

Don't Tug on Lois's Key Ring

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Rated PG

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Summary: Lois gives crooks her keys while at a jewelry store? A response to HappyGirl's first line challenge.

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Now

"You take the keys." Lois said as she tossed them. Clark almost missed what happened next. It was as graceful as ballet and... well... the only word for it was 'vicious'. As the man was momentarily distracted by the keys, Lois leaped into the air. Her right foot crashed into the side of his head. Her momentum carried her into a roll to the left and her fist connected with the second man's nose with a crunch. As she landed her other fist collided with the outside of his knee. In moments both men were down, one unconscious and one incapacitated, guns forgotten.

Five minutes earlier:

"It's good living I tell you," Lois gloated as she parked the Jeep right in front of the door to Parker's Jewelry. Clark rolled his eyes. Things were going very well with Lois, but for some reason he had gotten butterflies in his stomach when she had asked him to go to the jewelry store over lunch. That feeling eased somewhat when she said she needed to buy earrings for her mother's birthday present, which confused him further. He definitely wanted to go visiting jewelry stores with Lois someday for a completely different reason and at the moment he wasn't sure if he was relieved or disappointed.

As they walked to the door Lois took his arm. "This won't take long. I promise. You'll be having your corned- beef- bacon- feta- avocado and green pepper on grilled caraway in no time. Thanks again for going with me."

Clark was enjoying the moment, regardless of his earlier misgivings, and missed the look Lois gave the two men standing on the sidewalk as they entered the jewelry store.

Fifteen minutes later:

The moment the police left escorting the would-be thieves, or to be more accurate, the moment the police left escorting the stretchers containing the would-be thieves, Lois turned on Clark. "Seriously Clark, this is how you *stay* the second-best investigative reporter at the Planet. I mean face it, you're never

going to be better than me—but you can at least try. Develop those skills. Give me a challenge!"

Detective Jenkins had entered with the responding officers and had been making notes as he surveyed the crime scene. He was obviously finishing them as he approached Lois and Clark for their statements. Lois asked, "I'm surprised to see you here. Where's Henderson?"

"I lost the bet, so I came. Henderson's eating lunch on me today. He says 'Hi' by the way. Now, it sounded like you were about to give a detailed description of what happened to your colleague?"

"I had just parked the Jeep and we were... Just a second. Bet? Jenkins looked up from his notes sheepishly. Lois's eyes narrowed. "You'll get your statement, but I want to know what the bet was about." Jenkins looked at Clark, who just shrugged.

Jenkins resigned himself to his fate. "Fine. You'll hear about it from him anyway. We were about to go to lunch when we got the call. 'Attempted robbery at the jewelry store. Suspects apprehended with injuries.' Henderson says, 'That's got to be Lane!' I said that you only do kidnappings," he concluded hastily as her eyes flared. "Hey, you got to beat up suspects. I have to go back to the station and listen to Henderson harassing me for the next week—after I pay for a second lunch. Could we get a move on?"

He pulled out his notepad again and Lois started. "As I was saying to my partner here, it pays to be observant. We got out of the Jeep and I saw Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum standing just out of view of the edge of the window over there," she said gesturing in that direction. "They were both wearing jackets and it's nice out. Then one of them scratched near his collar and the whole jacket moved. They were both pretty lumpy in the wrong places so I was sure they were wearing bullet-proof vests. The bulges in their pockets didn't look encouraging, either. Tweedle-Dee, the one in the green jacket, was talking to his buddy pretty intensely when we got out and then I saw him point to the Jeep and us. I don't know what their original plan was but my Jeep is parked in the perfect spot for a get-away car."

"We had just gone inside when they entered. We turned to look. They both had guns out and approached us. Tweedle-Dum, in the blue, says, 'Excuse me Miss but we'll be taking your car.'" Lois rolled her eyes. "Like that was ever going to happen." She waved her hand near her hairline. "Look, do I have 'chump' written on my forehead or something? There's no way anyone but me is driving that Jeep and there was no way I was going with them to drive. Simple. Bullet-proof vests, so body shots are out. They had guns so it had to be unexpected and incapacitate quickly. They were stupid enough to get that close to me. In fact, the way they kept me between them and Clark they were probably worried about him doing something. Anyhow, they're not the brightest bulbs in the box," she concluded.

As he was wrapping up his notes on her statement, Lois said, "I'll make a bet with you, Jenkins." She wore a predatory smile as he looked up. "I bet that within a block of here you'll find their original getaway car illegally parked or broken down. If you want to go double or nothing, I'll bet you find plans for the robbery inside. I won't bet on the crayon."

Jenkins chuckled and said, "No bet here, but I'll float it past Henderson. His luck is due for a change." He looked at Clark. "Kent, anything you would like to add?"

Clark smiled as he looked at Lois. "Nope. I'm just happy to be on my partner's good side." His smile didn't last though. The incident started Clark thinking. He could have apprehended the thugs at any time as Superman. He would have apprehended the thugs as Clark but while he was deciding how to do it in a way that wouldn't raise questions, Lois had already acted. His partner's ribbing aside, her actions had made it clear to him that he did need to 'develop his skills' so a range of responses would

be available to him. He couldn't rely on Superman to rescue him all of the time. He chuckled to himself at the irony.

The Daily Planet, much later

"You take the keys," Superman quoted as he picked up his drei. He winked at Lois and then stepped out to meet Lord Nor. Nor never knew what hit him.

THE END