

# What I Did in my Christmas Vacation

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Rating: K+

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"Excuse me," said the twenty-something blonde, "is my cousin Clark around?"

Cat Grant looked up from her screen and said, "Clark Kent?"

"That's right, I'm his cousin Linda. Linda Lee." She smiled, showing perfect teeth.

"I'm Cat Grant. Clark and Lois are out on a story, they should be back soon. Want some coffee?"

"That'd be awesome. Thanks!"

"It's over there, next to the Christmas tree. Help yourself from the machine."

Linda went over and filled a polystyrene cup from the filter machine, grimaced as she tasted it, added sugar and creamer, and came back to Cat's desk. "Sorry to keep interrupting. Is there somewhere I can wait for them that I won't be in the way?"

"That's okay," said Cat, "Sit down here; you can spill all the dirt on Clark as soon as I've saved this file."

"Dirt? *Clark???*" Linda found a rickety chair and sat down cautiously.

"Come on, what was Clark really doing when he went off to see the world? Apart from being an absentee father, of course?"

"I think he said something about visiting Nepal," said Linda, "or was it Naples? That would have been when I had my first real crushes, on the guy who looked after the school's landscaping and on Jimmy Olsen, so I wasn't really paying much attention to Clark."

"*Our* Jimmy Olsen?"

"Sure. I was in private school, he came to town on some sort of story a few months after Clark took off. Lucy Lane introduced us. I must have crushed on him for months, but I met him last year and he didn't even remember me."

"Lucy Lane? Lois Lane's sister?"

"That's right; it was a weird coincidence, we were roomies for a while."

"So what happened?"

She shrugged. "I went back to live with family, and met boys my age and got over it. Then I came into a little money a couple of years ago and decided to finish school. I'm an engineering student at UCLA."

"Sounds... um... interesting."

"It is. And I've already earned enough from it to pay for my tuition, so I must be doing something right."

Despite herself, Cat was getting interested. "How does a student earn that sort of money?"

"I designed some toys, sold the idea to BalliToy. Linda's Laboratory, you might have seen the ads on TV."

"That god-awful little girl with the pink microscope and the lisp that says she wants to be a scientist like mommy when she grows up? You're *that* Linda?"

"Oh god, they had me there when they filmed it, she was a totally whiney little brat, but the ad sells a hell of a lot of science toys. And yeah, they named the toys after me, said that calling it 'Girls can do science too!' wasn't going to fly."

"Okay. I think you just gave me my filler story for the end of the column, 'How to become a household name without even trying.'"

"Okay," said Linda, "but don't quote me on the brat, I might have to work with her again some time." She touched fingers to her eyes.

"Tired?"

"I just flew in from the West Coast, and I think I need to change my contacts soon, but I left the kit in my rental. It'll have to wait."

"You should get Clark to try contacts; the glasses make him look like a dork. If he improved his posture and lost the horn-rims he'd be hot."

"Clark?" Linda said incredulously. "*Hot?*"

"You're not kissing cousins then?"

"Ewwww. I'm his first cousin, I'm pretty sure that counts as incest."

"So what are you doing in Metropolis?"

"Christmas with Lois and Clark and Jason, then I'm headed for Gotham for a business meeting, then DC, some of my friends there are having a New Years party. Then back to LA and school."

"That's a busy schedule."

"Why do you think I need coffee?"

"Well, if you hear any good gossip on your travels, bear me in mind, I don't get as much as I'd like out of Gotham or Washington. Or LA, though that's a little out of my area."

"It isn't likely, but if I hear anything good you'll be the first to know."

"Linda!" Jason Kent ran across the newsroom. "You're here! Did you bring something for me?"

"Hi, sweetie," said Linda. "Wow, you're growing fast. I might possibly have a package or two in the car, but it can wait until we get to your apartment."

"He is growing fast," said Clark Kent, following him to Cat's desk. "I hope Cat kept you entertained."

"She's been giving me all the dirt on you," Cat said mischievously.

"Hi Clark," said Linda, "where's Lois?"

"She's uploading the story, should be along in a second. Dirt?"

"I may have mentioned your trip to Naples," said Linda.

"Naples?"

"Naples, Nepal, whatever."

"Nepal makes more sense."

"So what were you up to in Nepal?" asked Cat.

"I did some aid work there with Doctors Without Borders."

"You always were a boy scout."

"He is," said Lois, coming into the newsroom. "I've just seen Perry, Clark, he's cleared us to take off until Monday, unless something really important breaks. And Richard confirmed

he'll be around for lunch on Christmas Day."

"And that's our cue to go," said Clark.

"Nice talking to you, Cat," said Linda.

"Bye," said Jason, as Linda stood. "Merry Christmas!"

"And you," said Cat. She reached into a drawer and pulled out a small package and tossed it to him. "Don't open this until Christmas morning."

"Thanks, Cat," said Lois, "that's really kind of you." She nudged Jason.

"Thanks!" Jason held the package to his ear and shook it.

"Don't be rude," said Clark, "and no peeking until Christmas Day."

"Thank you very much," said Jason.

"That's better."

"That's okay," said Cat. "Now scoot, you've got a big weekend!"

Cat watched them leave, and turned back to her computer. It must be nice to have kids at Christmas, but the rest of the time, the mess and the huge amount of time they needed... no, she was better off single.

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Clark waited until they were alone in the elevator, quickly scanned it with his super vision, and said "No bugs. How did it go?"

"No problems," said Linda. "Supergirl must have spent an hour with her when she interviewed her last year, and there wasn't a glimmer of recognition."

"The tinted contacts really make a difference," said Lois. "And the change in posture and accent."

"It's more a change in attitude," said Linda. "It's like being on duty when I'm Supergirl, and off duty when I'm me. I don't think I called her Cat once when we did the interview, it was always Miss Grant."

"Same for me," said Clark. "I hope you're taking notes, Jason."

"I get it," said Jason. "Cat's right, the glasses do make you look silly."

"Riiiiight," said Lois, trying not to grin. "So it's an early night and no TV for you, is it?"

"Just kidding," Jason said hastily, "they're fine."

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"So what did Cat give him?" asked Lois, once Jason was safely asleep.

"Cufflinks and a tie pin," Clark and Linda said almost in unison. Clark added "I think they're real silver."

"He's nearly ten, so I guess he's coming up to the sort of age where he might need them some time. That's a thoughtful gift. I didn't think to get Cat a present; she was in the office Secret Santa with everyone else."

"I think she got a pair of slippers. Fluffy ones."

"Oh... that's not good."

"Maybe we could get her something," said Linda. "Umm... a really good story?"

"That's an interesting idea," said Lois, "but if there are any stories going we want them for ourselves."

"Not your sort of story," said Linda. "Something more, well, more gossipy. Something juicy she can use for her column."

"I can't think of anything like that," said Clark. "If anything I try not to find out things about people's private lives. It would be too easy to spy on them."

"Me too," said Linda.

"It doesn't need to be in Metropolis," said Lois. "You live in LA; you must hear all sorts of Hollywood gossip."

Linda gave her an odd look. "The nearest I get to Hollywood is flying over the sign every once in a while. I haven't even had to put out a studio fire these last few months."

"You house-sat for Nigel Tufnel. Did you pick up any gossip there?"

"That was two years ago, and he wasn't there, remember. I could tell you more about his dog than I can about him. And if I did have any juicy secrets I wouldn't give them away, he was nice to me."

"That's the trouble," said Lois, "none of us move in the right circles. We need someone who knows the sort of people that Cat's readers want to know about, and doesn't mind digging up the dirt."

"Or someone who actually makes the news, and doesn't mind Cat knowing about it."

Lois snapped her fingers, reached into her bag and pulled out her phone. "I have an idea."

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"...so I was wondering," said Lois, "there's always a lot of gossip about you, and I know you're spreading some of it as a smokescreen. Do you have any juicy stories we could pass on to Cat? Some sort of lead she could follow up and turn into a story?"

"It's an interesting idea," said Bruce Wayne. "It would have to be something that couldn't backfire on anyone, or hurt any of my friends. How long have I got?"

"Christmas is on Saturday, if we could pass something on to her by then it'd be wonderful. But it needs to be something true, and an exclusive, not something that every reporter in Gotham knows. Maybe something that Linda could learn talking to her business contacts there?"

"That's certainly a possibility. Would you mind if it was something that helped with one of my cases?"

"That's fine, so long as Cat doesn't get hurt."

"Let me think about it. I'll get back to you tomorrow."

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"I've got a weird story for you," said Lois. "Something Linda heard from someone who works for BalliToy in Gotham. I think it's more your sort of thing than mine."

Cat smiled and turned her notebook to a fresh page. "Fire away."

"It's just something about Bruce Wayne's New Year party. This year he's going to be serving Japanese food."

"So?"

"So he's spent a hundred and ten thousand dollars on blue-fin tuna for the sushi. One blue-fin tuna! It's going to be flown in from Japan next week. They've keeping really quiet about it because Greenpeace are protesting over-fishing, but the BalliToy guy knows someone in the charter company, and he blabbed."

"How much does it weigh?"

"No idea, but it must be pretty big to be worth that much. What a hypocrite!"

"Hypocrite?"

"Bruce Wayne. He's always saying he supports the environment, then he turns around and does something like that."

"I don't know," said Cat. "'Billionaire buys sushi', it's not exactly the most exciting story ever."

"Shouldn't that be 'Billionaire blows a fortune eating endangered species'?"

"Well, if you put it that way," said Cat. "Maybe - and I stress maybe - we've got a story."

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"...and breaking news from Gotham City, where a three-way fight between police, hijackers, and members of Greenpeace ended with the arrest of the notorious thief nicknamed the Penguin and eight of his henchmen. The thieves tried to hijack a robot replica of a bluefin tuna which was intended as the centerpiece of the buffet at Wayne Industries' New Years Party, following a news leak which reported it as a real tuna worth more than a hundred thousand dollars. The Greenpeace members came to protest over-fishing, and stayed to help capture the criminals. Reports that the mysterious Batman was involved are being downplayed by Gotham City Police Department, who attribute the failure of the robbery to 'bad luck, good police work, and the help of concerned citizens.

"When asked to comment, Wayne Industries CEO Bruce Wayne said 'My aim was to publicize over-fishing of this endangered species, and the main charity to benefit from this year's party will be the World Wildlife Fund. In view of tonight's events I will be donating the same amount to Greenpeace. I must admit that we did leak news that we would be shipping in a real fish, as a way of emphasizing how rare and precious this species has become. That backfired spectacularly, and I'm taking full responsibility for the error. Fortunately nobody was hurt. In fact all of the seafood to be served at my party will be non-endangered or captive bred. I'd like to congratulate the police for bringing the criminals to justice, and all of the members of Greenpeace who helped. Above all I'd like to thank the press for their part in raising awareness of this issue over the last few days."

"In other news..."

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"I guess Bruce Wayne played us," said Cat. "They must have been leaking that story to everyone they could reach, your cousin just happened to be the one to pass it on to me first. I should have guessed when I got it from another source the next day."

"He's lucky he didn't end up with a dead protestor or two," said Clark. Privately he was sure that luck had had very little to do with it - Linda was in Gotham. "You don't seem to be too upset."

"I was a little annoyed, I guess," said Cat, "but I got over it." She reached into a drawer and pulled out a jewel box. "I got over it really quickly, when I saw what some anonymous friend had sent me as a late Christmas present." She opened the box, revealing a gleaming platinum chain and a small jeweled replica of a tuna.

"That's lovely," said Lois, "but isn't taking it a conflict of interest?"

"Nope. I checked with Perry and with Legal, I wasn't given it as a bribe to make me publish the story, the value looks to be below the threshold where I have to report it for taxes, and I don't even know for sure that it comes from Bruce Wayne. It's okay."

"Well, if Legal says there's nothing fishy..." Clark began. Lois and Cat groaned.

"He'll be telling tuna jokes for days now," said Lois.

"Well, if you feel they're out of plaise I cod talk about other fish, but sooner or later I'd start to flounder..." He ducked hastily and headed for the door, with Lois in hot pursuit.

Cat put the chain around her neck and settled down in front of her computer. She really didn't like to be played. Her instincts told her that somewhere there was a real story about Bruce Wayne, and a big one. She just had to find it...

**End.**