

Cursed

By [Julie Gastler](#) <julie.gastler@gmail.com>

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Summary: A relaxing morning becomes anything but in this response to Val's Mother's Day Challenge. Lois's daughter, Kara, wants to make Mother's Day special by surprising her with breakfast in bed.

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Kara Lane-Kent, at the ripe old age of fifteen, was positive she knew more about the world than her parents. Evidence for this included figuring out her own father was Superman *months* before they decided to tell her and realizing that the reason her mother never did the cooking was *not* because her father was so great at making mouthwatering culinary treats but because her mother prepared dishes that would make better science projects than meals.

While she had most certainly inherited at least some of her father's powers (and who knew if she would inherit more or not), she was determined to *not* inherit her mother's inability to cook. This past semester in school, she was enrolled in a cooking class. Learning the basics and maybe a few special dishes would surely prevent her from being completely clueless in the kitchen.

Her only mistake so far was telling her father what she wanted to do for Mother's Day. In true fashion, he was supportive but cautioned her to not choose anything too elaborate. After it became apparent that he wanted to be more than just in-the-know, she insisted on doing it all herself and told him that the only job she needed him to do was keep her mother busy until breakfast was ready.

Now, Kara stood in the hall outside the closed door to her parents' bedroom holding the expertly arranged breakfast tray. Before knocking on the door, she doubled-checked that everything was perfect. The dishes were well placed and looking their best. She'd remembered the napkin. The handmade card was placed on the corner of the tray. The whole setup was accented by a small vase of freshly picked flowers from the planter on the back patio.

The flowers had been a last-minute addition. She was on the patio anyway. When she saw the flowers there, looking so lively and pristine, she knew they would be the cherry on top.

Nodding her approval of the tray, she shifted its weight to her left hand and reached her right hand up to knock on the door only to hear her father call, "Come in, Kara," before she touched the door. She rolled her eyes and reached for the door handle instead.

Clark sat propped up with a pillow behind him while Lois lounged on her side facing him with her head propped up on her hand. They both casually read pages of the newspaper. Clark held in one hand a cup of coffee. Lois smiled as she noticed him intently looking at it for a few seconds before steam once again rose from the cup. "Why didn't you bring me a cup again?" she asked.

Clark stilled with his cup midway to his mouth at her question. "Kara told me not to," he answered and continued to take a sip.

"Right." Lois found the whole idea amusing. At least she'd gotten enough sleep last night. Waiting for coffee was easier that way. "And how's she doing down there?" she asked looking back at the newspaper in front of her. "You know she's not very good at this."

"She's fine," he assured. He gestured with his glasses and

nodded in the general direction of the kitchen as he added, "I saw her start a few things. Everything looked like it was fine."

"I still don't understand why you didn't try to talk her out of it." Lois glanced up to see Clark smirk and open his mouth to speak. She held her hand up to stop him. "No, wait," she said. "I know exactly what happened."

Clark closed his mouth and raised his eyebrows.

Lois couldn't help but grin. "She looked at you with her slightly raised eyebrows and called you 'Daddy,' didn't she?" Lois said *Daddy* in a childish voice that she was sure was the perfect imitation of the way their daughter said it when she wanted something.

Clark laughed. "When she looks at me with those eyes, it's harder to tell her no than it is to stop you from following a lead." He leaned over and pressed a quick kiss to her forehead.

Lois chuckled. It was true. From the day she was born, Kara owned her father. And that was as it should be for little girls. Lois only wished it wasn't quite so true for the teenage girl living in their house. Teenage girls were a whole different entity.

Clark's head suddenly popped up to look toward the door. Lois was sure he was about to leave for a Superman rescue, but instead he only said, "Come in, Kara." She smiled at his usefulness and sat up as she watched Kara enter with a big smile on her face.

"Oh!" Lois exclaimed as she positioned herself to receive the tray Kara carried proudly. "Breakfast in bed? What a treat!"

"It *is* Mother's Day, you know," Kara said as she walked over to her with a satisfied smile and carefully positioned the tray in front of her mother.

Lois looked down and was caught off guard by the mundane fare in front of her. "Cereal?" she tried to say without sounding confused but failed. "And an orange?" She picked up the orange and looked at it with a frown on her face. When she looked up, Kara was still eyeing the contents of the tray.

"And coffee," Kara pointed out with a smile.

Lois shook her head. "And here your father had me all excited about a gourmet meal." She picked up the carafe of milk and poured it over the Cheerios in her bowl.

"Well, I was going to make you steel cut oats," Kara explained. "But ... it didn't work out." She rolled her eyes.

Lois ignored it. She, of all people, completely understood the sentiment there. "Oh, that's okay," she said. "It's the thought that counts."

She heard Clark take a deep breath and saw his brow furrow as she put the first spoonful of Cheerios in her mouth. "Kara, what happened?" he asked. "I saw you get started on it."

True to her teenage years, Kara's expression changed in an instant to one of indignation. "Dad!" she nearly yelled, crossing her arms frowning. "I told you I didn't need any help!"

"Taking a peek to see how you are doing is hardly helping," Clark explained calmly.

"No, it's an invasion of privacy." Kara huffed and glared at her father.

Lois stifled a laugh and instead asked, "Kara, what happened to the steel cut oats?"

"I ... er ..." Kara started, her expression changing instantly once again, this time to chagrin, "... never actually made them." She clasped her hands behind her back and looked nervously around the room.

Lois raised her eyebrows as she took another spoonful of Cheerios. "I thought I smelled bacon," Lois added after she swallowed the bite.

Lois pressed her lips together as she watched her daughter's face redden before Kara quietly said, "It ... uh ... burned." Kara reached to tuck a strand of dark brown hair behind her ear allowing Lois to see her full embarrassment.

Lois winced. It was her fault. She was cursed, and she had apparently passed the curse on to her child. It didn't seem to

matter how hard she tried or how closely she followed the directions. She'd only ever been able to warm food up in the microwave or take it out of a box fully prepared. Her idea of *making dinner* was to order takeout. She admired Kara's efforts, but they would have to talk about it sometime. Just not today.

Finding something positive to focus on instead, Lois pointed out the obvious. "I didn't smell burned bacon."

Kara smiled at this. "I took care of the smell. That was the easy part." Her expression changed yet again. This time she seemed proud of herself.

The spoonful of Cheerios paused as Lois glanced at Clark. His eyebrows were raised as high as hers and they both looked back at Kara together.

Kara rolled her eyes and groaned as she brought her hands forward before explaining, "When I realized the cookie sheet was melting in the oven, I sucked up all the smoke and took it outside."

Lois sputtered as she choked on the spoonful of Cheerios. "The cookie sheet melted?!" she said while trying to contain what Cheerios were still in her mouth.

"Honey," Clark said with a hint of a laugh. "You shouldn't try cooking with your heat vision until you have more control over it."

"No," Kara said affronted. "I know better than that, Dad." She dropped her head and stared at the rug where her toe was tracing a small circle. "I accidentally used a plastic tray instead of a cookie sheet," she said almost inaudibly.

"How is that even possible??" Lois asked as smoothly as she could manage.

"I covered it in foil just like Dad told me to," she stated matter-of-factly.

"But you didn't see it was plastic before that?" Clark asked.

"Of course not, I was distract...ed." Kara's voice faded as she said the last word. She must have realized how badly she'd just put her foot in her mouth. Her skin reddened once again, but she didn't say anything more.

"Distracted doing what?" Lois prompted.

Kara rolled her eyes before launching into her explanation. "Grace texted me in the middle of it to tell me that Cameron said some terrible things about Jenna. I prepped the bacon with one hand and texted with the—"

"Kara," Clark cut in. "How many times have we told you not to do that?"

"But Mom," Kara interrupted, exasperated. "You wouldn't believe what he said!"

"I don't want to know," Lois said quickly. "It's probably not even true."

Kara huffed and tried again. "Mom, Jenna said—"

"Stop!" Lois said, holding her hand up. "I don't care what Jenna said. What did you do with the tray from the oven?"

"I took it outside with the smoke," Kara answered simply.

"The plastic was all sagging through the rack, so I had to take the whole rack outside." She stopped and hung her head before adding, "It's still out there with the pot."

Lois's eyebrows raised yet again as she caught the last statement. "What pot?" she asked hesitantly.

"The pot I was going to cook the oatmeal in, obviously." Kara laughed as though Lois should have known.

Rolling her eyes at her daughter's attitude, she asked the important question. "Why was the pot outside?"

"Well, it wasn't there when I took the tray out," Kara said as if it answered the question. "But it's out there now."

"That doesn't tell us why it's out there," Clark pointed out.

Kara rolled her eyes again. "It's with the burner from the stove."

Lois's forehead was going to hurt later from all the eyebrow raising going on this morning. "Still not answering the why question, honey." She glanced at Clark, who wore the same uneasy

expression that she was sure graced her face, then turned back to await Kara's answer.

Kara looked back and forth between them, anxiety written all over her face. Lois braced herself for the explanation that was coming.

"Fine," Kara began, taking a deep breath before continuing. "I started the oatmeal first – water and salt in the pot on the stove on high. 'Bring it to a boil,' the directions said." Kara made air quotes as she spoke, then began pacing at the edge of the bed, frantically waving her hands as she spoke. "That takes forever, Mom, so I picked up my phone. That's when I saw the text from Grace. I *had* to text back. Then I *had* to text Jenna. She was upset." Kara's eyes pleaded for understanding as she paused.

"But I didn't want to mess up breakfast, so I worked on the bacon while I texted." Kara went back to pacing, her hands acting out the actions she described. "After I spread out the strips of bacon and stuck it in the oven, I went back to texting. Then Cameron texted me." Kara stopped and threw her hands in the air. "*Me* of all people, Mom." She snorted. "Like that would somehow fix what he said about Jenna." She stopped and turned to face her parents, splaying her hands as she insisted, "But I put my phone down as soon as I smelled the burning plastic turned off the oven."

Lois felt her mouth hanging open as she watched her daughter tell the story with such animation. Was this what it was like when she babbled?

"The tray was drooping between the bars of the rack and just coming off in gooey pieces so I took the whole thing out and blew on it to cool it off. But then the tray was stuck to the rack and I didn't want the smell to get to you guys, so I sucked it all in and took it all out to the back porch." Kara took a deep breath and relaxed as if she was finished with her explanation.

Before Lois could say anything, Clark chimed in. "I still don't understand why the pot was on the porch."

"Well I was going to come back in and make the bacon in the microwave this time," Kara explained as she started pacing once more. "But it stunk in the kitchen still. So, I sucked all that in and took it outside, too. But it wasn't the same as the plastic tray. And when I got back into the kitchen I found the pot on the stove empty."

"Empty?" Lois and Clark repeated in unison.

"Yeah." Kara blew a breath up, pushing her hair out her face.

"I guess all the water boiled away. And I blew on the pot to cool it off after I turned the burner off. But when I picked it up, the whole burner came with it. Apparently, the empty pot can get hot enough to melt the enamel. Who knew?" Kara stopped here and chuckled as she looked at her parents before hanging her head to examine the circle she'd made in the rug with her toe earlier. "I got it unstuck, but the paint's still on the burner," she added quietly.

Lois blinked.

She really was cursed.

She pressed her lips together as she considered how to respond. "Well, honey," she said, "this cereal is delicious." She held up another spoonful of Cheerios and smiled as she nodded her approval.

Kara's embarrassment faded a little. "Thanks, Mom," she said bashfully. "And I promise I'll buy you a new toaster."

THE END