wouldn't want to be responsible for you possibly dying from pneumonia." Lois rolled her eyes. "No, that's okay. No, don't call me. I'll call you." Lois hung up the phone. "Never again."

Clark looked over at her. "What's wrong?"

Lois sighed as she came back over to his desk and sat in her chair. "That was Mitchell. He was supposed to be my date for the White Orchid Ball tomorrow night, but he cancelled."

She noticed Clark trying to hide a grin. "The sniffles?"

Lois laughed. "Yeah, Mitchell's kind of a hypochondriac." She leaned back in her chair and gave Clark a meaningful stare. "I don't suppose you have a tux?"

"I'm from a place called Smallville, what do you think?"

Before she could respond he continued. "But I'm pretty sure I could get one."

"Well, since it appears that I'm now dateless for the biggest social event of the year, I could use your help. Would you like to be my escort to the White Orchid Ball?"

Clark appeared to think deeply about Lois' query, then he shook his head. "Nah, I think I'll just turn in early tomorrow night. Us farm boys are used to going to bed early you know." He was rather unsuccessful in hiding his grin from her.

"Don't be a putz. I'll pick you up at eight."

Clark cocked his brow at her. "So, this is a date, then?"

Lois reached out and patted him on the cheek. "You can call it whatever you want. For me it's going to be about landing the first one-on-one interview with Lex Luthor." She stood up. "Think of it as our first undercover assignment. We can arrive together and we can leave together. Heck, we might even be able to sneak in a dance together, but my radar is going to be focused on getting that interview."

She pulled her chair back over to her desk, then grabbed her bag and coat. "I'll see you tomorrow, Clark."

"Goodnight, Lois."

Clark stared at Lois' back as he followed her down the hall to her apartment. It was a very nice back, which was nicely exposed by the gown she was wearing - a gown which hadn't bothered with material at that particular spot.

It had been an amazing evening. Clark knew he was in danger of falling for Lois, but he didn't care. He was a patient guy and it wasn't as if Lois was hostile toward him. If he allowed himself a bit of optimism he would say that he and Lois were becoming friends and from there... who knew.

The place had been quite impressive. No one could say that Lex Luthor deprived himself of the finer things. The ballroom itself was bigger than the Kent barn, and at the far end was the impressive staircase that led up to the penthouse living quarters. Clark didn't think he could live like that; there were too many rooms and not enough of him to occupy them.

He and Lois made an obvious entrance together. They made small talk with some of the society types. Of course, once Luthor made his imposing entrance, complete with a backdrop of lightning and thunder, Lois went into action. Actually it was fun watching her work.

She'd been amazing. Luthor never knew what hit him. She'd challenged him boldly, and openly, in front of all the guests. Luthor had been surprised by her actions, but he quickly regained his composure and went about charming the brash reporter.

Something about the man just grated on Clark. He had nothing to base his feelings on, but the man just seemed... slimy. Clark knew that he was supposed to stay out of Lois' way while she 'worked' Luthor for the illusive interview, but he just couldn't.

Lois wasn't too happy to see Clark cut in on her dance with Luthor, but it worked out okay in the long run. It appeared that Luthor suddenly saw the lovely Ms. Lane as someone desired by someone else. He'd momentarily lost her to a 'rival' and Lex Luthor didn't lose. Lois Lane became a challenge.

Later, when Lois was leading him through areas of Luthor's home that neither should have been in, they'd encountered the man once again. Luthor had placed a sword at Clark's throat in an effort to intimidate him. Clark, knowing that he couldn't be hurt, had merely made a show of examining the sword and accurately describing it as Macedonian.

Luthor had been impressed by Clark's knowledge and went on to claim that it was Alexander's sword itself. Clark hadn't laughed at the man, but it was obvious to him that Luthor had been taken by a clever criminal.

There was no way that the sword belonged to Alexander the Great. Clark's enhanced vision was able to see subtle signs that the sword had been forged fairly recently and had been made to look old. Obviously Luthor didn't have the personal expertise to accurately date his possession. Whomever he'd trusted to do that for him had cheated him. For some reason that made Clark want to smile.

Lois had then come up and gushed all over Luthor, complimenting him on his beautiful home and such. The man had turned back on the charm and Lois had her appointment for the interview.

Luthor's big announcement was news but was disappointing. Clark felt Luthor's plans for a space station seemed somewhat disingenuous. If Luthor really was interested in the idea of the space station and all the good it could do, he'd spend his money helping the Messenger and the space station Prometheus rather than put up a rival station. It smacked of simple avarice to Clark. Looking over at Lois he could tell by her frown that she wasn't all that convinced of his benevolence either.

Once the big announcement was over, Lois and Clark were left free to enjoy the rest of the evening. They'd shared some pleasant conversation with Perry, Alice, and Jimmy while taking advantage of Luthor's ample buffet. They'd even managed to share a couple more dances before the night, too soon, came to an end.

Now Clark found himself staring at the smiling Lois Lane in front of the door to her apartment. She was so beautiful.

"I had a really good time tonight, Lois." Clark reached out and took her hand.

Lois looked down at her hand, then up into Clark's eyes. "Except for that little stunt where you nearly queered my interview by cutting in on my dance with Luthor, I have to admit

that I had a good time, too, Clark."

Clark grinned. "I think it actually helped. I think I made Luthor jealous." Lois just laughed in response.

She sidled up closer to him. "So, do I get a goodnight kiss from my date?"

Clark shook his head. "I don't know, Lois. I thought this was strictly an undercover assignment. Wouldn't it be unprofessional of us to be kissing while on duty?"

"Oh, I don't know. I would think it would fit in with our cover." She made a show of looking up and down the hallway. "You never know who might be watching. Maybe Luthor had us followed."

Clark smiled. "Well, I wouldn't want to jeopardize our cover." He slipped his hand behind her head, threading his fingers into her hair. He lowered his face to hers and captured her lips in a sweet, hopeful kiss. Neither of them escalated the kiss, not wanting to give the other the wrong idea. But Clark had to admit that it was quite a pleasant experience, and he looked forward to a time when their kisses might mean more than just good night.

"Goodnight, Lois."

"Goodnight, Clark."

Lois leaned back in her chair as she gazed once again at the picture of her being carried into the Daily Planet newsroom in the arms of Metropolis' newest sensation. The large bold typeface of the headline exclaimed the story of the decade, if not the century. It was simple and to the point. 'Superman' was all it said, and that said it all.

Hers and Clark's story about the attempted sabotage of the Messenger, and the subsequent events which included the intervention of Superman, lead naturally into questions about the super hero. Lois had a hard time believing the man had actually swallowed the bomb. Then, he'd gone and lifted the shuttle into space to its rendezvous with the space station Prometheus. If she hadn't been there to witness the incredible events first hand she might not have believed them herself.

At first glance, this new hero seemed to be a wonder to behold. He said he was here to help. That was all well and good, as far as it went, but anyone with that much power and those strange abilities would bear watching.

Still, she couldn't help but feel that she could trust the man, wherever he came from. He seemed almost familiar somehow. There was something about him that caused her to believe him. She couldn't help but feel good about this Superman.

A smile found its way onto Lois' lips as the idea of feeling good made her thoughts shift over to her new partner, Clark. There were colleagues of hers who were surprised at how well she and Clark meshed. It was like they had known each other for years rather than just a few short weeks. It had surprised her, too.

In that short time they had become good friends - possibly best friends, and she knew that she really liked being partnered with him. There was a time when she would have resisted having a partner, but there was just something about Clark that made all those past reservations disappear like a morning fog after the sunrise.

The bell announcing the arrival of the elevator to the bullpen floor was cause for her smile to widen. She knew who was on that elevator. She could feel it.

The doors opened, and Clark strode out. His first look was toward her desk. Their eyes locked, and smiles grew. He was by her side in seconds.

"Still admiring your photo, Lois?" He chuckled as he sat on the corner of her desk.

She patted him on the knee. "I'll bet you've already cut it out and have it taped to your refrigerator."

"Nope. I framed it and it sits on my nightstand."

"Ooh, I like that. I'll have to come and see it there

sometime.”

“Anytime, Lois, anytime.” Clark chuckled again. He slid off her desk and transferred to her guest chair. “So, I forgot to ask. How did your big interview with Lex Luthor go?”

Lois’ smile suddenly turned to a frown. “Terrible. He spent the entire dinner evading my questions and hitting on me.” She shuddered. “There really is something slimy about that man. Maybe it’s time for a couple of intrepid investigative reporters to look a little more closely at the high and mighty Lex Luthor.”

Clark nodded. “Definitely.” He tapped the copy of the paper that lay on Lois’ desk. “So, what do you think about our mystery man?”

Lois tapped her pencil against her teeth. “I’m conflicted.”

“Conflicted? How?”

“There is definitely something scary about a person who has that kind of power. Especially someone who suddenly shows up out of nowhere. Logically, I would say that we need to keep a close watch on this guy.”

Clark raised his brow. “But...”

Lois grinned. “But I kinda like the guy. He seems very genuine.” Lois leaned toward Clark, her elbows on her desk. “What do you think? Am I being foolish? I really want him to be the real deal, but is that even possible?”

Clark shrugged. “I guess we’ll just have to wait and see.”

Lois nodded. “I suppose.” She put the smile back on her face. “I’ve been talking to Perry, and he was impressed with our Messenger story and how well we seemed to work together.”

Clark smiled. “It did seem to work out pretty well, didn’t it.”

“Yes, it did, and so Perry said it was up to us. If we want we can continue to work together on all the bigger stories. He said that he would still individually assign stories to each of us, but for the most part we would be a team.” Her smile was coyly shy. “So what do you say, Mr. Kent? Would you like to be my partner?”

Clark didn’t say anything. He pursed his lips and placed his chin on his fist in the classic ‘thinker’ pose. He stared at Lois for several moments.

“Clark!”

Slowly the tight line of his lips curved upward until he was smiling ‘that’ smile at her.

“Yes.”

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THE END