

Hitting Close to Home

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Rated: PG

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Summary: Lois is able to defend herself against the worst Metropolis can throw at her, but what can she do when her attacker is her own son?

Story Size: 2,069 words (11Kb as text)

WHAM warning: If you've read my other fanfic, you know that I usually try to write stories that are short, fun, and with happy endings. This current story is typical only in length. It is not a fun story and the ending is not happy or even entirely satisfying.

As the title indicates, this story really does hit close to home for me, and as you will see, the word "hit" is very deliberate. As in real life, things are not tied up in a neat little bow. Proceed at your own risk. You've been warned.

This story is the fifth one I wrote in this series but the fourth in the characters' chronology. If you want to read them in the order in which they are supposed to take place, you would do so as follows:

1. ["The Diagnosis"](#)
2. ["The Not-So-Great Escape"](#)
3. ["Echolalia"](#)
4. "Hitting Close to Home"
5. ["Jerome's Wedding"](#)

You don't need to have read any of the other stories to understand this one.

Standard disclaimer: Lois & Clark (along with a few other characters mentioned in the story) belong to DC Comics and Warner Bros. I just borrowed them for this not-for-profit story.

"Ms. Lane-Kent? It's Julie Bradshaw. Todd's acting aggressively again; we need him to leave school for the day. Please come pick him up as soon as you are able."

Lois clutched her phone tighter. "What happened this time?"

"We had a fire drill this morning, and the change in routine really upset him, and the alarm was overwhelming to him. He seemed to settle down when we returned to the room, but when he was told later that it was time to stop playing and to start getting ready to work, he hit Janice and then shoved her to the floor. We had three adults escort him into a separate room. The school psychologist, his other paraprofessional, and his occupational therapist have been trying to help him calm down for about an hour now, but he is still very agitated."

"Is Janice all right? How hard did he hit her?"

"She's not bruised too badly, but we can't risk the safety of the other students or staff."

"Of course. I'll be there soon. And I'm sorry for his behavior."

"No apologies necessary. It comes with the territory of working here."

As soon as Lois hung up the phone, she called in to Perry that

she had to leave for the day.

As soon as Superman landed in their living room, Lois told him, "Clark, clear your calendar for tomorrow afternoon from 3:00 on. We're taking Todd to see Bernie."

"How come?"

"You were out of the office when his teacher called me. There was another incident."

The next day, Clark and Lois took Todd to see Dr. Klein while Jerome was working on the school newspaper. As they filled Bernie in on Todd's recent behaviors, the young man in question started rocking and droning, "Wanna go home. Wanna go home. Wanna go home. Wanna go home."

Bernie spoke loudly enough to be heard over Todd's mantra. "I warned you years ago that this might happen — that nonverbal and minimally verbal teenagers have the same hormonally-induced rage as other teenagers, but they can't lash out verbally, so they sometimes lash out in the only way they can — physically. Damn. The one time I had hoped I'd be wrong."

Clark nodded. "Yeah, me too. Is there anything you can give him to help?"

"Well, Clark, if you were human, we could have tried Todd on medicine; earthlings in similar situations often respond well to Risperidone or Sertraline. But we've been through this before with both you and Todd. Kryptonian invulnerability prevents the meds from working on either of you, and using even small doses of kryptonite to reduce your invulnerability is a delicate, risky business. Couple that with Todd's mixed heritage and the fact that his body is transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and all bets are off. Even with humans, it's a balancing act to use medicine to help calm the patient without turning them into a zombie."

Todd grabbed Lois's hand tightly and tried to pull her toward the door. Clark gently pried Todd's hand off of Lois's and held his son's hand himself. Todd kept repeating, "Wanna go home. Wanna go home. Wanna go home. Wanna go home."

Clark spoke quietly and soothingly to Todd while Lois said, "So you're telling us that in order for the medicine to have a chance to work, we'd have to poison our son. Isn't there anything else we can do?"

"I can't think of anything, but if I come up with an idea, I'll give you a call."

Todd's drone became louder but remained a monotone. "WANNA GO HOME. WANNA GO HOME. WANNA GO HOME. WANNA GO HOME."

Clark said, "Thanks, Bernie. We'll talk about it and get back to you." Clark turned to Todd and said, "All right, sport. Let's head home."

Once the boys were in bed for the night, Lois and Clark resumed their conversation from earlier.

"Clark, what Bernie proposed is too dangerous. We'll just have to work harder to get Todd to use his communication board. We can call for an IEP meeting to request that he get more speech therapy at school. Maybe his OT could work on breathing exercises and other ways that Todd can learn to calm himself."

"I'm willing to try that; I just hope it works."

The next afternoon, Lois and Todd played a game of Chutes and Ladders while they waited for Clark and Jerome to come back from their grocery shopping trip. When Todd moved his piece to the last spot on the board, Lois said, "Good game, Todd. Let's put it away so I can start getting dinner ready."

"More game."

"We can't play more now. Dad and Jerome will be home soon."

"More game."

“No more game now, Todd.” Lois started to get up and leaned over to gather the game pieces. Todd shoved Lois. As she fell, her right arm hit the corner of the dining room table. By the time Clark got home, the entire bottom of her lower arm was black.

Clark took one glance at Lois’s arm and his face fell. He managed, however, to wait until they were alone that evening before discussing the situation with her. “Honey, you have to move out of here, at least until Todd becomes less aggressive. It’s for your own good.”

“Not a chance, Clark. The last time you wanted us to separate ‘for my own good’ was nearly two decades ago. It was the wrong thing to do then, and it’s the wrong thing to do now. I know you mean well, but I’m not going to just walk out on you and the boys. Todd is still a toddler developmentally; he doesn’t understand that other people can feel pain. He isn’t being malicious when he hurts people, and he doesn’t have the words to express his impatience or anger. He needs us to teach him better ways to interact. I’m not about to leave him.

“And what about Jerome? Having a younger brother with severe autism has meant that most of his life he has had to adjust. He’s had to put up with Todd’s idiosyncrasies, had to settle for far less attention than he would otherwise have gotten because our focus had to be so much on Todd (not to mention my one job and your two). I’m not going to abandon either of them, and I’m certainly not going to desert you.”

Clark took one of Lois’s hands in both of his, making sure to be extra gentle; he knew her hands were extremely sensitive these days from Todd’s squeezing them too hard. “You wouldn’t be abandoning or deserting any of us. But this time, it was just your arm that hit the table; what if it had been your head instead? Both of our boys could have been without a mother, and I don’t know how I would manage to keep going, let alone raise them, without you. And this isn’t just an isolated event. Look at your arms; they are never without fingerprint bruises lately. A day doesn’t go by that he doesn’t hurt you in some way.”

“I’ll admit it isn’t pleasant; in fact, it stinks. And I’ll agree that it’s a horrible phase he’s in, but it’s probably only a phase; he was a sweet boy when he was younger and there’s every reason to believe that his behavior will improve in a few years. That’s not just wishful thinking on my part; teenagers have been morphing from monsters into mature adults for generations. Todd won’t be any different there. Even his teachers and Bernie agree on that.”

“You’re probably right, but I need you to survive those years. So far, at least, Todd is not super-humanly strong, but he is already bigger, stronger, and faster than you are. It’s getting harder for you to defend yourself against him.”

Lois’s chuckle was devoid of humor. “Clark, I can defend myself against the worst criminals that Metropolis can throw at us, and you know it; I’ll survive Todd.”

“Lois, you don’t go easy on the worst criminals. Could you honestly do to Todd some of the things you’ve had to do to the bad guys over the years? He’s our son; you’d hold back. And after your encounters with the worst criminals, they are taken to jail; you don’t have to live with them day-in, day-out.

“Honey, you wouldn’t be abandoning us if you lived somewhere else. Maybe we could buy the townhouse that’s on sale just down the street. Jerome could visit or stay with you as much as the two of you would like. And you could see Todd whenever either Jerome or I could be with you to run interference. The two of us are strong enough and fast enough that we can keep Todd from hurting you without having to hurt him in the process. We’ll still see each other at work, Jerome could babysit at other times so we could have time alone together. Even if Jerome were busy, I could be with you in the evenings while Todd is watching TV or sleeping. I can keep a super-eye and ear out to make sure he is all right, and can be with him the moment there is any trouble.”

“And what if Superman is needed while Jerome is busy? What then?”

“Superman will just have to be less active for a while. It should only be for a few years.”

Lois’s voice dropped to a whisper, “And what if it isn’t? What if Todd doesn’t outgrow this ‘phase’? Or what if he does develop powers? What then?”

Clark enveloped Lois in his arms, being careful not to touch any of her injured areas. “Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that.” Clark then muttered, “I haven’t felt so helpless since I had to leave earth with Zara and Ching.”

Lois sat bolt upright. “That’s it. That’s the answer! You’re a genius.”

Confusion clouded Clark’s features. “I am? What did I say?”

“I think you solved our problems with Todd’s aggression. Remember back when you had to fight Nor? Ching and Zara taught you some Kryptonian meditation techniques to help you stay focused and relaxed during combat. Could you teach a simplified version to Todd to help him calm down when he becomes agitated? Maybe you could even use telepathy with him; perhaps he could communicate more clearly with you that way than he can with anyone else in any other way.”

Clark pondered the idea for a few minutes, and then broke into a huge grin. “You know, that just might work. It’s sure worth a shot.”

Lois wished they were in a story or on a TV show; she knew that if they were, then her idea would solve all of their problems with Todd. But they weren’t. This was real life. And only time would tell whether it would work.

THE END

Read more in the next story, [“Jerome’s Wedding.”](#)