



A Thankful Family

The family - - what was left of it - - were thankful that Jethro was now mostly a vegetable. In fact, Jethro, before he tangled with Lily Rose, ruled the women in his family with an iron hand.

After all, Jethro had been taught, women were required to cleave unto their husbands, and the man was the boss of the home. It was in the Book. Jethro's loose interpretation of the cleaving part, however, was what got the family into trouble, and his daughter, Lucy, into an unnatural family way.

It began when Lila, Jethro's wife, started going through "the change" and asked Jethro to leave her be. Jethro, not yet 48, was still a lusty fellow, who liked his whiskey on Saturday nights down at Wilkison's Tavern when he would come staggering up the dirt road wanting to crawl into bed with Lila. When Lila began locking the bedroom door, Jethro didn't much like it, but he knew better to try to force her. The woman had fingernails like hawks' talons.

The problems continued when Lila was visiting her sick mother in Jonesburg, and Jethro figured that his 15-year-old daughter, Lucy, might be

a ripe substitute for Lila, now gone frigid. Lucy wasn't much to look at, and never did have much to say.

The Saturday night Jethro came home and crawled into bed with Lucy, "Please, no, Pa!" were the last words Lucy would say to anyone.

Lucy was kind of "slow," and the Jonesburg school people told the family that they didn't have the special teachers and equipment. They would have to take Lucy into Wheeling for special education. That wasn't going to happen, so Jethro and Lila just let Lucy hang around the house as more or less an unpaid, silent servant.

Lila returned from visiting her mother (the old bag just wanted attention, as usual). As Jethro's pleas for conjugal rights stopped, Lila felt both relieved and suspicious. Maybe Jethro was consorting with those harlots that hung out at Wilkinson's. All the more reason to stay clear of Jethro, then, because you never knew what kind of nasty diseases he could pick up.

About five months later Lila noticed the unmistakable signs of pregnancy in her daughter, Lucy. Lila confronted Jethro one Saturday night, and Jethro admitted everything, but blamed Lila, because, as the Good Book said, wives must cleave unto their husbands.

Lila, never one to face up to conflict that well, wanted to just leave and take Lucy with her, but she had no one except her hypochondriac mother; plus she was dirt poor. The only money she saw was what Jethro gave her each week for food and bills. (Jethro had a pretty good job down at the mill, with low but steady pay.) She surely wasn't going to get Jethro arrested, either. That would stop the income altogether.

So Lila just accepted the situation. She was an experienced midwife and helped when Lucy gave birth to granddaughter Lily Rose in the bed of Lucy's room.

There were rumors, of course, but in Jethro's community, people minded their own business, and there were no meddling social services people to nose around in other people's affairs.

When Lily Rose was born, it became abundantly clear that she was a special child. She seemed, for lack of a better description, passively happy. She was never fussy or colicky, and she did not squall or even cry.

When Lucy held Lily Rose, one could sense that the infant seemed to almost be in charge of the mother. They would stare at each other and seem to almost communicate, as Lily Rose would break out in a giggle or pat her mother's head as if to say, "Don't worry, Mama."

At about age seven months, Lily Rose began her baby talking. Her first two words were, "What's that?" She would point, and Lucy would break her normal silence and repeat the name of things into Lily Rose's ear. Until one day Lily Rose pointed at a saltshaker, said "What's that?" and the shaker began to move towards the baby's pointing finger.

As Lily Rose grew, so, it seemed to Lucy, did the child's powers. She could lift and move objects (chairs, logs, her bed) that easily outweighed her. In fact, when Lily Rose wanted her mama and pointed, Lucy felt as if she were being dragged towards the child.

Lily Rose's one exception to her normal sweet nature was when she was in the presence of Jethro. She seemed to shrink and tremble when Jethro got anywhere near her. The only time Lucy ever saw Lily Rose whimper was when Jethro came stumbling in one Saturday night (drunk as usual) and began pounding on his wife's bedroom door demanding to be let in.

Lily Rose was nine months old when she began to walk and could make objects that easily outweighed her rise and move. Lucy was astonished one day to see Lily Rose elevate two large logs and propel them into the front door and set them gently down in a stack in front of the fireplace.

It was in the cold of winter in Lily Rose's tenth month that Jethro finally decided that if he was going to do any cleaving, it would have to be with Lucy again. Lucy had begun locking her bedroom door, sensing that Jethro was getting ready to "get at her" again.

The Saturday night that Jethro pounded on Lucy's door, he was especially drunk and angry. Jethro made short work of Lucy's bedroom door with one solid kick. When he entered the room, he saw Lucy cowering in the corner

next to her sewing box holding Lily Rose, who this time was neither cowering nor even apparently concerned.

When Lily Rose pointed towards Jethro and said, "What's that?" Lucy whispered in the child's ear, "That is a bad, evil person. He wants to hurt your Mama again."

As Jethro moved toward his two daughters, he felt a stabbing pain in his left eye. It was as if someone had stuck a needle in at its full length. It was then that he also noticed the knitting needle that had punctured his left ear cavity.

As he screamed in pain and shock, he also felt himself lifted a foot from the floor. Lily Rose sent Jethro out of her mother's room and propelled him headfirst into the brick fireplace. Already half blind and deaf in one ear, Jethro now suffered a head injury, which would begin his life in a semi-sentient, vegetative stage.

Thus began the happier, thankful days for Lila, Lucy and Lily Rose. Jethro's government Social Security check, addressed to Lila as the "caregiver," arrived like clockwork and, along with his disability insurance, was more than enough to look after the body. For the soul she had her daughter Lucy and her granddaughter Lily Rose.

Lily Rose, moreover, had definite plans for the future, and they had to do with Jethro's big life insurance policy. But that would have to wait until she became strong enough to lift Jethro as well as his wheelchair, though.

Besides, Lily Rose was beginning to get a feeling about some money and jewelry Jethro had hidden away, but Jethro's mind was kind of a scramble nowadays.