

Sic Transit Ralph's Pagoda

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Summary: What's the owner of Ralph's Pagoda going to do when the Board of Health closes his restaurant?

Disclaimers: I own nothing related to the Lois & Clark universe. I am just engaging in a little not-for-profit fun in said universe. Thanks to the owners of L&C (Warner Brothers and DC Comics) for bringing us such an enjoyable show.

My thanks also to my beta readers Female Hawk and Joan Powers. Their encouragement and insights have greatly improved this vignette.

Ralph's eyes narrowed as he read the notice.

Those bums at the Board of Health! How dare they close his restaurant just because a few people who had eaten there had gotten a little sick? Could he help it if they had weak stomachs? Yeah, sure, he had told his chefs to use the meat that someone had forgotten to refrigerate the night before, but what was he supposed to do — throw it all out and buy more? How could they expect him to make a profit if he had to spend more money every time someone was a little forgetful? He didn't have money to waste, especially since he was way behind on his payments for the restaurant.

He stormed his way back to his loft-cum-love-nest. What was he to do now? When Dad had lent him the money to start the restaurant, he had told Ralph that until he paid back all the money he had borrowed for his various businesses over the years, no additional startup money would be forthcoming. And the last time his dad had spoken to him, he had threatened to sue him for his arrears if he let even one more month's payment slip. Ralph could tell he meant it, too. When his father used that tone of voice, nothing would change his mind, and no excuses — no matter how reasonable — would be brooked.

And now the restaurant had been slapped with twenty health code violations. The cost of remediation and the down time necessary to bring the restaurant up to code were more than his finances could handle. Ralph would have to sell the business. How could his father do this to him?

Ralph had to think! He didn't have the money to start a new business. The banks had turned him down the last three times he tried getting venture capital. They claimed that his 'history of failed ventures is counter-indicative of future successes.'

He'd like to counter their indicatives!

If he couldn't be an entrepreneur, what could he do? He'd have to go — hat in hand — to try to get a job from someone else. But he wasn't about to take any low-level grunt job — not him — at least, not for long. It was all about who you knew, and he had contacts!

Let's see — Who should he talk to? Cousin Fred? No, Fred wouldn't help him. Ever since he had made a move on Fred's fiancée, Fred wouldn't even talk to him. Fred's reaction made no sense. After all, he and Julie weren't even married

yet, and anyway it wasn't as if Ralph were trying to steal his girl — he only wanted to borrow her to have a bit of fun.

So who else could he ask? Aunt Betty? Maybe, if he were desperate. He really didn't want to work in her toy store. He'd have to put up with babies and brats all day.

Got it! Uncle Ray was an Executive Editor and Senior Muckety-Muck. He would give him a job if he were asked nicely. Uncle Ray wasn't all that fond of Ralph, so Ralph wouldn't ask for a job directly. Instead, he would get Mom to schmooze her brother and to ask him for a job for Ralph. If Ralph sweet-talked her, maybe gave her a few flowers, she would do it.

Ralph would probably have to suffer through a grunt's job for a year or so — just for appearance's sake, but then Uncle Ray would be sure to promote him to something more interesting.

Ralph's mood brightened as he contemplated the job he might hold in about a year. 'Ralph Jarvis, Daily Planet Staff Reporter' — it had a nice ring to it.

THE END