

# The More Things Change

by Kala Lane Kent

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Rating: K+

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Lois shaded her eyes from the sun as she got out of the car at the Troupe house. "Damn, it's hot," she muttered, carefully balancing the cheesecake she'd brought.

"It's the Fourth of July - what did you expect?" Clark said gently as he opened the back door, Jason and Kala leaping out to race across Lucy's lawn. The Troupe kids were already at play in the side yard, chasing each other with water balloons and running through the sprinkler to cool off, and the twins couldn't wait to get in on the fun. For once, Lois and Clark let them dash off - they could make nice to their aunt and uncle a little later, when they'd worn the edge of their hyperactive excitement.

"I can hope for snow flurries," Lois sighed, heading for the front door. Clark followed, carrying the fruit tray and a case of soda easily. Independence Day among the Lanes was a potluck affair.

Lucy had seen them coming and met them at the door, getting the food put away and giving them both an affectionate kiss on the cheek. "Almost everyone's here," she said. "Still waiting on Tobie and Maggie, and Perry and Loueen. Ron and Richard are out back doing mysterious macho things to the grill, and Mom and Lana are making sure the kids don't kill each other. Want some wine?"

"It's barely three o'clock," Clark said, startled.

"Oh, it's that fruit-flavored stuff," Lucy said dismissively. "Barely enough alcohol to count. But it's ice cold. There's water, iced tea, and juice in the fridge, and beer and soda in the cooler outside, if you want something else. In fact, Clark, would you be a love and top up the soda supply out there?"

"Sure," he replied, carrying the case through the back door.

Lois, meanwhile, poured herself a glass of wine and sipped it. "Cat's not coming?" she asked her sister.

"Nah, the new boyfriend's taking her to a fancy-schmancy party downtown," Lucy told her. "She's gonna miss seeing Loueen and the new baby, though. I bet she'll wrangle a girls' night out this weekend just to coo over little Bryan White."

Chuckling, the two women headed outside into the dazzling sun. Ron had just lit the grill, and Clark and Richard were standing back talking in desultory tones over the benefits of charcoal versus gas grills. Lucy strolled around to the side yard to keep an eye on the driveway, and her presence relieved Ella and Lana of child-tending duties long enough to greet Lois and Clark.

There were hugs all around, but when Lana stepped back from Lois she had a

mischievous gleam in her sea-green eyes. "This is all *your* fault, I'll have you know," she said mock-sternly.

The famous Lane eyebrow rose. "What's my fault now?"

"You'll see," was Lana's mysterious reply before heading inside for iced tea. Lois just turned that speculative look on Richard, who shrugged, pretending ignorance. Lois *knew* he was bluffing, but it was too hot to bother prying the answer out of him.

About that time, the Troupe kids came trotting around the corner of the house, dripping water and looking for refreshments. Ron and Lucy had gotten a dog to go with the new, larger yard, and Hennessy - named for his cognac-colored coat - trotted along with them, hoping for a dropped hamburger. Lois patted his head absently, listening to the sound of a car approaching. Sounded like a big six-cylinder engine...

The guys heard it too, and Ron grinned. Richard, however, was the one to call out, "The steaks have arrived!"

Moments later, Maggie came through the house, carrying the steaks marinated in her personal top-secret blend of red wine and spices. Tobie was right behind her, already carrying a glass of wine, and more fond greetings ensued. "Have a beer," Ron said, holding a bottle out to Maggie, which she accepted gratefully.

Tobie, meanwhile, clinked her glass of wine against Lois'. "Damn, it's hot," she sighed. "I saw the cheesecake, Lane, and I'm not talking about you prancing around in those little shorts and a halter top." That earned her the smirk she had been aiming for, so she continued with a grin, "So, strawberries and blueberries, huh? Cutesy and patriotic. Nothing less than what I'd expect from an Army brat."

Lois grinned at her, glancing up at the American flag flying from the roof of the house. She might not always be fond of the military, thanks to her father, but the *country* was another matter. "Yeah, like I don't know you'll dive in for the first piece - of the *cake*, Raines, you perv."

"The first piece of *you* is long gone," Tobie shot back. "And I'm not even asking how many servings there were. I'm just glad Clark's the guy who gets to take home the Tupperware after the party." Good-natured laughter accompanied that remark, and Tobie collapsed into a nearby lounge chair. She'd barely sat down when Jason decided he was tired of running around, and since Mommy was sitting on the bench, he climbed up on Tobie's lap. "Hiya, kiddo," she said, momentarily nonplussed. "Make yourself at home, why don't you?"

"I love you, Aunt Tobie," he said, giving her his best shark-like grin.

Kala bounced up onto the bench next to Lois, never one to let her brother hog the limelight. "Can we light some real fireworks this year? Pretty please? Sam an' Nora get to light 'em. Can we *please*?"

"Maybe just one," Lois said warily, thinking of the relatively harmless little fountains. "And only if you behave."

"Yes, ma'am," the twins chorused.

Maggie sat down in a nearby chair, sipping her beer while the steaks started to sizzle. Lana had taken another seat under the Troupe's big patio umbrella, keeping her fair complexion out of the sun, and the lieutenant asked her, "How's the house-hunting going?"

"I've got two to look at tomorrow," Lana replied. "They're both condos, but one's a penthouse. While I hate to copy Lois, I'm kind of leaning toward that one for the extra space."

Richard wandered over to bring his wife a plate of appetizers, plenty of fresh fruit and veggies from the trays set up inside. "We might be starting a trend," he teased gently. "All of

our friends will move to penthouses, and I'll wind up getting a helicopter to go visiting. Nice way to get around traffic - they do that in Brazil, you know. Sao Paulo."

Lois saw the gleam in Tobie's eyes before the *Star* reporter drawled, "Nah, too pretentious for me. A *real* reporter needs to get down to the street every now and then."

Richard snorted in amusement. "Whatever, Raines. You're just jealous because I have a cushy magazine job with my own office, and they're *paying* me to fly."

"I'd pay you to fly if you'd promise not to land in the same country with me," Tobie shot back. "I'll give you this, White. You are the *luckiest* sonofa..." She glanced down at Jason and amended "...gun on the face of the earth. Not only did you... get engaged to the infamously hard-to-get Lois Lane, you *married* our favorite millionaire, Lana Lang. And then you top it all off by landing a freakin' job just by walking into Dooley's at exactly the right moment!"

Everyone chuckled, knowing the almost unbelievable circumstances. After fruitlessly job-hunting in Gotham City for months, Richard had taken a break from it and gone back to Metropolis, where he and Lana watched the twins and the apartment during Lois and Clark's honeymoon. He had happened to stroll into the journalist's bar one day, and overheard a reporter comment on a job opening at the *Aviation Journal*. That had led to some agonizing on his part, but when he finally mentioned it to Lana, her response had been simply, "My business is wherever I am. And if we move to Metropolis, we'll be closer to the twins. Go for it, Richard." The rest was history: Richard now had a job that combined his two great loves, flying and writing, and Lana was relocating to Metropolis.

"What can I say?" Richard replied, shrugging. "I *am* lucky. Now if I could somehow manage to make that luck work to get *you* a personality transplant..."

"Nah, I like her as she is," Maggie said. "Besides, Tobie's mellowing out in her old age." Everyone turned to look, Tobie arching an eyebrow, and Maggie said with a grin, "She hasn't called you 'Dick' yet, Richard, and it's been almost ten minutes."

"Damn, I'm losing my edge," Tobie sighed theatrically, and everyone laughed.

The three older Troupe kids had gravitated toward them, carrying cups of juice and small plates of snacks from the fruit and veggie trays. Though Kala was the first to turn and look toward the front yard, it was Nora who jumped to her feet, beaming. "That's Uncle Perry's car!" she cried. "Him an' Loueen an' Bryan are here!" That occasioned a mass departure toward the house, where Lucy had just gone in to get her own six-month-old daughter Michelle up from her nap.

"Good God, you all act like you've never seen a kid before!" Perry grumbled as he held the door open for his wife, who carried the baby, and for Jimmy Olsen, who had somehow wound up carrying everything else. "And most of you have 'em! Scram before you smother Loueen... Hello, Elinore." His gruff voice abruptly became courteous on the last two words.

"Hello, Peregrine," Ella said just as politely. Her attention was mainly on Loueen, and she gave the younger woman an affectionate smile. "Hi, Jimmy, glad you could join us. Come in, Loueen, just shove my brood aside. Have a seat and something to drink. Was he fussy on the drive over?"

"No, the old man likes to get out now and then," Loueen replied, provoking indignant grumbling from Perry. "Seriously, though, Bryan was a darling. I think he likes the car," she said more seriously, taking a seat at the kitchen table as Richard hurried to get her a glass of tea. All that could be seen of the infant was a pair of wide eyes peeking out from the crook of Loueen's elbow. She folded back his blanket and let everyone get a better look at him, the Lane and Troupe kids crowding up front eagerly.

"Aww, he's adorable," Lucy cooed, stroking Bryan's chubby cheek. She was carrying Michelle, who seemed interested in the younger baby. "Who's the cutest little guy, huh? What a charmer! Look at those eyes!"

"Yeah, he is cute," Lois said, pausing to hug Jimmy before looking over her sister's shoulder at the new baby. "Makes me wonder if he's really Perry's." She glanced over at her boss with an evil grin, but he just laughed at her.

"That's the White charm you're seeing," Perry informed her. "I'm just glad to see Bryan's following in his father's and his cousin's footsteps - barely two weeks old and he's already got women crowding in to see him."

"Peregrine, you are incorrigible," Ella told him, but she couldn't hide her grin.

"We've got umbrellas set up outside for shade, if you want to let him and Michelle loll around together," Lucy said. "Just keep an eye on him around Hennessy. The dog thinks babies should stay on their blankets, and he's liable to whine himself into a fit if Bryan starts wiggling too much."

"Sounds good to me," Loueen said. "I'm about starving, too. Let me at the appetizers."

"Here, I'll take him," Lana said, and Loueen gladly turned her son over to the older woman. With that decision, everyone headed back outside where Ron had been left to supervise the grill. Clark, whom only Lois and Ella noticed had been absent for a few minutes, had returned to talk to his brother-in-law, and was just as delighted to see the baby as everyone else had been.

Jimmy came in for some good-natured ribbing from Ron and Richard, since he'd somehow been drafted to schlep the car seat and diaper bag into the house for Loueen. "She and the Chief gave me a ride over here," he protested.

"Never carry the diaper bag for a kid that isn't yours," Richard told him, as Clark handed the younger man a beer. "Seriously, Jimmy. It's like the first law of retaining your essential masculine dignity."

"Although, you did get awfully pale when you found out Loueen was pregnant," Ron teased. "Something you wanna tell us, Jim?"

The photographer's jaw fell open as he stared in horrified shock. His freckles vanished as he blushed and fumbled the top off the beer. "Whuh? N-no!"

"Now, that's not fair, Ron," Clark said mildly. "We can't all be you."

"We can't all be *you*, knocking up the star reporter with *twins*," Ron replied, shaking the barbecue fork at him. "You beat me, Clark, even if I am trying to create my own Little League here. You'll get there faster than me if you keep up." The four men laughed companionably, Clark glancing to make sure Lois hadn't heard any of that.

While Loueen and Perry got snacks and gossiped, Lana and Lucy got the two youngest children settled on a shady blanket, supervised by Nora, Joanna, and Kala. The three girls were very interested in babies, and set themselves up to watch over the infants. Hennessy came over for a sniff as well, and though Loueen watched with a little hesitation as the big dog nosed her infant son, she breathed a sigh of relief when he lay down beside the blanket and watched both babies attentively.

Maggie settled herself in Tobie's lounge chair, beer in hand, and chuckled at Lana. "You're pretty good with kids," she commented.

Lana smiled her thanks as Tobie dragged up another chair and added, "Glad someone is."

"Oh, stop," Maggie sighed. "You like Ron and Lucy's kids, and you love the twins. You even get along with Jamie when she visits."

"Yeah, because they're smart, and they all halfway behave," Tobie replied. "And Jamie's yours, so she gets an automatic pass, even if she's not real happy about her mom's girlfriend. But kids in general? Not my cup of tea."

Loueen had barely started in their direction when Perry pulled up a chair for her, and Clark brought her a fan. "All right, quit spoiling me," she laughed. "Hey, ladies. And Tobie, too. So what do you think?"

"He's perfect," Lana said softly, tickling Bryan's toes.

"Ought to talk to my nephew about getting one of those," Perry said. "It's high time the Whites went forward with our plan to take over the world. Isn't that right, Junior?" In spite of his gruff sarcasm, Perry beamed at his son, and the little boy gabbled and waved his chubby arms.

Lana looked over at Richard, and he grinned. "Might as well," he said.

With that, the redhead sat up straight, smiling broadly. "Actually, Perry, we're already pregnant," she said. "I'm due January twentieth."

The assembled kids cheered wildly. Tobie practically sneezed her drink and started coughing. Maggie dropped her beer onto the grass as she thumped Tobie on the back. Lois' eyes widened. Clark's eyebrows went up. Perry's jaw dropped. Jimmy actually whooped with joy. Ella laughed delightedly. Ron hugged Richard and shook his hand. Loueen applauded. And Lucy squealed and flung her arms around Lana. "Congratulations!"

Only Perry noticed the faintly wounded look that leapt into Lois' eyes, but before he could think too much on it, the raven-haired reporter leaned back from the scene. Her tone was not unlike someone who has discovered a rare strain of flesh-eating virus on the chair next to her. "Dammit, Lucinda! You ought to be locked up in a plague ward! Anyone who spends any time around you catches pregnant!"

Lucy stuck her tongue out. "Not my fault!"

That reminded Lois of Lana's cryptic remark earlier. "Oh, yeah. Is *this* what you meant when you said something was all my fault, Lana? Because I fail to see how you can pin this one on me." She arched her eyebrow and glanced at Richard. "First time anyone's ever accused *me* of getting them pregnant."

Perry broke out in guffawing laughter while everyone else was still rolling their eyes. Maggie had to rescue Tobie again - she'd just taken another sip of her drink and was almost choking on it as she tried to laugh. Ella just hid her face in her hands while the girls sniggered, and the children looked around in confusion.

"If you must know," Lana said sternly, blushing to match her hair, "I'll remind you that Richard and I were watching the twins - and your apartment - while you two were on your honeymoon."

"And you..." *Oh, for crying out loud, Cheerleader!* Lois snorted as she visualized just how well Richard had dealt with this situation. That made her grin all the wider. "I *told* you I didn't care!"

The other woman's flush was almost as red as her hair. "I care," Lana managed to retort.

*One of these days you won't. Oh, Lana, you're hopeless.* "Well, now that we have *that* confirmed," Lois teased, her amused glance moved from the self-conscious redhead to the man smirking in the background. "Congratulations, Richard. You do good work."

"Thank you," Richard said seriously, and took a bow as their eyes met. Lana groaned and hid her face while everyone else laughed. It was never a good sign when Lois and Richard teamed up on you.

"Nice timing, too," Lois continued, shaking her head. "We get married, you two get pregnant. If I didn't know better, I'd swear that this was a set-up. You just *have* to one-up me these days, don't you, Richard?"

Richard grinned at her and then turned to Clark. "I'd say top that, but twins run in your family apparently..."

Clark didn't have an answer for that, and Lois gave him no chance to think of one. "Oh no," she said quickly, almost too quickly. "Thank you *very much*, Richard, but I've already gone that route. It's *not fun*. Don't even think it."

Jason and Kala had caught on, and plopped themselves down on either side of Lana. "Are we gonna have a sister or a brother?" Jason asked quickly, gazing up at her with those soulful blue eyes before his twin could speak up.

Kala, after heaving a huge sigh with her eyes going heavenward, stuck her tongue out at him. "Boys are stinky. Have a girl."

An arm around each of them, Lana kissed both of their foreheads. "We're not sure yet, sweethearts. But either way, you're going to be the best big brother and big sister they could have, right?"

No hesitation there. "Yeah!" the twins replied enthusiastically.

"Got any ideas about names?" Loueen asked.

"Well, if it's a boy he'll be James Paul, after my middle name and her father's middle name," Richard replied.

"And a girl will be Kristin Annette, after his grandmother and my mother," Lana added. "It's a tribute to the twins as well. Both first names start with the same letter as the older sibling - Jason and James, Kala and Kristin."

It was only Clark who noticed the withdrawn expression on Lois' face. While everyone else was congratulating Lana and Richard, discussing the names choices, and fawning over the twins for being so excited, he drew his wife away from the group. "You okay, love?" he asked, stroking her hair.

There was something in those hazel eyes he couldn't read and then it was gone. "Why wouldn't I be?" Lois asked him, an expression of almost cherubic innocence on her face.

That earned her a most doubting look. Clark knew all too well that look wasn't exactly native to Lois' face. "Hmm," was all he said, just watching her, wondering if this had anything to do with everyone else in their lives having kids. She had always insisted that two was enough and she was way too busy for another child - but he'd seen a wave of longing pass over her face when Lucy had brought Michelle home from the hospital. That same brief expression, like a cramp in the heart, had flitted across her features when Lois had learned Loueen was pregnant. And now, with Lana expecting, Lois had looked momentarily envious.

His wife only shrugged one shoulder, leaning into him with her cheek against his chest. "Well, Richard's finally having a kid - he's always wanted one. Honestly? I'm thrilled for him. He's a great dad. I just hope he doesn't forget about the two he already has..."

Clark hugged her; that sounded more like his Lois. Baby envy? Not this Pulitzer-chasing reporter. And as for her concern... "Listen," he murmured.

Richard had ruffled Jason's hair, and the little boy caught his hand and looked up at him seriously. "You're still gonna be our daddy now that Lana's havin' a baby, right?"

"Don' be stupid," Kala scoffed, crossing her arms and giving him her most exasperated look. "Daddy Richard's always gonna be our daddy. He said - he *promised*, dopey. A *bunch* of times. Him an' Daddy Clark and Mommy and Lana *all* promised us."

"Don't call your brother names," Lana chided her gently, succeeding in an appearance of the famed Lane pout. "And yes, Jason, Daddy Richard's still your daddy. What did we tell you before Christmas? Neither one of us is going to give up the two of you, ever." Jason just nodded solemnly, leaning against her arm.

"See? I *told* you, Jason," Kala said with clear exasperation, shaking her little head. "Boys." And Jason promptly stuck his tongue out at her.

Lana, however, glanced over at Lois and Clark with a smile. "You two kids get a baby brother or sister, and Richard and I get free babysitting services from Daddy Clark and Mommy. Isn't that right?"

That effectively brought Lois back into the conversation. Taking Clark's hand and heading back toward the others, she called out, "Only if the kid takes after *you*, Lana. I'm not putting up with a miniature Richard." Sliding back into her chair, Lois grinned affectionately at Kala. "One little clone in this family is enough." Her little girl, recognizing the family in-joke, beamed.

"The world isn't ready for another Richard White," Lana replied, smiling up at her husband. "Besides, the Lang genes tend to predominate."

Perry scoffed at that, but Richard kissed Lana's forehead. "So do the White genes, love. He'll probably turn out to take after both of us equally."

Kala scowled at him, wanting a sister, but Lana smiled beatifically and replied, "With my looks and your charm, we're going to have to watch *her* like a hawk when she hits the teenage years."

"Hey, what about my looks? I'm not exactly dogmeat here - I *am* a jeans model, you know." Richard grinned mischievously. The entire group of adults groaned. Ever since that picture had made its way into *Vogue*, none of them had heard the end of it.

"It doesn't count if you model jeans for your wife's clothing line," Tobie retorted.

The pilot's smirk was all masculine pride at hearing that. "Oh, so you saw that ad, did you?" It turned overly-apologetic when he turned to the *Star* reporter's better half. "Mags, I'm sorry."

The lieutenant snorted. "Like anybody over here cares about your ripped abs, Mr. White. Save it for your wife. She appreciates it."

"You'd better be saving it for your wife," Lana said, giving him an arch look.

Lois interrupted them before any more could be said on that particular topic, possibly saving her ex's life. "Wait, wait just a second. Let's just consider this for a moment. Lana's looks and Richard's ego? So what you're telling me is this poor kid's gonna have gorgeous hair and a big head?"

"No!" Jason yelled, adamant, before the adults could even start laughing. "Kala's already got a big head! We don't need any more big-headed kids! An' there's too many girls in this family already. It's just me an' Sam an' Bryan, an' Bryan's just little. That's not fair!"

His twin looked completely affronted to have had the size of her head brought up in front of the entire family for the millionth time. "Shut up!" Kala yelled back at him, her cheeks ablaze. "You just shut up, Lizard Boy! Everybody knows girls are better! That's why there's more of us!"

"Nuh-uh!" Jason retorted, backed up by Sam. "Boys are better!"

Kala stood her ground with her hands on her hips, echoed by Nora and Joanna. "Yes-huh!" Kala shot back.

"*Whoa!*" Ella called out, getting instantaneous silence. "Whoever told you that girls were

better than boys, Kala Josephine?"

Every adult turned to look at Lois, while all of the kids leaned away from Kala slightly. Jason whispered, teasing his sister even now, "Ooooooh, Kala's in trouble..."

"I'll have you know, Jason Lane, that boys aren't better than girls, either," Ella said sharply. "Boys and girls are both wonderful, and they're both very important. I won't have any foolish talk about which one is better. That's like ... that's like saying your right shoe is better than your left shoe."

"Depends on the pair of shoes," Lois called out, unable to resist egging her mother on.

"Lois, darling," Ella said sweetly, "shut your mouth unless you want me to spank you in front of your friends."

The kids all went round-eyed and called, "*Ooooooh*, you're in trouble!" Everyone else started laughing, even Clark, who got smacked on the shoulder for it.

"Ow!" Clark yelped, faking. "What was that for? It was funny, Lois!"

"Yeah, you just wait until we go visit your mom," she grumbled at him. "I'll get *you* in trouble, and we'll see who's laughing."

The threat shortly came to naught. "Lois, get that thought out of your head or I will call Martha and warn her," Ella warned.

"Just how is that fair? Whose side are you on anyway, Mother?" Lois exclaimed, as Kala sidled over into her lap, seeking solidarity in being yelled at. "And have I mentioned how weird it is that you and Martha call each other all the time?"

"Martha and I have a lot in common," Ella replied matter-of-factly. "We're both widows, we're both used to looking after ourselves, and we both despair of getting our children to listen to us."

Clark couldn't help looking a bit defensive. "I listen to Ma!"

"She told you to be careful coming to the city, and you started seeing my daughter," Ella said, softening the statement with a fond smile. "Clark, that's the definition of defiance."

As she inevitably had to, Lois spoke up with a smirk as she played with Kala's hair. "Yeah? And you know what? You wouldn't have this gorgeous pair of twin grandkids if he hadn't, Momma. So you just hush." Kala beamed up at her from her perch on her mother's lap, hugging her.

"Yeah, I have to hand it to you, Clark. You do good work," Richard teased. "The world is grateful that the two of them are at least a little like you."

Again, there was general laughter. "Give up, Lois," Perry advised. "No one's ever won an argument with your mother. It's not possible. Besides, she happens to be right - you *are* trouble."

In the end, it was Ron who had to break it up from his place at the grill. "All right," he called out, raising his voice slightly to be heard over the laughter. "Steaks are done, hot dogs are done, burgers are done, and the corn on the cob ought to be done by the time you all get organized. C'mon and eat, people."

It wasn't as if you had to tell this group twice. Already, Richard was attempting to beat the kids to the table, although hopefully it was in jest. But as they all got up to get their plates and start chowing down on something more substantial than snacks, Lois felt a tug at her sleeve. She turned to see Lana giving her a look that was half sad and half joyful. "You know I love you, right, little sister?" she said softly.

"Hey now, you were adopted into the Lane family as an equal - nobody said you could call me 'little' anything," Lois replied with a crooked grin, only gently teasing. She knew that

look on Lana's face by now, immediately ashamed of herself for not dummifying up faster.

"I'm still older," Lana said, trying to keep the joking tone in her voice. "And taller. So that makes you the little sister. Although my daughter will wind up calling you Lois-Mom instead of Aunt Lois, I'm sure."

"Have the twins started doing that to you?" The thought struck her hard and she was horrified to realize that the resentment she was feeling had crept into her tone.

"No, but I have been downgraded from Miss Lana to just Lana," the redhead replied gently. "Then again, there's not exactly a precedent, is there? Unless you count stepmother, but they won't consider me that because the stepmother is evil in all their favorite Disney movies."

It was only then that it struck Lois how bitter she sounded. Covering her eyes for a moment, she made herself get a grip. Lana had no intention of taking the twins from her in any way, shape, or form. And there was no reason to think so. She had the grace to look embarrassed when she looked up again. "I'm sorry, Lana. I don't know what's going on with me lately. I get a little stupid over it sometimes..."

"You're not stupid," Lana informed her seriously. "You're protective of your children. God knows you have a right to be, considering... No matter what happens, though, we're all family now, right?"

The reporter's grateful smile was clear. "I don't think we have a choice. Although we still haven't figured out how we should refer to you and Richard in the twins' case. 'Aunt' and 'Uncle' just seem weird, but saying that you're their step-parents is even weirder..."

Lana shrugged as they made their way toward the picnic tables. "We can figure all of that out later. Does it really matter how you define the relationship, as long as it's about love? About whom you love, and how you love them so much you'd do anything to keep them safe?"

They both turned to look at Clark, laughing with Ron as he helped Kala and Jason fix their plates. "Not in this family," Lois said then, watching the sprawl of the whole combined family with a grin. Glancing at the redhead, the understanding was clear. "Never in this family."