

# Making New Traditions

by Kala Lane Kent

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Rating: T

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Thanksgiving was the Lanes' customary holiday get-together, the one day all of them assembled in the same house. The menu always included certain favorite dishes, such as Ella's homemade stuffing, Lucy's casserole, and Lois' pumpkin cheesecake; and those flavors had become as expected as the practice of each person naming something they were thankful for before the meal began. Even the cider served alongside the meal was the long-established beverage, which Lois blamed on Lucy being pregnant for so many Thanksgivings. These days the choice of cider over wine was as much in honor of the past as it was to forestall objections by the kids, who all felt quite grown up when they were first allowed to drink from wineglasses instead of unbreakable cups. Although that didn't mean the adults couldn't quietly switch to wine with dessert, and would have this year, if Richard hadn't forgotten to bring it.

Ella liked everything planned in advance so that on the day itself she could relax as much as possible. Unfortunately, the one thing in the Lane family that was as traditional as using Great-Grandma Tremaine's good china was the annual family crisis. In spite of Ella's organizational skills, in spite of both Lucy's and Lois' best intentions, something *always* went wrong.

Some years it was minor - young Nora, behaving as primly as a dowager empress the year she was allowed a wineglass of cider, had glimpsed her brother mocking her from the corner of her eye. She had laughed so hard that she managed to bang the glass into her teeth, knocking out the loose one in front and provoking a torrent of tears. Another year Lois had been goaded into making the turkey for everyone, trying to silence Lucy's teasing on the subject of her cooking skills. When it was almost done, the reporter had stepped out of the side door to sneak a cigarette and found herself locked out. Everyone was in the living room with the drapes drawn, watching the *Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade* on television with the volume up, and by the time Lois had made herself heard banging on the front door, the turkey in the oven was a charred mess.

Other years the traditional Lane family holiday havoc had been much more severe. There had been the time Ron had gotten into a car accident, making a quick trip home to get Joanna's favorite naptime blanket. He'd been unhurt, miraculously, but the car was totaled. Or the year the family spent divided, Lois, Lucy, and Ella in Paris with the newborn twins, and Ron and the Troupe children in Metropolis.

This year, the customary catastrophe seemed to have been small. Just a simple matter of Lois completely forgetting what day it was in the unaccustomed bliss of being with her children's father, the resulting diatribe from Ella, and the momentary awkwardness of Richard

and Clark being at the same gathering so soon after the engagement was called off. All of it seemed to have been handled smoothly, and the reporter breathed a sigh of relief.

"Another family gathering passes without bloodshed," Lois muttered to herself. She'd been leaning against the wall in the kitchen after saying her goodbyes to Lucy, Ron, and their kids; everyone was so happy for her but so wary of expressing it around Richard that the farewell hugs were particularly long and meaningful. While Lois appreciated the support, sometimes the weight of unsaid words became a bit of a burden. Lucy's curiosity had gnawed at her like the gentle but relentless mouthings of a puppy, and Lois was embarrassed to realize she was glad her sister had finally left.

Before she could get too involved in scolding herself, though, Kala raced into the kitchen, skidding on the tile. "Mommy! Mommy!" she cried, in that high, breathless tone that presaged drama of some sort. Lois felt her heart kick into a higher gear; maybe they hadn't managed to ride out the holiday curse safely after all... Oh well, at least the kids were apparently over being mad at Mommy for uprooting their lives.

Jason came tearing into the room right behind Kala, and he grabbed Lois' sleeve, yelling, "Daddy's on TV!" Much to the reporter's surprise, her six-year-old son dragged her into the living room. By then, Kala was literally jumping for joy, making a dizzy quarter-turn with every leap.

There on the television screen was Superman. Ella and Richard had just come into the room, and they both glanced at Lois' incredulous expression. "Did you know he stepped out?" Ella asked.

Lois sighed and rolled her eyes. "Not a freakin' clue. Kids! Jason, Kala!" Calling their names actually got their attention, and they stopped bouncing long enough to look at her. "Guys, Uncle Ron and Aunt Lucy and your cousins were just here. Did you even think about who was in the house when you started calling for me?"

Jason caught on first, his mouth drawing down as his eyes got wide. Kala looked at her puzzled, glanced at Jason, and then gasped in realization. She clapped both hands over her mouth and stared at Lois, while her brother mumbled, "We're sorry."

"It's okay," Lois said, dropping to one knee to hug them both and kiss them. "He's your daddy, and you're proud of him - we're *all* proud of him."

Richard stepped forward to ruffle both kids' hair. "He's a seriously cool guy, and you two are lucky to have Superman for a dad - almost as lucky as you are to have *me*." That made both Jason and Kala look up at him, eyes bright, and Richard grinned.

Lois shot him a quick, warm smile. "The only thing is, we can't let anyone know he's Superman," she reminded her children. "That's to keep you safe - you remember how much trouble Lex Luthor caused, and he was just one person who found out about your daddy. He's enough trouble by himself, but there are other bad people out there mad because Superman won't let them break the law. They might try to hurt you, or someone else, if they knew the secret."

"It's a secret," Richard said, "but it's a good secret. Like when I took you guys shopping for Mommy's birthday present and you couldn't tell her what I got her. That was a good secret because it was supposed to be a surprise. This is a good secret because it keeps you safe."

The twins nodded; they had understood somehow ever since they learned the truth about their father, but having the reasons spelled out for them helped a great deal. "But you an' Mommy an' Nana already know," Jason pointed out.

"Right, but what if your cousins had heard? Or Aunt Lucy or Uncle Ron? They just left a

minute ago, and you guys didn't stop to think about that," Lois said.

"We can't tell 'em?" Kala questioned. "But they're family!"

Ella and Richard both looked at Lois, and she sighed. She loved Lucy ... but Lucy had never really been able to keep a secret in her life. There was nothing mean-spirited about it; Lucy simply believed, down in the depths of her heart, that people were essentially good, and wouldn't take advantage of knowing others' secrets. Not if they understood the reasons behind them. She wasn't a gossip, either, but she wouldn't be able to help sharing the news. Swearing everyone she told to secrecy, of course, but again, her optimism would fail her when they promised not to tell - and wound up telling just one or two close friends. Eventually the secret would be leaked to someone untrustworthy, and Lucy would feel terrible. It had happened enough times in high school, over such nonsense as Lois getting her ears pierced, that the entire family knew what would happen. Lois wanted to keep this from her sister not just for the twins' safety, but to spare Lucy that horrible moment of realization, of seeing a Supertwins headline and knowing it was her fault.

"It's not easy to keep a secret," Ella said quietly. "Not even one this important. Sometimes it can get very hard. I wouldn't want to make Lucy or Ron or their children carry a secret this big unless I absolutely had to."

Lois winked at Ella, thinking that her mother was the original diplomat. "See, kids? Everybody who knows either has to know - like me and Daddy Clark - or they found out and promised to keep the secret, like Nana and Daddy Richard and Miss Lana. We're not gonna tell anyone else. It's just us. Are you two cool with that?"

Jason and Kala looked up at her seriously, then glanced at Richard and Ella for confirmation. Finally they sighed in unison, and Jason gave Lois a woeful look. "Can we have some pie now?" he asked plaintively.

That broke the tension, Richard and Lois sharing a quick smile. Things were still a bit awkward between them, but at least they were getting that parenting teamwork thing going again. Lois kissed her son's nose and stood up. "Sure, honey. I think we're all ready for some pie."

"Did someone say pie?" Clark asked from the hallway, and he looked very puzzled when they all turned to stare at him for a long, silent moment before bursting into laughter.