Summary

Identity!porn goes badly wrong on a New Year’s Eve in Gotham...

Notes

:ahem: I have goofed and posted this ahead of time. This mostly means that this section has not been edited. It wasn't meant to be a work-in-progress, but :eeee: too late for that now without losing comments and kudos and stuff (all of which are deeply appreciated).

So, yes, the rest will be up ASAP, sorry for this goof up on my part, and thank you for your support.

Yeesh....

See the end of the work for more notes

Growing up in Kansas, Clark Kent had always imagined that if anyone was to be swept of their feet, he would do the sweeping--literally, perhaps. Growing up in Kansas, Clark Kent had never reckoned on Bruce Wayne...

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“Do we really have to talk about Lex Luthor, Mr. Kent?”

“Erm.” Clark pushed at his glasses and looked at the man seated at the other end of the couch. Well, no, actually, Bruce Wayne had scooted quite a bit closer along the butter-soft black leather.
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One arm was draped along the back, a hand resting just inches from Clark's face.

That hand was immaculate; its manicure so perfect that no hangnail would ever dare to make an incursion. Clark had never had a hangnail but going by the invective Lois unleashed on them he gathered they were a painful aggravation. He wondered if he should ask Bruce Wayne for the name of his manicurist, to pass along to Lois. He wondered how Bruce Wayne had gotten that scar that looked like drops of some corrosive had splashed his hand. A suggestion of calluses on those long fingers intrigued him as well. Another scar, not quite hidden by a wristwatch, vanished under the starched cuff of his dress shirt. A glint of light sparked off the gold of a monogrammed cuff link.

There was a reason Bruce Wayne landed on those lists every year--best dressed, most beautiful, sexiest philanthropist. The effect in person packed the kind of wallop Clark that usually only experienced fighting another Kryptonian--or Batman, that first time. At least he knew how to deal with Gotham’s Dark Knight now. Bruce Wayne was discombobulating him.

He suspected the other man was aware of that. The way he watched Clark, a glint of amusement and challenge in eyes like blue topaz, one eyebrow raised, seemed to confirm it.

Clark licked dry lips and tugged at his collar.

Bruce Wayne’s mouth twitched up at one corner in a disturbingly familiar way. It troubled Clark that he couldn’t pin down where he’d seen that quirk of lips before. And that chin... Where did he know that chin from?

“Mr. Kent?”

“Mmm?” Oh. Right. Wits gathered, he ventured onward. “Some would say this was a less than propitious time to purchase a newspaper, Mr. Wayne.” Propitious? Really? “What I mean is--”

Bruce Wayne edged closer and Clark began to have an inkling of how Little Red Riding Hood might have felt in the presence of the Big Bad Wolf. “In these times more than ever, Mr. Kent, I believe the public have a need for information that filters out the spin and brings to light the unvarnished truth, free of biased agendas and ulterior motives, and I know of no better publication that embodies that ideal, that spirit of fair deal and justice for all, than the *Daily Planet.*” He smiled full on then, to devastating effect. “How’s that? Too bombastic?”

“Little bombastic,” Clark said. He scribbled it down in his notebook anyway.

“You can tweak it later. Now, Mr. Kent--may I call you Clark?--tell me about yourself.”

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It was late September, nearly October; that time of year when summer was a memory that grew more distant with every falling leaf. That day in particular, with rain splashing down and a chill in the air, it was hard to remember summer ever happened. The spacious office they sat in, bigger than Clark’s whole apartment, made it easy to forget about the cold, soggy autumn day outside. It was almost cozy in this nook of couch, coffee table, and the tray of coffee that had been set down on the dark, polished wood.

“Black?” Bruce asked as he poured out the coffee. There was the barest hint of a challenge underneath the word, and Clark wondered if this was a litmus test.

If it cost him points, so be it. Clark couldn’t be dishonest. “Cream, thanks, and sugar.”

The only verbal response from Bruce was a soft, “Hhn.” Clark’s ears pricked up for an instant as
some faraway bell went ding ding ding. Whatever it was, it slipped from his grasp just as swiftly.
Bruce splashed cream into the coffee and handed him the cup and saucer. That eyebrow, eloquent
in its silent judgment, twitched upward as Clark added more cream and stirred in the sugar. Bruce
refrained from further comment, however, and settled back with his own cup of aromatic,
unadulterated coffee.

Clark experienced another self-conscious moment as he balanced the delicate china—or was it
porcelain?—cup and saucer on his knee. It was a beautiful set, cobalt blue trimmed with gold, and
probably worth more than he made in a month. One careless, infinitesimal increase in pressure
would shatter the cup. That knowledge flashed in his mind for a moment before he reminded
himself that he had had years to master this skill. He laid the spoon down on the saucer and
relaxed back against the couch.

His notebook and pen were abandoned over on the coffee table, mini recorder beside them, and he
wasn’t sure what to do about the interview. For reasons known only to him, Bruce labored under
the impression that Clark Kent was a wealth of fascinating information. Every time Clark tried to
get the interview back on track, Bruce had one more question about Clark’s life in Smallville, and
how did he like Metropolis, and why had he chosen journalism as a career. He had anticipated
some cynical response to his answer that he believed a reporter had a duty to pursue truth and
justice. Instead Bruce had nodded in a way that made Clark think that earlier speech wasn’t so
bombastic after all.

Now, setting cup and saucer on the table, Bruce said, “Did you know your eyes light up when
you talk about truth and justice, Clark?”

They did? They had? He jostled his cup, coffee and cream splashing up the golden sides. “Ah...
Light up?”

“Mmm hmm. With passion, excitement.”

Oh. So he hadn’t meant light up as in glowing red like laser beams and all that. That was good.
Clark didn’t know precisely what he looked like when his heat vision kicked it but he had
gathered it might be somewhat alarming.

Bruce didn’t appear disconcerted anyway He did glance away, his shoulders lifted in a shrug that
was the very definition of insouciant. “It looks good,” he added, but so quietly Clark couldn’t be
sure that he’d been meant to hear it.

Had the Big Bad Wolf retreated just a bit? Clark hoped so. If Bruce had been wearing a mask,
playing a certain role earlier, Clark believe he was catching a glimpse of something authentic now.
He found he preferred this quieter side of Bruce, with a hint of vulnerability in his bearing.

Not that he had any business preferring any variety of Bruce Wayne. He was here on business.
“So—”

“Look, Clark, I don’t want you to get the wrong idea here.”

He nodded okay, not a clue what the right idea could be. Something told him it was important to
pay close attention from this point onward.

“I know I have this reputation as this cavalier playboy,” Bruce was going on. A rueful smile
tugged at his mouth. “It’s not entirely camouflage—”

Clark pinged on that and filed it away to pursue later. If there was a later. He had a feeling there
really would be.
“--but I don’t as a rule just steamroll over anyone who catches my eye.” He shook his head, gaze passing over Clark’s features, searching his eyes as if looking for clues. “Are you sure we haven’t met before?”

Clark shook his head then. “No, no I’m not. I just...” He pulled a face, vexed by an answer he felt was right there, like that word on the tip of your tongue that you can’t remember. “I think I’d remember.”

“I’ve never been to Kansas.”

“I’ve--” Well, he couldn’t say that he had never been to Gotham. He hadn’t come in the guise of Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper, however. “I’ve heard one definition of déjà vu is that you only feel that you’re experiencing something that’s happened before.”

That sounded feeble to him, nor did he see any indication that it satisfied Bruce, either. How else to explain it, though?

“Maybe it doesn’t matter,” Bruce said at last. “Maybe what does is that we’ve met now.”

Clark could identify the word on the tip of his tongue--he just couldn’t speak it.

“You’re wondering why, aren’t you?” Bruce asked.

Oh, good: he was a mind-reader. That might come in handy. “I guess I am, Mr. Wayne.”

“Bruce--call me Bruce.”

“I--” Head cocked, Clark made one more attempt to piece everything together. The final answer gave the appearance of being the correct one. He couldn’t quite believe it, though. “Mr. Wayne, are you trying to seduce me?”

There it was again, that Big Bad Wolf look. “What was your first clue?”

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End Notes

From a prompt courtesy of cerberry, who asked for: Superbat - A long winter’s night.

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