

*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 Kasbnikov, 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, 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, Barbara Caine, Edward and Mary (nee Leese) Caine, Richard & Wilhelmine Marie (nee Kurzweil) Delancey, James William & Nancy (nee Roland) Kurzweil, Erich Martin & Ivanova Marie 'Iva Marie' (nee Schmidt) Kurzweil, Jason & Natasha 'Tasba' (nee Porter) Cummeron, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito[®], Leonard's Restaurant[®], Hunter Auto Parts[®], Right Way Groceries[™] and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission.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 Meig'h

Chapter 05 – “Arraignments and Agents”

The day had come when the Immortal Couple would finally be taken to the world of the Celestial Courts to be tried for crimes against the universe. As many of the family that could had visited this morning to give their support to the Matriarch and the Patriarch of the Svensen clan. Once the last teary good-byes had been said, Thomas Iskenderian erected a portal for them, allowing the trio to step through it to their destination.

They arrived in a room that seemed to be just an arrival point for travelers, having no furniture in it at all. The only thing interrupting the white walls, ceiling and floor was a sign, electronic in nature, indicating with an animated electronic arrow for them to walk down a hallway off to one side.

“Through here, please,” Thomas stated, heading in the direction indicated. Torvald and Victoria followed, somewhat apprehensive of the situation. Just a short ways down the corridor, they encountered what must have been a reception desk. A human female sat behind the counter, pushing her flame-red hair out of her face to greet them.

“Hello, Victoria, Torvald. I'm Tracy, your assistant during the arraignment phase.” she informed them. “If you would, please follow me. Thomas will meet with you again after we've processed you in.” she added.

They followed Tracy to an area where they were politely fingerprinted, photographed and asked to empty their pockets. After they were deemed unarmed, the female guided them to a room that seemed like a waiting room of some kind. They weren't wrong, as it was a waiting room for a pair of doctors that checked the couple over to ensure they were in good health and not carrying some contagious disease. Afterward, they were taken to a suite of sorts that would be their temporary home while they were on this planet.

“We will bring you appropriate clothing for your arraignment and your meals will be brought in for you three times a day.” Tracy stated. “If there's some need that I can fill for you, just let me know. I'll be leaving now so Thomas will be joining you shortly.” The female turned and left the room, quietly closing the door after herself.

“Well, the whole thing starts in earnest now,” Torvald said to no fur in particular, trying not to voice his opinion of the whole stinking mess.

“I hope Thomas is right, that he can get the whole thing thrown out tomorrow,” the tigress brought up, walking over to look out the window to the city that spread out as far as she could see. “If we get out of this, Sweetie, I’m am so done with doing the work of the Gods. As far as I’m concerned, they have failed us big time. I actually feel like they have abandoned us. Why didn’t they tell us this would happen?” she mused.

“Maybe they omitted this information just to get us to do their work?” her hubby put forth. Torvald knew in his heart that it was his fault they were in such a mess. If he had possessed any common sense at all, he would have never married and stayed off to himself, just like Aslaug had done. The fur’s lives that he had wrecked by marrying and having children didn’t deserve to be in this position. He was especially concerned with Ronald, Bradley and Nancy, since the Gods might expect them to do the work of the Gods in exchange for being immortal. That wasn’t fair at all. As far as he was concerned they were innocent in this matter. Torvald’s musings were interrupted by their counselor, coming into the room.

“I hope this suite is satisfactory?” he asked, putting his briefcase down on the coffee table. “By the way, I kind of told them what you might like to eat, based on what you served me while I was on your planet.”

“That will be fine,” the tigress replied. “Um, what time will we need to be in court?” she asked.

“About ten in the morning, based on your time. It should only take about twenty minutes tops to get this thrown out.” Mr. Iskenderian replied. “Just so you know, the courts wanted to put you in a jail cell until morning but I reminded them of just who they were dealing with. I really think they’re afraid of Wilhelmine’s connections with the Consortium.” He looked in his briefcase for a paper, scanned it quickly then put it back before he continued. “Speaking of Wilhelmine, the Consortium is sending a lawyer to assist me at Mrs. Delancey’s request.”

“That was thoughtful of her,” Victoria commented.

“I heard the femme that is being sent is a Grand Mistress, just like Wilhelmine.” Thomas offered up. “Her name is Bethany Carmel, according to the note I was given.”

“Well, let’s hope this all works out,” Torvald offered up, making himself comfortable on the couch. “I don’t know what we’ll do if it doesn’t.”

Conrad sat on the bench, watching the Steelers hand his team their behinds on a silver platter. The defensive squad was being ate up and spit out by Pittsburgh’s offensive furs with no obvious way of stopping them. He was joined by Irv, the coach for the receivers.

“Doesn’t look good, does it?” the fox queried, giving Conrad a Sports-Ade drink to replenish his electrolytes.

“We’re getting our asses kicked, Coach.” he replied. Sipping his refreshment, he made a candid observation. “I don’t think we’re going to the Superbowl this year. First the Raiders, then the Grays, followed by Jacksonville and now Pittsburgh. This game will most likely make four losses in a row.”

“You know, I've noticed they're not as strong to the left, Conrad. We're going to try a few plays that focus on that weakness if we can get the ball back.” Irv offered up.

“Well, maybe that will . . .” The tiger stopped talking when Gary intercepted a pass and ran it back twenty-seven yards, getting them to their forty-six yard line. “Alright!” Conrad shouted, jumping up off the bench and putting his helmet back on.

“Go get 'em, Svensen,” the coach shouted, patting the tiger on the shoulder right before he ran out onto the Synth-turf. Conrad and Gary high-fived each other as they passed one another on the field, a long-standing tradition with them. Once on the field, Jack Meadows called a huddle.

“Okay, they're weak to the left so we're going to run a forty-three but I want you, Conrad to slant left. Bill, Jeff, you two hold off that number twenty-seven fur, don't let him sack me.” the equine told his squad.

They broke the huddle and lined up, waiting for Jack to call the play. He called it, the ball was snapped and Jeff Matthews, a very large, muscular Brahma that played center, fell on the unfortunate number twenty-seven, stopping him cold. Bill Forney, a Clydesdale, took out two more furs, keeping Jack safe for the moment.

Conrad sprinted a few steps then turned left, crossing the field. He looked back just in time to see the quarterback throw the ball his way. Getting under it, the tiger snatched it from the air, trapped it and ran like the wind. A few furs tried to catch him but it was all for naught; he was across the goal line when he was finally tackled, hard.

“Uunnggh!” he grunted, trying to get his vision back once he heard the horn that signaled the play was over. When he was tackled, kind of on the low side, he was slammed into the grass hard which was bad, since they were playing on Synth-turf. There was some cushioning but the impact on the ground was still quite brutal.

“Conrad? You okay?” Bill asked, putting a paw out to help his team-mate up.

The tiger looked up at him, eyes still out of focus. “I'm . . . I've got the wind knocked out of me,” he finally admitted, not telling the equine the whole truth. Conrad was sure he had broken several ribs when he hit the ground. He rolled over onto his back and got a big breath, feeling the ribs pop painfully back into position.

“Let me help you up,” Bill suggested, helping his team-mate to his feet. “Wow, you really hit the turf hard, buddy. Sure you're not hurt?” he queried.

“Naw, I'll be fine,” Conrad replied, walking back to the bench. He would be fine in a few minutes, just about the time the field goal squad would be done. He looked up, watching the ball go sailing between the goalposts. Well, maybe this game could be salvaged.

Madelyn was wiping down the display cases, trying to tidy things up when her hubby walked through the front door of their shop, grinning like he didn't have a brain in his head. He had been to the fur stylist's shop a few blocks away, getting a full-body dye job.

“Well, how do you like it?” he asked, turning to show off his body, naked from the waist up. He was dyed to appear as a dark flaxen chestnut, his body colored a dark honey-chestnut and his platinum mane and tail darkened to a medium blond tone.

“Um, you look nice, Sweetheart but I thought you were going for a buckskin look,” she offered up. She stood, sat her cleaning supplies on the counter and slowly walked around her hubby, taking in the net effect.

“I thought about going buckskin but I saw this on the chart and I couldn't resist it.” he admitted. “You know, the fur that did this for me was telling me about a chestnut equine femme she dyed black, made her mane blond and put a black stripe down the middle of it afterward. Sounds pretty intense, huh?”

“I'll say,” Madelyn replied. “Next time, I want to have you done as a zebra,” she told her hubby as she slipped her arms around him to hug him. “I think you would make a very handsome and sexy zebra male,” she stated, running a finger up and down his chest slowly.

“Um, this took almost four hours, Hon. I can't imagine how long making me look like a zebroid would take.” Axel proffered up.

“I'm thinking all day,” his wife replied, giving him a kiss afterward. “Now that you're done, go get a shirt on and help me with these display cases, Mister.” she said with a smile, turning him to head him towards the back room for a company polo shirt.

Axel was returning from the back room, putting on his shirt when a thought went through Madelyn's mind concerning the dye job. She tried to dismiss the idea but it just wouldn't go away. “Um, Axel, Sweetheart, when you were dyed, just how much of your body did you have done?” she asked.

“Head to hoof, Hon,” he replied, looking over to see her thinking about something. “Why do you ask?” he queried.

“I was just thinking; if you were dyed all over, who dyed you between your waist and your knees?” she requested, hoping he didn't say it was some femme that had done the work.

“The femme that did the dye job wrapped my tail quite tightly with some vinyl-wrap and had me do my own privates.” he offered in reply. “I was not going to let her see me like that although I did have to wrap a towel around myself and let her finish her work on the rest of my body with only that towel around me. I really felt . . . naked and embarrassed like that.”

“Oh . . .” Madelyn said softly, feeling a bit embarrassed by her question. She knew her hubby loved her unconditionally so why did she worry about such a stupid idea? “I'm sorry, Sweetie. I feel like I wasn't trusting you right now.” she explained in a small voice.

“That's alright, Madelyn.” Axel told her, walking up to her and hugging her tightly. “Listen, I would never have affections for another femme. You're the only one I love and want to be with.”

“Thank you,” Madelyn said softly, trying not to cry. “Axel, that was stupid of me to ask,” she added, hugging him in return.

“Come on, let's get these counters cleaned,” the male equine suggested, giving his mate a kiss on the lips. “You will never have to worry about me leaving you. Ever.”

The blond femme equine measured the distance center-to-center on the steel studs that framed up an interior wall, making sure they had been done properly. Putting her tape measure away, she made a cursory check of the area that would be the living and dining rooms for the new high-rise flats being constructed in the north end of downtown Los Angeles.

Attaching her safety harness to a positioning lanyard, she stepped over to the edge of the flooring to make sure the anchors for the balcony railing had been put in correctly. The lanyard was reassuring, not allowing her to step over the edge to the ground some twelve stories below her.

Gazing past the anchors embedded in the slab, she looked down at the construction equipment parked around the site. Nancy wondered whether or not she could survive a fall from that height. Needing a better look at a railing anchor point, she disconnected her harness from the safety lanyard. She knelt down, still holding the attaching ring, checking the anchor just to make sure it wasn't standing proud of the concrete.

She stood back up, looking down at the lanyard ring she held in her left paw. It was a new lanyard, hardly used, the plastic wrapping still around the shock arrestor section of the device. If she had let go of it, stepped over the edge and somehow managed to die from the fall, she knew the insurance investigator would deem it a suicide. That wouldn't be fair to her husband and family because the life insurance wouldn't pay off in that case. Hitting her like a sledgehammer, she suddenly came to the realization that she was thinking of taking her life once more.

“Gah! Not again!” she spat out, backing away from the edge very carefully. She hooked the positioning lanyard back to her safety belt, dropped her clip board on the floor and sat down against an interior wall, hugging her knees to her chest while the tears streamed from her eyes. “NO! NO! Go away, you frigging demons! Leave Me Be!! Leave me the Hell Alone!!!” she screamed in frustration, trying to get her head back on straight. It had been years since she had thought of suicide.

Nancy had been plagued with these demons all of her adult life, ever since she had discovered she was an immortal. Somehow, the thought of living forever seemed like a cool thing in the beginning to a twenty-year-old college student. Then it became a nightmare for her a few months later when she survived a horrific traffic accident.

She had been on the way to school at UW College of Engineering when traffic on the I-5 South came to a stop. She slowed her car, a little Vauxhall Vectra and looked for a way around the diesel tractor-trailer she was following behind. That was when a speeding diesel rig behind her collided with her car and made her the jam in the sandwich.

Her car was literally crushed between the two trucks from the impact, leaving her no room to move about to extract herself from the wreckage. The truck behind her started leaking diesel fuel which caught on fire after a few minutes. She sat there, pinned in her destroyed vehicle, contemplating just what it would feel like to burn to death. The flames grew in intensity, making the plastic parts in her car begin to smoke from the heat. For some strange reason, she felt unafraid of death. It actually felt welcome to her. Then the realization that she would die in this wreck hit her hard, making her feel suddenly afraid of the afterlife.

One fur, a rather muscular wolf that was the driver of the truck she was smashed into, did his best to try to get her out of her vehicle before the flames grew too hot but the fact that her car was crushed to about a third of the normal length was a real problem. Just as her dashboard burst into flames, the fire

department began to wet her car down, attempting to keep the flames at bay.

It was still getting incredibly hot in her car, the fire inside her vehicle being fueled by all of the plastic and upholstery around her. She recalled the skin on her paws where she tried to beat out the flames with her leather jacket had become blistered, her coat of blond singed black from the flames behind her in what was left of her back seat.

She remembered the prayer she said to her God to grant her a quick and painless death followed by the sudden appearance of a feline standing by her car, in a space that wasn't big enough to stand in. She couldn't believe he was actually there but he did his best to reassure her that if death took her it was not frightening, that she should just give into it and follow him into the light if she felt so inclined. Nancy remembered looking at the figure, standing directly in the flames beside her car, wondering if he had seriously lost his mind. She remembered thinking she was not going to follow him anywhere because she was hoping to survive this accident somehow. The firefighters at that point finally got the upper paw on the fire, giving her some hope.

"Hey! She's still alive!" Nancy heard a rescue worker exclaim, then she was surprised when that same fur poked his head into her car, asking if she could hear him.

"Yeah, I can hear you just fine," she remembered replying in a whisper, her lungs seriously restricted by the steering wheel pressed painfully into her chest. She had tried several times to touch the seat recliner lever in hopes of getting the seat to lean back a bit and allow her to get a deep breath.

"Just sit tight, Ma'am. We'll get you out of there," the rescue fur had told her, and sit tight she did for almost three hours while they pulled the two trucks apart, disentangled her vehicle from the trailer in front and cut the Vauxhall apart with their hydraulically powered metal-cutting circular saw, some wicked-looking rescue shears and a spreading tool they called a "Vario".

The rescue furs seemed very surprised that she was still alive and talking to them, considering that the space she occupied appeared too small for a living fur to exist in. She had to grit her teeth numerous times as the space around her enlarged from the rescue operation and her shattered body reassembled itself in turn. Eventually they had the car sufficiently pried open to allow a backboard to be put behind her so they could secure her to it, remove her from the wreckage and transport her by helicopter to nearby Harborview Medical Center's trauma unit.

The furs in the air-ambulance were shocked to find her vitals all normal, not those of a femme that was clinging to life. The lead paramedic actually at one point checked his own blood pressure and heart rate just to be sure the equipment wasn't malfunctioning. By the time they had reached the hospital's heli-pad, the medics were shaking their heads.

"Come on you two! Let me up from here! Please?" she had requested, finding that backboard to be seriously uncomfortable for extended usage. The board had no padding at all, they had positioning pads on either side of her head and they had a neck brace on her, her head and that neck brace secured to the board with some wide medical tape.

"You can ask the doctor if you can get up when we you get to the trauma unit," the male squirrel had replied to her, helping to get her out of the helo and onto a gurney. She recalled being greeted at the elevator by a doctor and her father. The doctor, a male bovine, started checking her over while her father looked on, trying to stay out of the way.

“How are you feeling?” her father had asked her, looking very concerned for his daughter's condition. She couldn't forget the look on his face, going from concerned to relieved when she replied to him.

“I'm fine, Dad. If they would just quit fussing over me and let me up from here, I want to go on to class this morning. I have a test in Structural Analysis at ten.” she had replied, serious in her request.

“You're delirious, little one,” the doctor had told her, checking her pupils for reaction. “We'll be doing a CAT scan and I need to X-ray your neck and skull, Miss Svensen,” he had added, stopping to take another look at the portable monitor sitting between her legs. The bull seemed puzzled by the normality of the display but her father wasn't. He had suspected she was an immortal, just like himself.

Nancy finally spent that afternoon and on into the evening in the trauma ward, then she was transferred to ICU until the next day. By that time, the medical team that had been in charge of her care had decided to let her go home with the orders to take a week off and spend it recuperating. There seemed to be no need for her to remain there, since she seemed healthy except for her coat that was singed pretty badly. On the way out of the hospital, she remembered the local newspaper's front page had a photo of the wreck, a high school photo of her and the headline that proclaimed, “Miracle Femme Of Seattle”. Just the kind of publicity she didn't want at that time and certainly not ever again.

And now, mulling over that past horrific incident in her mind, while sitting twelve stories up in a partially build high-rise, she was startled by the appearance of that same feline, the one that had suggested she follow him into the light.

“Where the hell did you come from? This job site has access gates, buddy! How did you . . .” The feline cut her off politely.

“I just popped in, if you must ask,” the feline replied, sitting down by her and offering her a smoke. He shook a smoke out of the pack of Lucky Strike non-filters, his favorite brand. “You don't know who I am, do you?” the figure asked.

“I don't have the slightest clue who you are but I will bum a smoke off of you,” she replied, taking the smoke offered. The figure gave her his lighter, a Zippo, and waited to light his until after she had fired up her cigarette.

“This might sound strange to you, but I'm Uriel, the angel of death,” he replied, casually taking a drag and blowing a smoke ring. “You and I have to talk,” he added, looking to see what her reaction to that statement would be.

“Um, I didn't jump and kill myself, just in case you didn't notice,” she offered up, coughing a few times afterward. It had been a long time since she had quit smoking. Twenty years, in fact.

“I know you didn't jump, Nancy Corbin. It's not about that at all because you would have survived the fall without a doubt. It's about your immortality.” he replied.

“What of it?” She was bothered by this line of discussion.

“Even though you came to possess immortality by accident rather than having it granted to you, you still have to do what all immortals have done; you must do the work of the Gods.” Uriel laid out for her.

“My Grandpa Torvald said to run screaming the other way if you showed up offering work for me,” she

pointed out, starting to feel very . . . uneasy, maybe pressured by all of this.

“I should have guessed Torvald would tell you that,” the angel mused. “Nancy, you must either do the bidding of the Gods or . . .” Uriel caught himself before he gave her the other choice.

“Or what?”

“Or you would . . . I'm not sure I can tell you this.” the angel finally stated. “Maybe you should talk with your Grandfather. I'm sure he can tell you the in's and out's of this situation.”

“I would talk with him but he's not here right now, as you should probably know.” she said almost sarcastically. Grandpa Torvald had been right; the angels had the ability to be dense at times.

“You're right; he's not on the planet.” the feline agreed. “Look, here's the gist of it; you either do the bidding you're asked to do or they *will* do something, like make you sterile or remove your immortality.”

“That's not a bad thing, to be mortal. I think I . . .” Uriel stopped her in mid-sentence and began to fill in the blanks for her.

“Listen, if your immortality is removed, all the things that happened to you as an immortal will have a cumulative effect on your mortal health and lifespan. You might die right on the spot if your gift is removed, Nancy. If you become an agent, we will age your appearance, helping you to fit in with your husband's age. Once he passes on, you can go to be with him in the afterlife.”

“I would still be an agent, though? Right?” she asked, just to be sure of what her grandfather had said.

“Yes, you would still be an agent, Nancy.” Uriel agreed. “I know you like the antiquities so we could offer you a job retrieving items that were left behind on a mission or recover things that were never meant to be found by mortal furs.” he added.

“And I would do this work right here on this planet?” she queried, giving thought to this crazy, hair-brained notion.

“No, there are already too many immortals on this world as it is. You would be transported to other worlds to do your work, most likely partnered with another fur, another immortal like yourself.”

“But I would live here, right? When I'm not working?”

“We could arrange that,” the angel suggested. “Please give it some serious thought, Nancy Corbin.”

“This sounds serious. How long do I have to think about this offer?” she questioned.

“Not very long, Nancy. Please think this out carefully, though. We are offering you the best deal we can.”

Nancy looked over to say she would think about it but Uriel was gone. Just like that. This troubled her because she might not be able to talk with her grandfather before she had to make a decision. She took another drag off of her smoke before she ground it out on the concrete floor, retrieved her clipboard and went back to work.

Waiting for the construction elevator to arrive at her floor, she mused about just how sideways her day

had gone. She knew the events of this morning would blow her hubby's mind so she decided to just keep it to herself for now.

Conrad had a towel in each paw, trying to get most of the Sports-Ade off of himself before he hugged his wife. The Niners had pulled it off, salvaging a game that looked grim in the first half. Grabbing his wife around the waist, he gave her a big kiss.

“Conrad! You're soaked!” Cathy stated, pulling back from him just a bit. “Honey! You're going to get me wet, too!” she added. That was about the time another cooler of Sports-Ade, lemon lime flavor, was poured over Conrad's head by Gary and Jeff. Unfortunately, Cathy was the unlucky recipient of part of that drink. The two males apologized for soaking her, bringing her a large towel as a peace offering. While she was drying off, they were joined by a brown ursine, Coach Logan.

“You did great out there, Svensen,” the head coach told him, patting the tiger's soaked shoulder as he walked by. The coach stopped, looked at the femme cougar in Conrad's arms and made a comment; “Um, Mrs. Svensen, you should know by now, not to get near him until all of the coolers are empty.” He was going to say more until a cooler of berry-flavored Sports-Ade was dumped over his head. He just stood there, licking the dripping refreshment from his muzzle, trying to keep from smiling.

“Um, Coach Logan, what was that you said?” Cathy asked, smiling at him. “I would have thought you . . .” He cut her off, trying not to smile.

“Yeah, well, being the coach you kind of expect this,” he replied, tugging at his soaked sport coat. “Come on, Conrad, let's change into some dry clothes for the post-game interview. Mrs. Svensen, I'll drop Conrad off at the hotel for you.”

“I appreciate that gesture, Coach Logan. Don't keep him out too late,” she added with a smile.

“I'll be there in about ninety minutes or so,” Conrad offered up.

“I'll be ready to go to dinner when you get there!” she shouted, watching her hubby walk off towards the locker room. She was joined by Tricia Meadows, the quarterback's little dun-colored pony wife.

“So, how wet did you get?” she asked, giving Cathy a towel to dry off with. The femme feline turned to take the towel offered only to see Jack's mate, soaked to the skin.

“Tricia, you're soaked through!” Cathy blurted out, shaking her head. “Okay, the next game we wait until all of the coolers are empty.”

“That's a plan,” Tricia agreed. “I'm glad we brought towels, though. Um, we had better get back to the hotel so we can be ready for dinner.” Cathy nodded, agreeing with that thought.

“Okay, I'll call your room when I'm ready. As soon as the males get there, we're going to this place I was told about that serves some killer Mexican fare.” the femme cougar laid out.

“Yeah, that sounds fine. Jack likes Mexican food.” the diminutive pony retorted. “Come on, let's get going.” They turned, got their bearings and headed off to the player's family parking lot.

The day had finally come and Willi Marie was sitting on her patio, mulling over what was soon to transpire. She had poured over the law books that the Consortium had provided her only to see nothing that would have incriminated her adopted aunt and uncle. Deciding that Bethany's plan had merit, she dressed in some conservative clothing and had done up her mane and tail, preparing to go to the arraignment to offer moral support. That and maybe scaring the courts into thinking just a bit differently about the situation.

“Willi, are you ready?” the kurani asked as she and Mala materialized on her patio deck. They were dressed in similar business attire which looked odd on the blue and white femme, since she usually didn't wear clothing.

“I'm ready,” she replied, standing up in preparation of being transported to another world, a world that she had never been to. This seemed to bother her but she knew her presence was needed somehow. Within moments, they were standing in a room, all white, devoid of furnishings except for an electronic sign stating “Svensen Arraignment”, pointing the way with an animated arrow.

“The courtroom is this way,” Bethany told them, motioning for them to head in the direction indicated. A short walk later, they arrived at a checkpoint of some kind.

“Please empty your pockets,” the human male asked, obviously the guard for this station. They did as they were directed, walked through a scanner of some sort, loaded their pockets again and headed on to the chambers that would be the courtroom for the arraignment.

The courtroom didn't seem too much different to her than that of one on her homeworld or on the Consortium's home planet, for that matter. They took up two seats right up front while Bethany greeted Mr. Iskenderian and began to talk with him in a low, hushed tone. Within a few moments, Torvald and Victoria made their appearance.

Torvald was wearing a conservative blue suit with a blue-based Tabasco[®] tie while the tigress had on an outfit¹ consisting of a maroon patterned salwar, a long sleeve kameez and a dupetta draped over her shoulders. She smiled at Willi, lifted a corner of the scarf and shrugged her shoulders. Apparently, the Celestial Courts had no idea how Americanized her family was. She knew for a fact that Victoria owned only one sari² with a matching pavada and ravika.

“All rise and come to order! The Honorable Judge Harold Talmadge presiding!” the bailiff said loudly, indicating a door off to the side. A rather scruffy-looking canid of indeterminate origin, dressed in a black robe entered the courtroom. He took up his seat, looked around then focused his attention on the bailiff.

“Please call the three individuals on this list to the bench,” he requested, looking somewhat nervous while he gave the slip of paper to the tall, dark haired human.

“Mrs. Mala O'Kendranal, Mrs. Wilhelmine Delancey, Counselor Bethany Carmel, please approach the bench,” the bailiff stated loudly, making a grimacing face afterward. He stepped away from them as they filed up to face the judge, seeming to be a bit intimidated by their presence. Once they were in front of the canid, he spoke softly, putting a paw over the microphone in front of him.

“Mrs. O’Kendranal, Mrs. Delancey, Counselor Carmel, I am very aware of the fact I have three Grand Mistresses here in my courtroom. I will expect each of you to wear dampening bands at all times while court is in session.” he put forth.

As planned, Willi turned to the frightened bailiff, allowing him to secure the bands onto her wrists. She then turned back to the judge, lifted her arms so he could see the bands and allowed them to 'fall through' her wrists, dropping to the top of his bench in a musical jingle.

“We will not wear these bands in your court.” she said quietly. “We are appointed high members of the Consortium and as such, we are ambassadors for them. We are here to see justice is meted out fairly and we have no intention of turning loose our powers on these fine furs assembled here today. Just remember, we are only here to ensure fairness in this trial.” That made the judge gulp.

“As long as I have your word you will contain yourselves,” the judge stated, looking just a bit uncomfortable in the three femmes' presence.

“You have our word, Your Honor,” Bethany stated, indicating for them to take their seats again. Once the trio of sorceresses had sat down, the arraignment proceeded.

“Torvald Arend Svensen, Victoria Angela Svensen, please rise,” the judge directed, waiting until they were upright to speak again. “In the matter of the Celestial Courts versus Mr. and Mrs. Svensen, I have been told you have read the complaints against you. They will not be stated at this time since they are very lengthy, to say the least. Please answer yes or no.”

“Yes, Your Honor.” Torvald stated.

“Yes, we have read them, Your Honor,” the tigress chimed in.

That was the moment Counselor Iskenderian had been waiting for. The jackal stood up, straightened his tie and spoke up.

“Your Honor, before this goes any further, I respectfully request that all of the charges be thrown out.” he said in a firm, strong voice. This didn't seem to surprise the canid one bit.

“Very well, then. Counselors, please approach the bench.” he directed. Mr. Iskenderian and the prosecuting attorney, a pudgy ferret, went to stand before the judge. The ferret spoke up first.

“Your Honor, we will allow all but two charges to be thrown out. The Courts wish to keep standing the charges relating to the murders of Edward Harper and Vincent James.” the prosecuting attorney stated.

“Your Honor! These charges are patently false!” the Immortal Couple's lawyer countered. “Please, you have read the charges. Mrs. Svensen was only defending herself and Mr. Svensen was following proper police procedure! Please consider this, Your Honor.” this made the judge stop and think for a few moments before he replied.

“Counselor Iskenderian, I have read the charges against your clients. These are the only two charges that have any slim amount of merit to stand in my court. I am sure if they are found to be false or without merit, the proceedings will indicate this. Please return to your stations so we may proceed.” The two lawyers went back to their tables and the bailiff made the statements required.

“Torvald Arend Svensen, you are charged with the death of one Edward Irwin Harper. Victoria Angela Svensen, you are charged with the death of one Vincent Lyle James. How do you both plead?” he asked.

“We plead 'Not Guilty' to all charges, Your Honor.” their lawyer replied. That statement by Mr. Iskenderian made the judge seem very uneasy, for some reason or another.

“Very well, the courts will have to hold Mr. and Mrs. Svensen over for trial.” the canid put forth. “I have been told I must set bail for the defendants, so I will set bail at one U.S. Dollar for each one of them and they will . . .” He was cut off by the prosecuting attorney.

“Your Honor! This is a farce!” he shouted. “Bail should be set at . . .” The judge cut him off.

“These charges you bring against them seem a bit trumped up, Counselor.” the judge stated in a stern, loud voice. “I will set bail at one U.S. Dollar each and they will be allowed to return to their home to await trial. I do not see them as a serious flight risk. Court will resume in twenty cycles, or four weeks, depending on which planet you hail from.” he added before banging his gavel to signal the end of today's proceedings.

“But Your Honor! We think . . .” The judge looked ready to blow a gasket as he glared at the ferret.

“You will shut your trap *right now!*” the judge practically shouted. “One more peep out of you today will land you in jail for contempt! Do you understand me clearly?”

“Crystal, Your Honor.” the prosecutor replied, looking like he was scared of the judge.

“Mr., Mrs. Svensen, if you would follow me,” the bailiff asked, leading them through a side door to a hallway between the courtroom and another room. He motioned for them to sit on a bench and then picked up a pair of pawcuffs that were chained to the wall behind them. “Um, you know, I'm . . . supposed to . . .” He looked at the cuffs, then Victoria, over at Torvald and back to the cuffs again. “Here, just hold them, please?” he blurted out, practically throwing the manacles at them before heading to that other room in a big hurry.

“I wonder what that was all about?” Victoria mused, looking at the pawcuff in her possession. Sensing some movement in her peripheral vision, she looked up to see Thomas coming their way. He looked a bit sad, like he had failed them in some way.

“Listen, I know it wasn't what I thought would happen but it's better than having the whole enchilada thrown at you.” he said somberly. “Well, at least we have some time to prepare in earnest.” he added.

“Can we go now?” the tigress asked. She was ready to get home and change out of her current clothing. It was a very pretty ensemble but she hadn't worn garments from her family's native land since she was married to Torvald.

“Yeah, we can go since I have paid your bail, all two dollars of it. Wilhelmine is waiting for us in the 'White Room'.” Mr. Iskenderian related to them. “She said she would like to go back with us and I think Bethany will be joining us, too.”

“Okay, let's go home,” Torvald said as he hugged his wife. “Let's go home and unwind from this ordeal.”

1. Just to clarify things, Victoria's courtroom outfit consists of a salwar, which are trousers, fitted closely at the ankles, a kameez, which is a long sleeved tunic, almost knee length and a dupatta, a longish scarf that is draped so the middle of it is in front and the ends drape over the shoulders and down the back, almost to the knees.

2. A sari (or saree) outfit consists of a long strip of cloth that is the sari (as much as 8 meters long and wide enough to go from waist to floor) that is wound about the waist and the end is draped over the left shoulder from front to back. The pavada is a petticoat worn (but not seen) under the sari. The ravika is a short-sleeved, some times high-necked blouse that ends just under the bust. This would be in a color that compliments the sari.