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“End Game”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 04 – “Waiting For The Inevitable”

Wilhelmine was standing in her kitchen, watching her coffee pot brew away. Resisting the urge to make it finish with a bit of magic, she thought over the conversation she had with Aslaug the last evening, concerning the possibility that she might actually be a Valkyrie.

Aslaug had felt her life force and she really thought the sorceress should wait until her kits were born before jumping to conclusions. Willi had heard the apprehension in the filly's voice when she had asked if any sentient besides another Valkyrie could summon her with just their mind. Aslaug had answered that she didn't know if it was possible or not but Willi felt there was something more that wasn't said.

“Honey, are you ready to go to church?” Richard asked, startling her momentarily. She got her composure back, then looked at him and answered.

“I, um . . . I'm kind of apprehensive, Sweetie. You know I haven't been to church in years.” she replied.

“Your mother wants us to go with her this morning,” he put forth, getting down a travel mug for himself from the cabinet.

“Okay, if you insist,” she said, thinking she was already uncomfortable with being a Sorceress and possibly being a Valkyrie at the same time. Going to church would just add another layer of discomfort to her mind right now.

“Willi, I'm not going to twist your arm to get you to go. I'm just trying to keep a good rapport with your mother.” he stated.

“I know, Richard. Um, let me get a cup of coffee in me and then we can go.” she retorted.

Willi was torn by this; she used to enjoy going to church after they had found a non-denominational church to attend. The pastor was a great fur, always making himself available for his congregation to unload their troubles on. He always had a way of understanding a fur's trouble and helping them to see the reality of their situation. He was also big on free will being the reason things were like they were.

He had a way of helping a fur to understand the Bible like no other pastor she had been in contact with. He was also a realist when it came to the written word; the Bible had lessons to teach but it had to be taken with a grain of salt. She had agreed with this view completely just like her hubby had.

She finally poured herself a cup of coffee and sipped at it, thinking this over. Her mother was a very religious fur so she made sure Willi attended mass when she was young. She smiled wistfully at the thought of attending a non-denominational church now; would her mother approve?

“Wilhelmine, your father and I are ready,” her mother offered as she came into the kitchen to join her daughter. “If you would, please pass me a cup?” she requested of her offspring. Willi smiled while she poured a mug of the steaming beverage for her parent.

“Mom, has Richard told you our church is not a Catholic church?” the daughter asked, giving her mother the requested drink.

“He has told me that fact,” her mother replied, then took a sip of her coffee. She tasted it, thinking about it for a moment, then she took another sip just to confirm it didn't need sugar. “He has also indicated to me the fact that this church you attend is very open-minded and they will not judge where a fur has worshiped before.”

“So, you won't be judgmental?” the younger femme asked.

“No, I will not.” Iva replied.

“Thank you, Mom. You don't know how badly this has upset me. I'm a very powerful femme with the ability to summon a Valkyrie with my mind. I just don't have my heart into going to church this morning but I will go for you.” she submitted to her mother.

“Wilhelmine, I'm not forcing you to go,” Iva stated, getting a slightly pained look on her muzzle. She had found some clarity during her last mission when it came to attending church and a fur that was forced to go would only end up being forced away from worshipping altogether.

“No, maybe I should go, Mom. I might ask Pastor Lucchese to come by so I can talk to him about my problems.” Willi suggested. That got her mother's attention.

“You would tell him you're a Sorceress and possibly a Valkyrie?” the elder femme asked.

“Mom! I could tell him that and be sure he would keep it to himself. He is a good fur of the cloth that has always said he keeps our discussions confidential.”

“Speak to him of these matters only if you're sure he will keep these things to himself, Sweetheart.” her mother suggested. “If you're ready, we should be leaving.”

“Okay, let me fix Richard a cup of coffee in a travel mug and then we'll go.”

Willi and her family got into Richard's Ford Excursion and headed off to church, all of them hoping to have a nice Sunday worship. Just a few doors down the street from their home, they passed a black

Chevrolet Suburban with dark privacy glass, parked at the curb.

“That was her, I think,” the femme raccoon in the Suburban's passenger seat stated, looking down at her mini-laptop and scrolling through the photos that the camera in the grill of their vehicle had taken.

“You think so?” the male poodle asked, looking at the images on his Polaroid D-SLR camera. “She seems to match the description; palomino, tall, somewhat athletic. Okay, let's go.”

The vehicle pulled away from the curb, eased down the street and parked in front of Richard and Willi's home. The femme lifted a device up and pointed it at the house, letting them see thermal images of what was inside. The display indicated two bodies moving around inside, Jason and Tasha.

“Crap! Their other houseguests are still inside!” the canid spat out.

“Don't worry, Frank. Just park across the street and we'll keep an eye on them.” the femme suggested.

“Okay, Mandy. Go ahead and plug this thing into the power port so the batteries don't get drained,” the male retorted as he repositioned the vehicle for further surveillance.

Harriet Connell put her house robe on and wandered out to the kitchen, hoping to find her daughter fixing breakfast. What she observed instead was her offspring, coaching Aslaug through putting a hair clip in her mane to put it back up like it was last evening.

“Just catch the one side with the open hair clip, then use your paw, yeah, just like that, to bring the other side up.” she instructed while her mother was watching this lesson transpire. “Now make sure to get a bit of your mane down here at the back of your head in the clip to hold it centered, just like that, and close the clip.” she continued.

“I think I have it, Victoria but this is a lot of work to go to just to put my mane up,” the filly stated, squirming in her seat while the tigress straightened out her mane.

“Aslaug, you seem . . . uncomfortable with looking pretty,” the elder tigress offered up as she sat down across from her at the table.

“It is who I am,” the filly replied, looking at herself in a paw mirror. “Victoria, these curls will wash out, right?” she asked, hoping in her heart they would. A Valkyrie didn't need to look nice to do her job; often times a shocking look would work out to her advantage.

“Yes, they will wash out, Aslaug.” the younger feline femme replied. “So, would sausage and eggs be fine for breakfast?” she asked her company.

“That will be fine with me.” the filly replied.

“I would like that, Sweetheart. It's nice to have a breakfast that I didn't have to fix.” her mother admitted.

“I agree, Mom. Torvald will be our chef this morning.” Victoria offered up. “I will be right back with our cook,” she added, headed for their bedroom to retrieve the stallion.

Walter Connell wandered into the kitchen, sitting down by his wife and getting her attention. "Um, where was our daughter going to?" he asked.

"She went to go and get Torvald so he could fix us breakfast," she replied. That made her hubby look at her strangely.

"I didn't know he could cook," the tiger admitted.

"I have heard his kits saying he is a very good cook," the Valkyrie offered up. "I suppose we will find out for ourselves very soon."

She grimaced, thinking about what she needed to do right after they ate and it bothered her; if she failed, it would be tragic for several of her friends. All she knew was she needed to get going quickly, right after breakfast. She also hoped Varghöss had left the local wildlife alone, just like she told him to.

Torvald had put on a black pocket-tee and his sweatpants so he was now making his way to the kitchen to begin cooking for his guests.

"Good Morning," he bid his in-laws and the filly, nodding to them. They all looked rather tired this morning for some reason. Maybe a little too much partying yesterday? It could also have been the mead that the Berserker had made for the occasion . . .

"We have decided we would like sausage and eggs," Aslaug informed their chef, smiling at his appearance; it was apparent he was still trying to deal with that beard trimmer of his. The stallion's facial hair was quite a bit shorter than it was last eve.

"Aslaug, last night after you went to bed, I thought I saw a huge wolf-kali skulking around up in the tree line. I went up there to have a look around but I didn't find so much as a paw print," he informed her. She thought about it for a moment before she replied.

"It might have been a reflection from one of your outdoor lights, Tor. A neighborhood kali might have walked in front of it, casting a shadow up the hill," she suggested. No need to confirm the existence of her beast. Not yet, anyway.

"I guess you're right but I have to say, it certainly had the feeling of *sejd* to it," he put forth while he pulled out the required cooking devices. The filly was glad he had his back to her because she cringed, thinking he might be able to feel the beast's presence. She knew she could.

"Not to change the subject, but are you going to Sacrament services this morning?" Walter asked his daughter. She had rejoined them when Torvald had come out to cook their morning meal.

"Um, if you want to go, we can go to the ward where I've been going," she replied.

"How about you, Aslaug? Would you go with us?" Harriet asked. The filly looked over at Mrs. Connell and took a moment before she answered.

"I am sorry but I must decline. I have to be going right after we eat," she replied, making a save that had Torvald wink at her, acknowledging her quick thinking. She could tell he was fighting off a smirk as he turned back to the range to start the sausage cooking.

“That's a shame, Honey. I really like your attitude,” the elder femme feline put forth. “Torvald, how about you? Will you go with us?” she asked.

“Yes, I will go with you. The bishop of Victoria's ward understands the fact that I am devout Asetro. He will not try to convert me because he knows I worship the Old Norse Gods.” the stallion put forth. “Besides, it looks better for Victoria when her hubby attends with her.” he added.

“Torvald, I've been meaning to ask you about that.” Walter piped up. “Don't you feel odd about being in a Christian church?” he queried. The stallion stopped what he was doing and looked at his father-in-law in a very serious way before he replied.

“Walter, I have stood in the presence of the one that you call Jesus. If he was comfortable with what would be called a heathen in his home, I'm sure his father wouldn't mind my being in one of his houses of worship for a few hours.” Torvald offered up. “Besides, the Gods are still our employers, as much as we want out of the business in the worst ways. We must still have work to do because our immortality hasn't been taken away from us yet.”

“You've met Jesus?” the tiger asked, seeming a bit shocked by that statement. There were furs in his ward that would give up everything for just five minutes with *The Son* and here his son-in-law has seen him personally? This was almost too much to comprehend.

“Dad, we have both been muzzle to muzzle with him and I can tell you truthfully that Odin and Freya are both very much real, just as real as *The Son* is.” Victoria informed her father.

“This makes my head hurt,” Walter put forth, shaking his head at the mere thought of where they had been. “So, what does Heaven look like?” he asked.

“It is just what you would expect, Dad. It's like an alpine meadow in full bloom. It's just . . . beautiful . . .” the younger tigress offered up, getting a very far-off look in her eyes. “You just don't want to come home after you've been there. Asgaard is just as beautiful and if that's what it takes to be with my husband after we've gone to our final rewards, I will go with him to Asgaard. The Gods have already told us that we will be together once it's said and done.”

“Enough of this for now, please?” the stallion requested, getting their attention back. “How would everyone like their eggs?” He asked, preparing to start cooking in earnest. “Aslaug needs to get going soon and the rest of us are going to church only if we get this breakfast done!”

Tasha 'looked' out front with her mind again, acknowledging the presence of that black Suburban still sitting across the street. Now puzzled and bothered by this, she made a 'long distance' call to Mala. Within moments, the blue and white femme arrived.

“I came as fast as I could,” Mala explained, giving the lioness a hug. “you say there's some furs spying on the house?”

“Right across the street, in that black vehicle.” the feline replied. “They have something aimed at the house that must be looking for heat signatures because I can feel it.” she added.

“I can feel it too, Tasha. Hmm, I hate to do this because I know I'll catch some flack for it,” she said reverently, waving a paw in the direction of the agents in the SUV. “There, I stopped time for them temporarily. Let's go, quickly.”

The two femmes and Jason went out to the vehicle, walking around to the passenger side very casually. The canid male popped the lock on the back passenger door with a gesture of his paw and the three climbed in. The two agents were in the front seats, frozen in a stasis as time around them stood still.

“It's some kind of an infra-red viewing device,” Jason stated, pointing out the coffee pot on the counter in the kitchen, the heat signature on the screen clearly visible.

“Jason, Tasha, they seem to be FBI agents,” Mala pointed out after taking the femme raccoon's badge wallet from her coat pocket and looking at it.

“They're probably spying on Willi Marie but for what reason, I have no idea. She's a law-abiding fur with no police record that she's ever spoke of,” Jason suggested, pointing down at the photo in the male poodle's paws. It was a good picture taken of Wilhelmine at some recent time in her front yard when she was doing some gardening.

“We must leave. Time is almost up,” Mala stated, transporting them back into the house.

“What are they spying on Willi Marie for?” Jason mused after they had arrived safely back inside the Delancey residence.

“I have some connections on this planet so I'll call in a marker and have my contact find out some information for me.” Mala stated. “I must go now, before they notice I have popped in.” With a snap of her fingers, she was gone.

“This is really messed up, if you ask me.” Jason put forth while he sat down on the couch.

“I just hope everything's going to work out. You know what, maybe it was just me but this seemed to really upset Mala.” Tasha retorted. “Well hell, I'm not going to sit on my paws any longer, Hon. I'm going to call in a marker of my own and get the Consortium to look into Willi's problems and the deal with her adopted family's charges.”

“Oh no, here we go again,” Jason stated, shaking his head. He wondered what type of tree would appear in the Celestial Court's plaza once the dust settled this time. He knew in his heart that his wife was preparing to call in the 'Big Guns' now and that could end up being a bad thing for numerous furs involved. Without a doubt, there would be serious destruction and Hel to pay before it was over with.

The Connells and the Svensens sat down in the sixth row of pews on the left side of the chapel and the Immortal Couple tried to make themselves comfortable before Sacrament services started. Torvald and Victoria both seemed a bit on edge this morning, finding it very hard to get settled. The tigress seemed to be the most bothered by this, fiddling with her purse while they waited. She held her tongue for a few moments, then voiced her concerns to her hubby in a whisper.

“Tor, I feel very uncomfortable this morning, like there's something trying to make me leave the ward chapel,” she shared quietly with her hubby.

“I feel it too,” he replied, giving her a concerned look. “I am not sure what it is but it feels like *sejd* to me.” he added.

“Do we dare stay?” Victoria asked in a whisper. This was scaring her to no end.

“I think for your parent's safety, we should stay.” he replied to his wife. It was bothering the stallion, too but he wasn't going to admit to his wife just how much this was disturbing him. Especially the fact that his hooves were tingling rather badly at the moment. He wasn't sure what that meant but it surely wasn't good.

“Honey, is something wrong?” the elder tigress asked her daughter after she got her attention, looking very concerned with the situation. “Victoria, you have been acting nervous ever since we set foot in the chapel.” The younger tigress looked at the floor before she looked at her mother and answered her.

“Mom, I have this . . . foreboding feeling hovering over me. Tor feels it too,” she offered up, trying not to broadcast it too loudly.

“Um, you know, your father and I can feel something like an overbearing presence here, too.” her mother offered up. She turned to her hubby and whispered something in his ear that made Walter look up for a moment, then nod in reply. Harriet turned back to her daughter and made sure no fur was listening before she spoke again. “Do you think we should leave?” she asked.

“Um, let me ask Tor . . .” The tigress stopped in mid-sentence when she observed Hrist and Elin walk in, dressed in what Victoria would call Sunday church clothing. She watched them look around the room until they spotted the Immortal Couple and then act as if nothing was wrong with Valkyries being in the chapel while they casually strolled over and sat down in the pew next to Torvald. That overbearing feeling had vanished, no doubt due to the two Valkyries in their presence.

“We were following a dark entity of some kind, stallion,” the lioness whispered to Torvald. “It seemed to be skulking around nearby but the coward left in a big hurry when we showed up.”

“Elin, Hrist, aren't you two uncomfortable being in . . .” Hrist cut him off politely

“No more uncomfortable than you are, Berserker. Now be quiet, the services are starting.” she informed him.

Torvald just rolled his eyes and made himself comfortable, hoping this wouldn't stir the fires excessively.

Conrad checked his tie once more, making sure it was neatly tied. He was standing outside the General Manager's office, trying his best to be calm this morning. Irv Kanegawa had asked him to meet with them before suiting up for the game so they could discuss some things.

He was bothered, considering he was just a wide receiver and not Jack Meadows, their star quarterback. The only thing that kept going through his mind was the possibility of being told his contract was not going to be renewed. This really bothered him, since Cathy and he had decided to settle down in Carmichael. Their home was about one-third paid for at the moment and they had made numerous friends in the area. What else could the management want to talk to him about? Swallowing hard, he knocked on the door.

“Enter,” the voice beckoned from beyond, prompting him to grimace momentarily as he opened the door and stepped into the room. Irv sat off to the side while the General Manager, Al Rawlings, sat behind his desk. “Thanks for coming by this morning, Conrad,” the beagle offered up, extending his paw in a friendly gesture. They shook, then Al indicated for him to sit in a chair beside Irv.

“Um, I'll be point blank, Boss. Why did you need to talk with me?” the tiger asked, somewhat surprising the head of the team.

“That's what I like; a fur that's not afraid to speak his mind.” Mr. Rawlings replied, trying to suppress a smile. He scratched behind one ear, then leaned back in his chair and looked straight at the receiver. “I suppose I won't beat around the bush, Conrad. Your contract runs out at the end of this season. You have shown great improvement since you've been with the 49'ers and you're well respected by the rest of the team.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Conrad said, trying to keep his nervousness to himself.

“I have spoken to Irv about this, Conrad. He seems to think you're an asset to the team. Well, to the point he practically demanded we either renew or extend your contract.” Al shuffled some papers on his desk, looking for the one he wanted. “I discussed it at length with the team's owners and we have come to a decision. I just hope you won't be too upset by it.”

“I'll take whatever decision you have made and accept it.” Conrad told them, looking down at the floor. He knew the GM was going to tell him he was let go at the end of the season.

“Now don't look so heartbroken!” Mr. Rawlings said as he gave the paper to Conrad. “I know you probably thought you would get a substantial raise but we just can't afford that. I can, however offer you a new contract for four years at your present rate the first year, twenty-five thousand a year additional per year on the second, third and fourth years with a negotiable extension of two more years at your top pay rate.”

“You're offering me what?!?” the tiger blurted out, looking over the rough proposal in shock. That extension was the clincher; they could pay off their home, get a good retirement package set up and maybe do a bit of traveling. He finally got his voice back to ask, “Is this for real, Mr. Rawlings?”

“I wouldn't have let you see it if it weren't for real, Conrad. I like your style on the field, son.” the boss informed him. “You seem to be able to know just where to be to receive the pass and you're very fast on your feet. I can't see letting you go to some other team and have to play against your skills.”

“Thank You, Sir!” Conrad blurted out, getting up to shake the GM's paw. “This is a very good offer that I will not pass up!” he added.

“Didn't think you would, son.” Al retorted. “I'll have this drawn up this week and you can sign it Friday.” he proposed.

“Thank You!” Conrad said again, feeling like a burden had been lifted from his shoulders.

“Okay, now that we have gotten that out of the way, you had better get dressed for the game, son.” Mr. Rawlings pointed out.

“Yes Sir, I'll get ready to go kick some tail today,” the tiger stated, shaking the GM's paw again before leaving the office quickly.

“I told you he would take that offer,” the reynard stated after the door closed behind the tiger, looking at his boss with a knowing smile.

“I'm glad he did, Irv. I would hate to see that felid playing against us.” the boss retorted. “Now, you have a job to do, Coach. Better get going.” he suggested.

“Yes, Sir,” the fox replied, shaking the boss' paw. “We'll show those Raiders who's the boss.”

Willi Marie and her family were returning from church, having enjoyed the morning in worship. As they were turning into the driveway, the younger mare made a comment.

“Mom, do you feel that? An odd tingling sensation?” she asked.

“Yes I do, Honey. That is so . . . unusual.” she replied. “I wonder what it is?” Iva mused as she took off her seatbelt. They went inside only to be greeted by Willi's house guests.

“I'm not sure if you noticed, but there's some FBI furs spying on your home, Willi Marie.” Jason put forth.

“How do you know?” she asked. There had been that black Suburban parked across the street ...

“Mala stopped time around them momentarily so we could check them out.” he replied. That seemed to make Willi seem upset for just a moment, right before she took action.

“Let's see just who they really are!” she stated tersely, using her powers to locate them and transport them into the house, placing them on the couch. “Okay, I'm Wilhelmine Delancey,” she stated as she confronted the two furs. “Who the hell are you two and what do you want with me?” she demanded, standing right in front of the agents with a very cross look on her muzzle.

“Uh . . . we're . . . with . . . How did we get in here?” the femme raccoon asked. She was looking around at Willi's living room, positive she had been sitting in their vehicle just a moment ago.

“I brought you here! Now answer me! Who are you and what do you want with me?” the palomino femme demanded in a loud voice.

“I'm . . . Mandy Berkshire and this is my partner Frank Reed. We're FBI agents.” the femme raccoon replied. She patted her coat only to discover she no longer had a weapon on her side.

“Looking for these?” Willi asked, holding up their service weapons in her paws. “I do not allow strangers to carry weapons in my home.” she explained. “You may have them back when you leave.” she added, putting them on a side table by the front door.

“Honey, maybe you should ...” Richard was going to suggest that she be easy with the agents but his bride cut him off.

“Richard, these two furs were up to no good, if you ask me. I intend to get to the bottom of this.” Willi stated. She turned back to her unwilling guests and made her demand again. “Now, what were you doing outside that you couldn't just walk up to the house, knock and be asked inside?”

“Um, Ma'am, we're supposed to be investigating you.” Frank offered up. “The nature of that investigation, I can't divulge.”

“What have I done to warrant this?” Willi asked, making a chair appear behind her. She sat down, crossed her ankles and made herself comfortable, much to the agent's surprise. She then gestured at the coffee table, making some lemonade and cookies appear. Taking her glass and a gingersnap, she motioned to the table. “Trust me, I will not hurt you but I want answers just as badly as you do. We have all day to talk,” she suggested, taking a sip of her beverage afterward.

“Well, I guess there are some things we could ask,” Frank suggested. “Um, I guess this is stupid to ask at this point but you are Wilhelmine Marie Delancey, right?” he asked, starting what would become a long afternoon of beating around the bush, FBI style.

Victoria, Torvald, her parents and the two Valkyries made their way up the drive in Victoria's mini-van, the promise of some lunch made by the two tigresses burning in their minds. As they topped the rise right before the motor circle by the front door, they observed a white Ford Fusion parked in a guest spot with a lone occupant inside.

“I wonder who that is?” Victoria asked no fur in particular as she parked her vehicle in the driveway.

“Hmm, I guess we should be on the alert,” Torvald countered, keeping an eye on the fur in the Ford. Once they had gotten out of the van, the fur, a jackal, got out of the Fusion and walked over towards them. He was neatly dressed in slacks and sport coat, armed with no more than a briefcase. As he arrived, he put out his paw to Torvald and introduced himself.

“My name is Thomas Iskenderian. Mitchell Gallegos has asked me to represent you and your wife at your upcoming trial.” he offered up.

“I'm Torvald, this is Victoria, my wife and these furs are Walter and Harriet Connell, her parents. The two femmes with us are Hrist, and Elin, friends of the family.” the huge fur put forth. “I guess you'll want to start going over this case right away.” Tor suggested.

“I was actually looking at my watch, wondering why I was hungry. Travel lag, you know. I was going to go get a bite to eat when you drove up.” Thomas replied.

“No, please have lunch with us, well, as long as you like middle eastern spices.” Victoria offered.

“With a last name like Iskenderian, what do you think?” the jackal asked with a smile. His family was from a parallel world's country of Lebanon, so spicy was just fine with him.

“I guess you'll like my mother's special burgers and potato salad, then,” she replied. “Please come inside.”

The two FBI agents had accepted their weapons back from Willi Marie, walked back across the street to their vehicle and got back in. The femme looked at the package of home-baked cookies in her possession and shook her head in disbelief before she broke the silence.

“So . . . Frank, do we put this in our report?” she asked her partner. He looked at her, then shook his head 'no' in reply.

“Um, yeah, just put it in there . . . we were zapped into her home via her magical abilities, relieved of our weapons and interrogated by Willi Marie and their house guest, that lioness. She then gave us back our weapons, offered us some cookies her mother had baked and allowed us to walk out of there without so much as a scratch on us. That would go over well . . .” he replied. “Just think about it; I'm sure we would be fired in a heartbeat.”

“You're right, Frank. We can't put that in the report.” Mandy agreed. “So, what *do* we put in our report?”

“Okay, how about this?” he proposed, “We were on surveillance and were unable to enter their residence. I think that would work.” Frank put forth.

“Yeah, that would work except for the scans, Frank. We are in plain sight, right here,” Mandy pointed out, running back the recording for him. It was obvious when Willi had 'zapped' them into her home and when they walked back out again.

“No problem,” Frank stated, taking the thermal imager from his partner. He removed the SDHC card from the device, put it into his camera and formatted it. Placing it back in the scanner, the playback screen stated in bold white letters, 'NO IMAGES TO DISPLAY'. “There, fixed,” he added, giving his partner a knowing smile. “Polaroid camera, Polaroid scanner. Formatting matches close enough to be pretty much indistinguishable from one another.”

“Well, okay, that's good enough for me. Thermal imaging scanner malfunction, happens all the time.” she suggested, shrugging her shoulders for emphasis.

“Listen, I'm not sure how you feel about it but from now on, let's just go to her front door, knock and ask to be invited inside.” Frank put forth for her approval.

“I agree; no more messing around with her. We know what she can do but there's no way in hell we can bring up a bit of it.” Mandy stated. “As far as I'm concerned, what happened in her house, stays in her house.”

“Amen,” Frank offered, starting the engine and pulling away from the curb. No need to piss Willi off because there was no telling what she might do to them.

Thomas finished the last of his potato salad, trying to wash the burn out of his mouth with some coffee. Victoria had warned him that her mother cooked with a lot of spices but he hadn't had food this spicy since he was a teen, living with his family.

“That was very good, Mrs. Connell.” he offered up. “It was very hot but I enjoyed every bite.” he added.

“It was not that hot,” Hrist piped up. “Willi Marie has some hot sauce called 'Liquid Lava' that is very

hot. I have put it on my pancakes to add a bit of taste.”

“Trust me, that stuff *is* hot,” Torvald put forth, indicating for them to adjourn to the study. Once there, he allowed the lawyer to use his desk out of courtesy while the Immortal Couple sat down on the couch.

“Well, I won't mince words, Torvald, Victoria. Most of the charges against you are pure hooey but there are a few charges that might stick.” Thomas told them. “Um, I'm thinking the ones to worry about are the issue with Ed Harper and the death of Vincent James. Those are the ones that might make it to trial so I need all the background you have for those incidents.” he requested.

Torvald nodded, preparing to give his statement to his counsel “Okay, here's what happened with Ed Harper . . .”