

# The New Adventures of Zooperman

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Summary: Lois and Clark spend an afternoon at the Metropolis Zoo.

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*Author's Note:* Hope you enjoy this short tale that is, uh, loosely based on events that happened to yours truly while visiting the zoo with my kiddos several years ago... :) Special thanks to my daughter for her help with "research" and for laughing at all the right times while she "BR'ed" it for me.

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"Okay, so we saw the amphibians, reptiles, bugs — gah, I don't know how you managed to convince me to go in the Bug House — never again, Clark. And up ahead, oh! The Bat Cave. Ha!"

Clark laughed as he shuffled along next to his partner, who pointed at the map in her hands with a silly grin. A grin he loved. Er, liked. Right. He liked it. A lot.

He smiled back and moved just a little closer to her, pretending to have to squint to see the small writing on the page.

"We can check out the bats and then head over here to the African animal exhibit. Lions, elephants, giraffes, zebras," he suggested.

"Sounds like a plan."

Lois nodded an agreement and then reached over and snatched a handful of popcorn out of the bag in Clark's hand.

"Hey, I offered to buy you your own bag. Don't steal mine!" Clark feigned indignation, but his smile only grew.

"I don't want the whole bag. Just a handful," Lois said, popping a few of the pieces into her mouth. She smiled up at him again and then turned left toward the Bat Cave.

They both stopped, still fifty feet or so from the entrance, and Lois sighed.

"Of course there would be a line to get in," she complained.

"Well, Lois, it is a popular exhibit."

Clark followed her as they took their place at the back of the line to enter the Bat Cave. She continued to pick pieces of popcorn from his bag while reading random animal facts off the back of the map to pass the time.

Clark, on the other hand, forced his eyes to wander away from his partner.

His girlfriend? Maybe. He wasn't quite sure yet.

They'd had one real date, but hadn't gotten the opportunity for a second yet. And this outing was for work — covering the grand reopening of the Metropolis Zoo after a year-long closure to rebuild and restructure many of

the older exhibits. So, this really didn't count as a second date.

He'd been meaning to ask her, he just —

To his left, movement caught his eye. Near the top of a short slope in front of the cheetah enclosure, a child jumped up and down next to his mother, who leaned over a stroller and crooned softly to her sleeping baby girl.

"Mommy, can we go see the elephants now? Please, please, please! You promised!"

Clark chuckled and tried to turn his attention back to what Lois was saying.

"Did you know that the okapi's tongue is long enough that they can use it to clean both their eyes and ears? Eww."

"Oh wow, really, Lois? No, I didn't know that," he teased.

She swatted at him, but he managed to dodge her attack. Giggling, she inched forward as the line to the Bat Cave moved and then looked back down to the map again.

Clark pretended to listen as she started to rattle off some fact about female meerkats engaging in "competitive growing" or "eating contests" to establish dominance.

However, he was again distracted as off to their left, the little boy grabbed his mother's hand and tried pulling her away toward the elephant exhibit. When she didn't follow, he took off, toddling along as fast as his little legs would carry him toward the elephants.

"Clark, this is taking too long, let's —"

"Yeah, sure, Lois, whatever you say," Clark cut in, watching distractedly as the mother realized her son was no longer at her side.

The boy stopped and turned back as his mother called his name. And Lois tugged at Clark's hand, pulling him in the opposite direction. He followed, reluctantly, but then happened to glance back over his shoulder one more time. Cringing, he saw the boy take off again, and in a moment of panic, the mother ran after him, leaving behind the stroller with the sleeping baby. The stroller, which sat precariously on the top of a small slope. The stroller, which —

"Clark, come on."

Lois again tugged at him, hard enough this time that he stumbled after her in his distracted state.

"Lois, wait I..."

His eyes widened as the stroller started, ever so slowly, to inch backwards down the slope. The mother still chased after her son, unaware that she'd forgotten to set the foot brake on the stroller. And the baby still slept peacefully, unaware of the impending roller coaster ride she was in for.

No one else seemed aware of the danger either.

He had to step in, or the child could be seriously injured. But Lois held his hand tightly, pulling him away. He grimaced, glanced around quickly, and made a split-second decision.

"Hey, Lois, look, a...giraffe!" Clark pointed off in the direction opposite where the stroller now started its descent down the slope.

Startled, she released his hand and turned toward where he pointed.

“A giraffe? What?”

With a short burst of speed so fast he was nearly invisible, Clark flew to the stroller, stopped its slow downward progress, applied the foot brake to keep it in place, and returned to Lois’s side. All without waking the sleeping baby or spilling his popcorn.

“Clark, that’s — really, Clark? That is not a giraffe.”

Lois swatted at him again, this time with the folded up map in her hands.

“Oh?”

He stuffed a large handful of popcorn in his mouth and watched with a lopsided grin as the mother picked up her toddler and hurried back to the stroller, now safely stopped and immobile.

“No, that’s — oh wow, their tongues actually *can* reach their ears. Eww,” Lois grimaced as she stared off at the animals in the exhibit he’d pointed toward. She reached down, took his free hand, and led the way toward the okapi exhibit. “You know, Clark, maybe you need to find a new optometrist. The okapi really looks nothing like a giraffe.”

“Well, actually, Lois...”

THE END

*End Notes:* The okapi is an artiodactyl mammal that belongs to the family Giraffidae and is therefore a type of giraffid. Okapis (genus *Okapia*) and giraffes (genus *Giraffa*) are the only two extant genera belonging to this family. Okapis are also commonly known as forest giraffes, Congolese giraffes, or zebra giraffes.