

*The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' & Victoria Angela (nee Connell) Svensen, James Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' (nee Hunter) Svensen, Brett, Dana Lynn (nee Svensen) and Sabrina Angela Kasznikov, Roger, Gytha Louise (nee Svensen) Roger Jr. & Heather Louise Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn (nee Barrett) Svensen, Bradley Torvald 'Brad' & Janet Lee (nee Mondragon) Svensen, Trenton, Nancy Jeanne (nee Svensen), Trenton Junior and Chelsea Corbin, Ronald Arend 'Ron' & Brenda Mae (nee Cartwright) Svensen, Lawrence James 'LJ' & Alicia Leanna (nee Svensen) Hood, Valerie Connell & Barbara Caine, Walter Lee Sr. & Harriet (nee Bishop) Connell, Walter Lee Jr., Michelle Annette 'Misha' (nee Kazinski), Walter Lee III, Joseph Franklin 'Joe' and Sarah Noel Connell, Robert James & Elizabeth Ann (nee Caine) Sands, Edward and Mary (nee Leese) Caine, Richard & Wilhelmine Marie (nee Kurzweil) Delancey, James William & Nancy (nee Roland) Kurzweil, Erich Martin & Iranova Marie 'Ira Marie' (nee Schmidt) Kurzweil, Jason & Natasha 'Tasha' (nee Porter) Cummeron, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito[©], Leonard's Restaurant[©], Hunter Auto Parts[©], Right Way GroceriesTM and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meigh and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission. Any resemblance to any fur or person, either living or dead is purely coincidental. Fender, Guild, Gretsch, Jackson, Charvel and Squire are the property of Fender Musical Instruments, Inc. Gibson, Les Paul and SG are the property of Gibson Musical instruments. (Gah, this is tedious!)*Note* More rambling credits/warnings below! Please read and heed!*

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“End Game”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 03 – “A Subdued Housewarming”

Conrad was standing under the shower in the locker room, letting the hot water work the numerous knots out of his neck and shoulders. It had been an especially grueling practice session, running new plays that didn't always work. He was positive of that fact by the number of times Gary Hurtubise had tackled him. Even though they were friends, team-mates and neighbors, he was sure the husky was relishing the punishment he was meting out to the tiger.

He had his head under the shower so he didn't hear Jack Meadows, their first string quarterback turn on the shower next to him. The lanky dapple gray equine was about Conrad's height and he weighed not quite one-hundred eighty pounds soaking wet, typical for a quarterback. Jack smiled, then tapped him on the shoulder, getting his attention.

“Oh, Hi, I didn't hear you walk up. Good practice today, huh?” Conrad brought up when he turned to see who it was next to him. He smiled at his team-mate then clapped him on his shoulder.

“Well, it wasn't too bad of a practice for me but you seemed to have a case of 'The Hurt' out there.” Jack replied. The tiger smiled at that inside joke.

“Yeah, Gary was all over me, Jack. Play number one-forty-three seemed to fail every time and Gary tackled me each and every time we ran it,” Conrad brought up. “Not real hard, mind you but hard enough for me to know he was holding back.”

“Yeah, I agree. That play seems destined for failure to me.” the gray one suggested. “Oh, by the way, your cell was ringing so I answered it for you. For some reason, Cathy wouldn't accept my offer of marriage or a dinner date in San Francisco on the wharf.” he added.

“Aw Jeez,” the tiger said, sticking his head back under the shower. “I hope you weren't crude to her like Gary is every time he answers my cell.” Conrad put forth.

“No, I was a perfect gentlefur to her.” Jack offered up while he soaped up his arms and chest. “She said to remind you about a flight to SoCal this evening for your parent's housewarming.” That made Conrad

nod in agreement before he spoke.

“We're supposed to go down for a housewarming day after tomorrow. My parents bought Glenn Ranch to open an At-Risk Teen Diversion program. I haven't seen the place personally but it looks huge on Yahoo! Earth.”

“Hey! Isn't that place near Whiting Ranch Reserve?” the equine asked while he lathered up his mane.

“I think it is,” Conrad replied. “I forgot you're originally from my old stomping grounds. I'm hoping that ranch works out for them.” he mused. “Well, I better get going, Jack. See you Sunday,” he bid, getting his things and heading to his locker to get dressed.

The tiger stopped off on the way to his locker to dry off in a drying booth, giving thought to his parents and their desires to get out of the business of doing the bidding for the Gods. He had always thought it was too risky, remembering the time he spent in an alternate reality, no thanks to that ass-hat Thammuz.

He stepped out of the drying booth, still brushing at his fur just a bit to kill that fluffiness he always got from drying off like that. He sat down at his locker, thinking about the situation. At least they were making an effort to stay out of harm's way now but he still thought the purchase of that ranch was iffy at best. The economy had recovered to some degree but it still wasn't a done deal. The bottom could still fall out of the housing market and leave them owning a white elephant.

“Hey Conrad! You still here?” the husky called out from the doorway to the lounge.

“Yeah, at my locker,” the tiger shouted back, listening to the footfalls headed his way. Momentarily, Gary made his appearance.

“Hey, uh, sorry about all the tackles today,” the canid offered up, giving Conrad a cold Coke Zero as a peace offering. The tiger took the drink offered, opening it and taking a sip of it.

“Naw, don't worry about it, Gary. We were supposed to run the play as if it were a real game. You were just doing your job.” he replied. “Besides, I should just make you walk home as penance for that punishment you dished out today, buddy.”

“You wouldn't make me walk home, would you?” Gary asked hopefully. “That's about ten miles!”

“Just kidding, Gary. Um, what do you think about having little ones in the house?” Conrad brought up.

“As long as they're my sister's kits visiting me, that's fine,” he replied, trying to hide his smirk.

“Gary! I meant, do you and Cindi plan to have some kits?” he questioned. The husky nodded in return.

“We've been trying ever since we got married six months ago but it seems like we just aren't doing something right, Conrad. We time it to her cycle, you know ...” The canid shrugged his shoulders and gave his team-mate a pensive smile. “Gah, we just don't seem to get the results we want.” he added.

“Yeah, I think I understand. Cathy wants to have kits but right now isn't such a great time for us to try.” Conrad put forth. It wasn't a good time because he was still immortal for the time being and he did not want to pass this curse along to his offspring. If anything, he wanted to be mortal again in the worst ways. Besides, the 49'ers management still had not indicated if his contract was being extended or renewed. He

might just find himself a free agent at the end of the season.

“Still worried about being dropped by the team?” Gary brought up, shocking Conrad momentarily. It was like he was reading his mind.

“Yeah, I suppose you could say that. I would feel better about having kits if I had a five year contract, even if the pay wasn't that good. I would take what I'm getting right now for five more seasons.” he admitted. “My house would be paid off by then so it wouldn't matter what I did after that. I could take a coaching position or a phys-ed instructor's job at a local high school.” He shrugged his shoulders and spoke again. “Heck, I could go into law enforcement like my father. He just retired, you know.”

“You told me about that,” Gary stated, then drained his drink. “My uncle retired, then drove my aunt bug-nuts. He just sat around, watching television or yelling at the kits to get off his lawn. It was just dirt, anyway. Not like they could have hurt it.” That made Conrad chuckle.

“My dad won't sit on his paws doing nothing.” the tiger brought up. “He will find something to keep himself busy, if I know him like I think I do. He was telling me he wanted to plant enough grape vines to get wine from them each year. That will keep him busy trimming, weeding, fighting the bugs, things like that.” he added.

“You know, I have a Thompson Red seedless grape vine in my back yard, among others.” Gary stated. “It has the best grapes each year, the kind that you just can't find in the grocery stores.”

“Maybe I should get you and my dad together,” Conrad mused. “Well, I had better get dressed. Cathy will have my hide if we miss our flight.”

“Yeah, I'll be in the lounge, Conrad. Don't leave me here, please?”

“I won't make you walk, Gary. Give me a few minutes and I'll be ready.”

Hrist helped Richard support his wife while the spotted femme transported them back to their home, since Willi Marie was still in shock over hearing what Eyr had shared with them. The leopard appaloosa filly helped him to get Willi into their master bathroom, then told the male she would wait in the living room while he took care of cleaning up his wife.

Richard retrieved the EMT's shears from their medical emergency kit and cut away her clothing, since it was obvious the blood stains would have never come out. He threaded her belt out of her pants so he could at least save her trophy buckle from an invitational pistol match back in 2012. Through all of this, she had continued to sob openly, seeming to be completely out of it mentally.

He quickly stripped down to his bare coat, maneuvered his mate into the shower and turned on the water as warm as he could stand it. It would help to relax her and assist in getting the blood out of her coat. Getting the heavy-duty body coat cleanser from the shelf by the window, he soaped up her body, mane and tail, then began scrubbing her with a shower brush to get the dried blood off of her. Willi was very upset but she was at least helping a bit, putting her paws on his shoulders to help keep her balance when he knelt down to scrub her legs and tail.

He had stood back up to begin washing the soap from her body when she leaned her body against his,

getting a bit of her composure back. She put her head against his chest, hugging him tightly, trying her best to stop crying. Willi was still sniffing and sobbing silently but she seemed to be getting herself under control. In return, Richard held her tightly to his body for a long time, trying to help her regain some level of mental balance. This kept her from seeing the tears that streamed from his eyes, caused by the hurt he could feel in her very essence.

With her coat as clean as he could get it, he guided her into the drying booth, the one that was their first year wedding anniversary present to one another. He put it on a setting to accommodate them both and started to brush out her mane for her so it wouldn't be unruly. She was being quiet, snuggled up against him while he worked. He turned her around, her back to his chest and brushed at her coat, helping it to dry while he comforted her with an arm around her waist and his muzzle draped over her shoulder, nuzzling her neck.

Her coat fairly dry, he guided her into the bedroom, to their bed and under the covers. He fluffed her pillow for her and made sure she was tucked in snugly. She was asleep before he could reach for his sweatpants to put them on. Glad that his wife seemed to have calmed down, he headed back out to the living room and his guest.

“How is Willi doing?” the spotted one asked, looking very concerned for the palomino femme.

“She's quieted down and she's sleeping now, Hrist. Uh, let me ask you something?” Richard requested. “Earlier, you asked if another Valkyrie had summoned you. Am I right in assuming you had thought it was a sister Valkyrie that had summoned you here?” Hrist looked a bit apprehensive, taking a moment or two too long to answer.

“Richard, When Willi would call me verbally, it sounded a certain way to me. That's how I knew it was her, calling for me.” Hrist answered. “When she summoned me here earlier, she used her mind, which is something I am sure only a Valkyrie can do. That is an unspoken, wordless summons that I really can't describe.”

“So she *is* a Valkyrie?” Richard asked carefully. He had his suspicions but he wanted confirmation in the matter. Hrist grimaced before she answered, as if it were something she didn't wish to speak out loud.

“I cannot be sure, my friend. On one paw, she seems to be a Valkyrie but she is also a very powerful sorceress *and* she's pregnant.” Hrist offered up. “I cannot be sure of anything. She did summon me, though. I feel we should wait until the kits are born before you have Eyr check her over again.”

Richard went to the kitchen to fix some snacks for them, trying to be a proper host to an other-worldly agent. He knew in his heart that his bride was in fact a Valkyrie; he could sense something very different about her that wasn't present in her mother or her brother. It was a feeling that wouldn't go away, it just kept getting stronger with time. That feeling was the same one he felt in Hrist's presence.

Giving his supernatural guest some sliced apples and some mint tea, he went to see about Willi again. She was still sleeping, snuggled down in the covers further but there was one glaring addition now. She had her Valkyrie's spear in her grasp, the one Hrist had given her, holding it in front of her sleeping form as if to protect herself.

Dana had explained to her parents the reason they had come to see them, the thought that Sabrina might

be an immortal like her father. Victoria looked down at the little femme in her arms, her precious little grand-kit and shook her head in disgust. Once again, Pamela Benelli's paw-work had sent a dark cloud over her family temporarily. She looked to her stallion, who nodded in understanding before he spoke.

“Sweetheart, you can't pass on that gift to your little one because you aren't actually our direct genetic offspring,” he reminded her. “I realize that your memories of that day may have faded by now so I'm hoping you might remember how you came to be.” he offered up to his daughter.

“Well, I guess I might have forgotten ...” the feline mix replied, giving thought to that fact. “I think we were meant to forget all that and just remember we've always been a family.” she offered up. “I do remember clearly being on a mission with all of you,” she brought up.

“That mission was one that we can't forget,” her mother pointed out. “Your father and I were livid when Denise suggested you, Axel and Gytha were props for our mission and we would lose you after the mission was over! Gah, I wanted to kill her, then I wanted a piece of that mongoose when I found out about her eff-up!” Victoria was still upset about this, even after all of the years that had passed. “We were overjoyed, however by the fact we had three kits of our own that wouldn't share your father's curse. It was a no-brainer when we decided you would all stay with us.” Dana thought for a moment before she said something.

“So, when I dream of being a different species with a different family, that has actually happened to me?” she asked carefully.

“Yes it has, Honey.” her mother replied. “You, Gytha and Axel were all mission assistants before you were our children. When the memories for that mission were implanted in our minds, they did a good job of it. Too good of a job, in fact due to that backstory being too exacting, too perfect. Do you understand now?”

“I think I do,” Dana replied, trying to hold back her sobs. “I was so worried that little Sabrina would become an immortal, Mom. I've heard you and Dad complain about it enough to know I didn't want it for my little ones.”

“Well, don't worry about it, Honey.” Victoria urged. “Little Sabrina looks just fine to me and her bellybutton is a cute one. She will have an 'innie' instead of an 'outie', Hon.” The little striped femme in grandma's arms smiled up at her, oblivious to the bullet she had just dodged.

“So, if we have more kits, they will *not* be immortal?” Brett asked just to settle his mind.

“You have our word they will be just as mortal as their parents.” Torvald replied, hugging his son-in-law around the shoulder with one paw. It was obvious by the look on their muzzles, the young parents were very relieved to hear that news.

Several days later, the day of the housewarming had arrived and Victoria was busy giving another femme some special attention. She had taken this particular femme clothes shopping that morning and she was now working on her mane, styling it just a bit for her.

“Victoria, you're wasting your time,” Aslaug grumbled, sitting in front of the tigress' dressing table while the tigress worked on her hair.

“I’m not wasting my time, filly.” she retorted. “You’ve spent too much time alone, Hon. The way you looked last night was the same way you looked when I went to pick you up.” she added. “Well, not all chewed up but you get the idea.”

“And what was wrong with that look?” the equine asked, making a face when Victoria parted her mane on top of her head, brushing it to each side of her head in front of her ears.

“If you want everyone to think you’re a lumberjack, nothing,” the feline replied, trying to hide her smile. Aslaug tried to scowl back at her but it ended in a smile.

“I still say you’re going to too much trouble. I am not really into that femme look.” the filly put forth.

“There are times that you might need to look at least a little feminine to fit in, Hon.”

“You said yourself that my new clothes are feminine,” Aslaug pointed out, holding still while Victoria pulled the front of her mane around the sides of her head and clipped it to her mane behind her head with a hair clip, giving it a very feminine look. The tigress started brushing it into place, being careful not to brush out too many of the curls she had worked so hard to put into the filly’s mane.

“Yes, they are very femme-like if you like motorcycle logos on your clothing,” the femme feline pointed out. They had stopped at the Harley-Davidson dealer on the way to the mall where Aslaug had purchased a black leather motorcycle jacket that caught her fancy. Victoria spotted a few things that might work for Aslaug and she had finally convinced the filly to allow her to purchase her a blouse, black in color, femme-cut with the Harley logo embroidered on the collar tips in grey and a pair of black jeans with an unobtrusive orange tag on the right back pocket that proclaimed in tiny letters, “Jeans by H-D”.

“Are you finished yet? I feel *very* odd allowing you to fuss over me like this,” the filly grumbled, looking at the chestnut-colored femme looking back at her in the mirror. It was her yet it was not; that femme in the mirror was ... pretty? She didn’t think of herself in those terms so Aslaug wasn’t sure if she was pretty or not.

“You know I’ve always tried to help you fit in,” the tigress put forth. “Now look up at me, please?” she asked, carefully putting a bit of clear gloss on Aslaug’s lips.

“You have tried too hard sometimes,” the equine femme retorted, looking back at the femme in the mirror again when she stood up. She was wearing some light eye liner and just a smidgen of mascara to accentuate her eyelashes, something she had never done before. Her mane and tail were done in loose curls, making her look quite different. Her black clothing did look very nice against the copper-chestnut color she had decided to dye herself.

“Aslaug, I enjoy making you look nice.” the tigress stated. “You have to admit, you look very sophisticated in a way with your mane done up like that. Besides, there will be times you might need to blend in so this is good practice for you.” The filly turned her head, looking at her mane pulled back like it was. She still didn’t know if she liked it or not but it did look good. It did seem to be a lot of trouble to go to, though.

Victoria and Aslaug had went out to the back patio where a number of the Svensen clan had gravitated

to. Torvald turned from the grill at the sound of the two femmes talking, recognizing the Valkyrie's voice. He was stunned by the femme equine looking back at him, with a look on her muzzle that meant she had no idea why he was so taken aback.

“Aslaug?” he questioned, not really sure if this femme could be the Angelbreaker herself.

“What are you looking at so strangely, Berserker? Have you not seen me before?” she asked, finally realizing inside that he was struck by her appearance. He shook his head, trying to put an answer together.

“You look so different like that.” he finally stated. “You could go anywhere and have males drooling over you.” That made the Valkyrie chuckle.

“You know I have no use for a male that fawns over me. I am oath-sworn to Odin.” she allowed.

“I know, it's just that you could fit in perfectly in any modern situation like that. No fur would realize you weren't really a tenth century warrior, dressed in that manner and dyed that color.” he submitted.

“Maybe you should listen to your own words, warrior,” Aslaug said the stallion, taking the ale offered to her by Victoria and taking a long pull from it, savoring the taste.

“You are right, filly. I should at least dye my mane and tail black and try to pass as a buckskin.” he admitted. “Axel and I have talked about this at length. His customers really think he dyes himself blond.”

“Not to change the subject, Torvald but I need to talk to you. In private.” she requested. He could see the concern in her eyes so he guided her up a path to the stables above the house.

“What do you want to talk about?” he asked once they were well out of earshot of the rest of his family.

“Did Victoria tell you what happened when she came to retrieve me up in Canada?” she asked. For some reason, she was sure that information had somehow been related to him by his wife.

“When she came back, I knew something was up. She wasn't going to tell me so I tortured her until she spilled the beans.” he replied. When Aslaug looked at him in shock, he added some omitted information. “I tickle-tortured her. She is very ticklish right above her bellybutton and on the backs of her legs, right below her butt cheeks. It took about ten minutes to make her talk.”

Aslaug had to stifle her laughter before she could speak again in a serious tone. “What did she tell you?”

“She said that an agent inhabiting a feral bear's body was most likely after her, according to you. You took care of the agent and you healed up sufficiently before you two hit the U.S.A. border checkpoint to cause a stir.” he replied.

“Is that all she told you? Do not lie to me, please?” the filly requested. Her look was dead serious as she waited for an answer.

“I swear as a Berserker she did not tell me more. That was all she told me, even though I can tell there is more to this story. Both from her and from you.” he stated.

“I am sorry but I must tell you that I cannot share more with you. This is my problem to solve,” she stated, then looked down at the ground for a moment before looking back at him. “Do not get involved

with this unless I specifically ask you to.” she requested. No need to put him in harm's way. Not if he didn't need to be. Torvald was in enough danger already just by being immortal.

“You're very serious about this, aren't you?” he asked. She nodded, confirming his suspicions.

“Yes, I am very serious. Enough of this for now, Torvald. I think you still owe me a burger and another ale to replace the one I sent with Joe to the fourteenth century,” she stated, nudging him back down the path towards the party.

Brenda turned up the driveway, satisfied this was the right place by the wrought iron archway over the roadway that was proudly proclaiming the property beyond to be 'Rancho Svensen'. She smiled at the incongruity of the words, Spanish and Dane. At the top of the drive she found a place to park right next to a Ranger four-door pickup then shut off the engine. Ronald got out and went around to the trunk of their rental car to retrieve his camera gear and his mate joined him, getting her gear out too.

“They bought a real nice spread here,” the male commented, looking at the landscaping of the front yard.

“There was a fire here some years back.” his mate offered up, taking out her Kodak Z980 and snapping a few shots. She was reviewing them when a very loud, orange hued vintage musclecar came up the drive. “If I have my guess right, that's Valerie and Barbara.” she offered up. Kneeling quickly, she took a few shots of them driving up, one in particular of Valerie looking out her driver's window, appearing kind of shocked by being photographed.

“Brenda?” the tigress queried after she shut off her 1969 Roadrunner and climbed out. “My Gawd, I haven't seen you in forever!” she blurted out, giving the chestnut-colored femme a strong hug once they met. “Brenda, this is my other half, Barbara Caine. Barbara, this is Brenda Svensen.” she said, introducing them.

“Well, Barbara, Valerie, this is my husband, Ronald.” Brenda stated, introducing her mate.

“I can't believe how much you look like your brother.” the tigress brought up to the tall male. “I met Brad at the hospital, when Dana had Sabrina.”

“Speaking of that, how is she doing?” Brenda inquired. “I heard how big Sabrina was when she was born. What a whopper of a kit!”

“Dana's doing just fine. She's here so you can have a chance to talk to her.” Valerie proffered up. “Come on, let's go join the party.” she suggested, heading them towards the front door.

Once inside, the tigress spotted her sister, standing on the patio by the living room sliding patio door so she directed Ronald to go out through the family room door to get a clear shot of the imminent meeting. He quickly prepared his Canon EOS 5D, making sure it was ready when his wife approached Victoria. The immortal tigress was 'In The Zone', in a conversation with her daughter Gytha when the chestnut equine tapped her on the shoulder.

“Yeah, uh ...” Victoria was speechless when she turned to see who it was, only to be stunned by the visage of the furson standing next to her.

“Hi Vicki. Good to see you again,” Brenda said right before she hugged her long-lost friend tightly.

“Brenda, it's so weird to know you're family now,” the tigress blurted out, stepping back a step or two so she could see the femme equine fully. “You haven't changed a bit,” she remarked.

“I have changed, Vicki. This is all fur coloring,” she suggested, smiling at the tigress' stunned look. “And besides, I have to wear a size sixteen in pants now.” Looking her friend over, she made an astute observation; “You look pretty good for fifty years old, Vicki.”

“Well, like I told you on the phone, that twenty-four years spent on that other planet toughened me up.” Victoria interjected.

While Victoria and Brenda chatted, Conrad and Cathy watched another copper chestnut-colored femme interact with the children present. Aslaug was tossing around a football with Walter the Third, Joseph, Roger Junior and Nancy Corbin's son, Trenton Junior. The two felines were stunned to see the way she enjoyed having fun with the young kits, giving them valuable coaching in the fine art of the football. They were at one point shocked to see her laugh and smile at Trenton's little sister Chelsea's attempt to throw the ball back to the filly.

“Did I just see Aslaug laugh?” Conrad asked carefully, looking to his mate for confirmation.

Yes, she laughed and she smiled, too. I swear I saw her do those things.” the femme cougar replied.

“You know, when Aslaug first came to our house, back when I was in high school, she was a real rough-edged femme. I remember trying harder to accomplish tasks set by her because I was afraid she might do something if I failed.” Conrad confessed. “Now I see a femme that's totally different. I mean, just look at her. She could blend in anywhere.”

“I agree, Hon. She really has changed a lot in attitude but I think she had some help with her appearance from your mom.” the femme feline suggested. “I have to say, though, her mane and tail looks very nice done up like that. I've always wished I were an equine so I could have a thick, lush tail like that.”

“Been there, done that,” Conrad piped up. “I think I shut my tail hairs in a car door at least three times that time I went to help my parents.” He sipped his ale, then spotted his biological father coming around the corner of the house with a very large cook pot in his paws. “Hey! Pop's brought his tamales!”

“He who what ... ?” Cathy asked, looking to see why her mate had scrambled off across the patio. There was obviously a reason because more than a few furs were gravitating in that general direction . When Aslaug left the kits to head that way she knew something was up. Wasting no time, she followed hot on the filly's hooves.

Axel was sampling some of John Park's infamous tamales off of Torvald's plate while he chatted with his father. It was an indisputable fact that the tiger could make tamales. There was a twist that he put to them, adding just a bit of middle-eastern spices to them.

“Um, Dad, who are the two young canids?” the younger Svensen asked, indicating the pair that were devouring a plate of tamales apiece.

“Those are Nancy's kits, Axel. She adopted them to prevent herself from passing the family curse along” Torvald offered up. “His name is Trenton Junior and her name is Chelsea.” Tor sipped his ale and continued. “They're maned wolves, from what Nancy told me. Her hubby is right over there,” he added, pointing out a not-too-tall but seriously buffed donkey/Belgian mix.

“Um, what does Trenton Senior do for a living?” Axel asked. It was apparent this fur was one muscular equine.

“He's a service writer over at The San Diego Ford Store.” the elder Svensen put forth. “He said if any of us needs a new vehicle, to get in touch with him. He'll get us the employee discount.”

“That's nice to know.” the younger equine put forth. “I'm going to go get a tamale for myself,” he added, turning to head to the buffet table that was set out. Once he had left, Torvald was joined by Aslaug.

“Tor, I want you to tell me what these are all about,” touching the highly polished bracelet around his wrist. “Victoria would not tell me so I'm hoping you will.” she added.

“You will not like it,” he warned, setting his plate down. “We were charged with crimes against the universe by the Celestial Courts.” Aslaug looked down at the ground, then back up at the stallion in complete disbelief.

“What are you talking about? Neither of you have committed crimes!” she said rather tersely.

“You and I know that. It's just a matter of convincing the courts of that.” Tor put forth. It was obvious that this news upset the filly and she didn't waste a moment in voicing her opinion.

“Torvald, you and your mate do important work, work that is for the good of all furkind. I have my duties that are necessary and must be done. It seems like we are destined to run up against unwritten rules, ones that will trip us up.” She stopped for a moment to pull her thoughts together, then continued. “This is not right, stallion. Gah, with this other 'project' I am working on, I cannot give my time to help you out.” She wished she could tell Torvald about her project but she knew she had to keep that one to herself.

“We have been offered counsel already, Aslaug. We're hoping to have this all thrown out at the arraignment.” he stated.

“I wish you luck,” the filly stated, quietly, patting him on the shoulder before walking off towards the refreshments table. Torvald knew she was upset because she was muttering something under her breath in Old Norse. The stallion was snapped out of his musing by his mate touching him on the arm gently.

“You told her, didn't you?” the tigress asked.

“I could not lie to her, Sweetheart. You know she can tell if I'm lying.” he pointed out.

“That's okay, Hon. We'll make it through this,” she allowed, having to stifle a sob. “Look at our family, Tor. We have a lot to live for,” she stated, indicating the back yard full of furs. “We have to get through this. If not for our own sake, we have to get through this for their sake. Each and every one of them.”