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“End Game”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 07 – “Investigation”

Judge Talmadge sat at the bar in one of his favorite haunts, trying to rationalize what was going to transpire in his courtroom. This whole thing had a stench to it that clearly smacked of the Underworld. To be specific, the Malefic Council. He had read the charges carefully, trying not to laugh too hard at some of the entries. The death of Hel's Daugr soldiers? That was probably the most ridiculous charge of the whole stinking lot. He looked up in the mirror behind the bar to see a familiar face sit down by him.

“Hey Harold, long time no see.” the badger put forth.

“That's true, Morgan. How long has it been? Almost a century?”

“Eighty-nine years, I reckon.” Mr. Sleight replied. He gestured at the bartender to bring them a fresh beer apiece.

“Come to ask about the Svensen trial, I take it?”

Morgan nodded. “Yeah, I thought I would start with you, now that I know the other player's name.”

“I'm game, Morgan. Tell me, who's the fur you're looking for?” the judge asked.

“Ingvar Gamel.”

That made the law-fur cringe. “Okay, he was seen roaming the halls over at the investigative branch. A security detail failed to locate him, however.”

Morgan pondered this for a moment. “You think he might have went to the Svensens' homeworld?”

“Wouldn't put it past him.” Harold put forth. “You're going to stop him, right?”

“Actually, I was thinking about dragging him into your courtroom, kicking and screaming. Make him confess the hard way.”

“Nice thought but I would have to throw out his confession. Can't accept confessions under duress, you know.” the judge brought up. He turned to look at the badger and said in a very quiet voice, “You find his employer and drag that fur into my courtroom. I *will* let that confession stand if it's an underworld figure.”

“Just like old times, eh? Bring 'em back in one piece, more or less.” the badger pondered.

“I really don't care if you have to bring him back in a shopping cart, Morgan. Just bring that bastard back to my court. I will see to it he's 'taken care of', if you get my drift.” Harold put forth. The judge rummaged around in his shirt pocket for a moment, then pulled out a card. He wrote something on the back of it, then gave it to Mr. Sleight. “There, don't say I never gave you a break. That's your 'Get Out Of Jail Free' card. Us it only if you have to.”

“Thanks, Harold. I owe you one.”

“Listen, you bring the fur or demon responsible for this travesty of justice to me. Do that, and we're even.” The judge thought for a moment, then suggested something. “You think I should get a bodyguard for the Svensens?”

“Wouldn't hurt,” the badger agreed. “Well, I'll see you around, Harold.”

“Take care, Morgan.”

The canid watched the badger walk out of the bar, hoping Morgan could manage to stay in one piece. It had been a long time since a warrior of his caliber had went up against the likes of whoever might be behind all of this.

Willi Marie was sipping her coffee, wondering what they were up to now. They had escorted her to a 'holding cell', for a lack of a better word for it and put her in it some time ago. It was about ten feet square with a twin-sized bed, a table with two chairs and a small wet bar with a coffee maker.

This might have been a room to be used by a visiting agent, since it did have a network jack in the wall by the table. What she did know was the fact that the door was locked from the outside. She was upset a bit by that, since she could just open the door with her magic. The reason it upset her was the fact that she had promised her husband Richard she would curtail her spell-slinging.

The camera in the corner of the room had quit a few moments ago, not of Willi's direct influence. She had only been thinking that they had no right to watch her like this. That's when the camera made a small popping noise and the side cover fell off. She watched the show with amusement as a technician came into the room, took one look at the camera and left, shaking his head.

They had relieved her of her watch so she had no idea what time it was or just how long they had kept her here. She just knew they were up to no good. It really appeared like they were getting ready to make a fall-fur out of her by associating her with Rollie.

The door opened and that onager came into the room along with Frank Reed. The canid sat on the bed while the elder agent sat across from her. “I'm Special Agent Thomkins, Wilhelmine. We thought we

should talk with you again concerning Roland Braunschmidt.” he offered up.

“I don't see how I could help you and I still don't see a connection between us.” she replied. “I went with him to a dance when we were fifteen, for crying out loud! He couldn't dance, I was tired of him stepping on my hooves and I was overjoyed when he started dancing with Jeanne Mueller!” she added, then she sighed. “I hope you catch him but I fail to see how you could tie us together.”

“You were both stationed at . . .” Willi cut the agent off politely.

“Agent Thomkins, I spent most of that time either in Pakistan, Iraq or at home on leave! We were not in bed with one another!” she brought up. Willi sipped her coffee, then continued her diatribe. “I was the junior member of a crack demolition team, doing mostly mine clearing duty. Do you *really think* I would teach some fur how to make IEDs that *I* might have to *risk my life to clear*? Just think about that for a moment!”

Agent Thomkins looked at her strangely before he started to speak. “Wilhelmine, we were just . . .” she interrupted him again, a little more insistent this time.

“You were just fishing, the slang word for it in court. Why don't you give me a lie-detector test. That will prove my innocence.” she suggested very tersely. It was clear her patience was beginning to wear thin. And the coffee carafe was beginning to boil, even though the coffee maker had been turned off long ago.

Agent Reed decided it might be prudent to speak up. “Brian, maybe we should let her go,” he suggested, pointing at the coffee carafe, bubbling away. “I told you, strange things happen around her.”

“You know, I think you're getting . . .” The onager looked at the coffee maker, noting it was off. He got up from his seat, went to the coffee machine and lifted the pot up, checking the heating element below it. The element was ice-cold.

“Um, surprised?” Frank asked.

“I'm not going to be buffaloeed into . . .” The onager stopped talking and quickly sat the carafe down when the boiling shifted into overdrive and the lights in the room flickered. “What the hell?!?” he blurted out, backing away from the palomino-hued femme with a frightened look on his muzzle.

“I'm telling you, let her go before something bad happens.” Frank suggested. That's when the lights went out.

A few moments went by, followed by the onager breaking the silence. “Um, Frank, do you have a flashlight? Mine seems to be missing.” Brian asked.

“Brian, tell her you're sorry we picked her up,” Frank interjected, noting his Mini-Mag was not in its holster. “Sorry, mine's missing too.” he added, hearing Willi chuckle quietly.

“Wilhelmine, I'm sorry we picked you up so rudely,” Brian tried, hoping that would work. What they heard at that moment was an announcement throughout the building.

“Attention all occupants. We have suffered a complete failure of the primary electrical system. Please remain calm and make your way to the nearest exit. Do not use the elevators. I repeat, we have had a

complete failure of the primary electrical system.”

“See?” Frank put forth. He had to stifle a laugh too.

“Yeah, you're right. Willi, you can go. Right now, in fact.” Brian stated.

“You will have to drive me home, you know.” she offered up.

“Okay, Frank will drive you home.”

“Thank You,” Willi said just as the power came back on.

Frank and Willi had made the whole trip to her home in silence, the canid seeming to be rather distracted. They were almost to her house when the agent finally spoke up.

“Um Wilhelmine, did you do that coffee pot-lights out thing back at headquarters?”

She smiled, then fought to keep from laughing. “I had no direct control over it, to tell you the truth. Every time that I get upset or frightened, 'things' happen around me.”

“I see,” the agent stated, pulling up in front of her home. “I can't guarantee you won't be watched but if it's me, I will let you know.”

“Thank you, agent Reed. I appreciate your honesty. And thank you for the ride home.” she said as she got out of the car.

“I hope we don't meet again, Mrs. Delancey. Have a nice evening.” he bid. She closed the door and he pulled away from the curb. Once he was down the road a ways, he said loudly, “I hope you're satisfied. I just know that she knew we were recording this conversation.”

In a van following agent Reed, a technician was still fiddling with the equipment. “Brian, I'm telling you, I can't make out a thing that's being said in that vehicle.” the felid brought up.

“Well, play the recording back and run a series of filters on it! Do something!” he demanded.

“That's just it!” the feline interjected. “This is all we recorded, just garbled garbage!” the technician interjected, playing back the scrambled audio for his superior. “It's jumbled and the recording is degrading further every time I play it back!”

Agent Thomkins face-pawed himself. “Gah, I guess Frank wasn't lying about her!”

The femme wolverine chimera walked up the front walk to Torvald and Victoria's home, stopping to look at the address one more time. Noting it was correct, she dropped her duffel bags at the front door and knocked. This seemed like a 'tame job' to her, doing some bodyguard work for the judge.

It had been a while since she had done bodyguard work, basically since she had worked security at an

extreme sex brothel. Camille thought about those days wistfully; they had been a high point in her life. That and her time as a County Sheriff on her home world. She really hoped this job would be a quiet one and she could get to know her charges.

Victoria was cleaning up after an early dinner, taking a moment to wipe down her stove-top. She was giving thought to her discussion with her hubby this morning when she was interrupted by a knock at the door. The tigress went to the front door and opened it, seeming very confused by the huge femme standing on her porch. "Hello?" she said tentatively, not sure of what to make of the situation.

The femme standing on her porch was imposing, to say the least. She was a wolverine, about six feet tall and maybe over one-hundred and ninety pounds, very muscular. She was dressed in black security-type clothing and her boots appeared to be highly polished combat boots. The huge femme smiled, then spoke to Victoria in a soft voice.

"Hi, I'm Camille Carter. I was sent by the courts to be your bodyguard until the trial is over." the wolverine femme stated. "Ah, I have some paperwork here for you," she added as she searched her coat pockets. Finding the envelope she was searching for, she gave the information to Victoria.

"This seems to be in order," the tigress commented after reading the order from Judge Talmadge. "Please come inside." she requested. The huge femme picked up her two duffel bags, making the straps audibly strain from the load inside.

"I hate to be a pest right off the bat but I will need an area to work from that has power," Camille explained, shifting her substantial load in her paws while she followed her charge through the house.

Victoria showed the way to a small desk in the family room that held a computer for the grandchildren to use when they visited. "Would this be suitable for you?" she asked.

The wolverine smiled and nodded as she replied. "I think this will be fine, Mrs. Svensen. Would it be alright if we moved this computer? I need to set up my laptop because it has Redtooth capabilities."

"Well, yeah, that would be okay. We can put it on the floor for now." the tigress suggested. "Uh, you know what Camille, maybe Torvald can help me take it into my office. I have a spare work area in there that might work." she added.

"Okay, I'll start unhooking this one and get my stuff set up if you don't mind." Camille said with a smile. "Oh, and by the way, you can call me Cami."

"Okay, you can call me Victoria. I've never went by Vicki much since high school, to tell you the truth. Even Torvald has always called me Victoria."

"I'll call you Victoria, then." Camille responded.

The tigress left and returned with her hubby just a few minutes later. "Cami, this is Torvald. Honey, this is Cami Carter. She was sent here by that judge to be our bodyguard until the trial."

"Nice to meet you." the huge stallion said as he offered his paw to Cami.

"It's my pleasure, Torvald," she retorted. "I hope this stay with the two of you is very uneventful."

"I hope so too," he replied, picking up the parts to the computer that was being dismantled. "Victoria, I'll set this up in your office," he added, turning to head towards his mate's personal work area.

Cami watched her charges head off with the parts for the computer she had disconnected, hoping in her heart that this would be a quiet stay with them. She set about her work, taking out her laptop and setting it on the desk. She was rather glad that the power here was the same as on the Celestial Court's world, making direct connection to the 110 VAC very convenient. After testing the receptacle, she plugged her portable computer into the wall, hooked it up to the Ethernet port by the desk and started it up.

Digging around in the larger duffel bag, she extracted a case that held twenty perimeter devices that she would use to secure the property. Noting her laptop had finally booted up, she used a utility to test each device for proper functioning. Satisfied that they were all in order, she went out into the back yard to begin her job in earnest.

Using her internal GPS and a map of the property, she hiked up the hill until she reached the upper patio above the stables. Placing an Automated Perimeter Listening Device, otherwise known as an APLD, Cami marked its location on her map and walked toward the stables.

Cami pondered her situation while she took care of business. She had been hired by Judge Talmadge personally and this was odd in itself. Normally, the judge would have sent her an official letter requesting her services. This time he just called her, giving her the lowdown over the phone. He was sure the Malefic Council had something to do with this so she had been informed of that right off.

Stopping for a moment, she thought she either heard or felt something very big nearby. It had a smell that was not unfamiliar to her but if she was right, it didn't belong here by itself. Its owner or rider, whatever the being that would be in control of it was, should be somewhere nearby. The thing that bothered her was the fact she could only sense one creature, not two. And she was sure it was watching her.

"Hey! Whoever or whatever you are, show yourself!" she said loudly, scanning the surroundings for signs of life. She could still feel its presence, very close to her but it didn't make itself known. "Hey! I'm a friendly! I'm on the good guy's side!" she offered up, hoping to reason with it to no avail. That feeling wouldn't go away, however. It wasn't getting any closer, though.

"Hey, look, just don't eat me, please? I'm supposed to protect Torvald and Victoria!" she pointed out to the being stalking her. To her relief, it 'seemed' to back off a bit. "Thank You!" she offered up before returning to her work. Cami still felt like she was being watched.

Morgan wiped the blood from his lip where the dark agent that was currently lying on the floor had tried to deck him just moments ago. He stepped back a few feet and took his Wesson Arms .50 Magnum revolver from its holster, checking it to see that it was loaded. He then kicked the agent in the foot, getting his attention.

"Listen here, dip-stick. I'll let ya live if you tell me where Gamel is hiding," he stated in a menacing tone. "Go ahead and ignore me like you're doing and I'll just kill you right here and now."

“Screw you, Ass-Wipe!” the canid spat back after he rolled over to see the badger again. “I ain't fuckin' telling you shit! Besides, you ain't got the cojones to kill me, Dick-weed!”

“You just don't understand the gravity of the situation, Mr. Mondell. I'm holding all the cards.” Morgan pointed out. A baseball bat appeared from the sleeve of the overcoat the badger was wearing and he put to good use, shattering the canid's left ankle with it. Waiting until his quarry quit screaming in pain, he spoke up. “Now that I have your attention, let's try that again. Where is Gamel hiding?”

“Fuck! What the hell'd ya do that for?!?” the dark agent screamed out, grabbing at his broken appendage. “You're one of us, anyway! You're a dark agent too!” he stated loudly.

“I'm not a dark agent, you idiot!” Morgan shot back. “I've been trapped here in this mortal existence for almost four centuries now with no respite to be had. You should know that Heaven doesn't want me and Hell is afraid I'll take over. So, my friend, that leaves me with no place to go and nothing to do except piss off the Gods, screw with the Malefic Council and beat the shit out of stupid entities from both realms. Entities like you.” He kicked the canid's broken ankle for good measure.

“SHIT!!! THAT HURT!!!” Mondell screamed out.

“Tell me what I want to know and I'll leave your sorry arse alone.” the badger informed the unlucky canid. Morgan prepared to kick the injured ankle again which finally elicited a response from his victim.

“Okay! he went to see the Council!” the dark agent blurted out.

Morgan thought about that for a moment. “You had better not be lying to me because I can and will find you and send your carcass to Lucifer in pieces if you're sending me on a wild goose chase.”

“NO! I'm not lying! He went there!” the canid almost pleaded.

“Better get that ankle looked at, Mondell. It looks pretty bad to me,” Morgan stated as he left the room. He walked down the hall, up a flight of stairs to street level and headed for his car. “Gah, what have I gotten myself into?” he mused, shaking his head. He knew at some point he would have to go and face the Council.

That thought made him shudder, considering what he had done the last time he had been in the presence of the biggest collection of evil. He had blatantly told them he wouldn't work for them, the same as he wouldn't work for the Gods. He felt both sides had issues that would never be resolved so he decided to just pick his own fights. Like helping the Svensens. They had done nothing to warrant what was happening to them, they had just been caught in the crossfire of a bigger struggle as far as he could tell.

Bradley held his hammer pendant in his paws and said a quick prayer before he ran across the narrow street from one alleyway to another, keeping his head low while his partner laid down some withering suppression fire for him. Diving into the alley just as an anti-personnel bean bag load flew by his head, too close for comfort, he came up onto his hooves and checked his rifle quickly.

“Brad, you okay?” the doormouse asked, peeking back around the corner to see if the museum security 'guards' were preparing another assault on them.

“I'm fine, Nick. Just fine,” he retorted, poking the barrel of his rifle around the corner and letting loose with a short burst to deter their pursuers. “Megan! Megan, we need to get out of here! Now!” he shouted loudly, hoping their mission assistant was listening. “Megan!! We Need Help!!” he added, ducking back from the corner when a spray of bullets hit the alley wall across from him, showering the two of them with brick dust.

“Whose brilliant idea was it to raid the Louvre in broad daylight?!?” the stallion mused, preparing a grenade to fire from the launcher under the barrel of his M-16.

“Not my idea, I can assure you!” the mouse put forth. “Megan!! Help!!” he shouted, noting the alley they were in was a dead end. “Brad, what do you think is on the other side of that wall?” he asked.

“I dunno, Nick. Let's find out.”

Brad fired his grenade at the wall, blowing a hole in it large enough to get through. It seemed to lead into a residence of some sort.

“Let's get the hell out of here!” the rodent suggested, heading towards the hole in a run. Brad was hot on his heels, firing back down the alley occasionally to deter some fur from following them.

They entered the residence, finding it to be a brothel. There were femmes running and screaming everywhere and a lone security guard that was hell-bent on preventing them from leaving.

“Stop! You must halt!” the French poodle guard shouted, attempting to impede their progress.

“Outa my way, Frenchie!” Nick spat back, hitting him in the muzzle with the butt of his rifle to clear their path. Once out the front door to the house of ill repute, they spotted a very familiar femme that was waving to them from an adjacent alley.

“There she is!” Brad put forth, grabbing Nick to direct him the right way. Once they met up with the leopard-spotted skunk, she transported them back to the 'white room' for debriefing.

“Gah! Who cooked up that mission? An insane fur?!? We almost got captured back there!!” Nick put forth. “Those 'guards', as you called them, were armed to the teeth and you didn't disable all of the security devices, either!”

“I had your backs,” Megan retorted. “If you hadn't blown out that alleyway wall, I could have gotten both of you out right there!” she insisted.

“We hollered for help!” Brad pointed out as he gave his weapons to the male desert lynx that was one of the weapons techs.

“I was too busy right then with a fur trying to get a bead on you with a bean bag round, big guy.” she told him.

“Well, okay then.” he retorted. “Um, I do have a beef with the management, though. I thought our deal was that I did the missions and you would leave Ronald and Nancy alone. Well, now Nancy tells me Uriel has informed her she has to work for the Gods or face something nasty. Are the Gods going back on their promise to me?”

“Um, I'll have to check in on that,” Megan replied, seeming to be upset by that information.

“No, they will be left alone, do you hear? I haven't risked my immortal life for thirty-seven years for nothing! I even lied to my Grandfather about not being in the business! No, you will leave them alone!” the stallion said rather tersely.

“I'll pass that along,” she said quietly, getting her composure back after having been read the riot act, long version. “Um, I guess you retrieved the watch, right?” she inquired.

“Right here,” Nick replied, giving her the piece in question. The timepiece looked ancient and it was dated by the Louvre on that planet to be over four hundred years old. It was actually dated two-thousand and two on the inside of the back, a classic Timex Conductor's wristwatch with a white face and easy-to-read black numerals. It had been left behind during a mission on that planet when an injured agent was being looked after by a local inhabitant. The importance of retrieving it was the NIST self-correcting hardware contained inside. Highly classified hardware used only by Agents.

“We made a mess of the archives when we blew the vault,” Brad put forth. “Probably needed about half of that load of C4 plastique on that weak door lock.” he added. Nick nodded in agreement.

“No fur was killed so you both did good,” she stated, smiling at them. “It's time for you two to go home for some rest,” she added, nodding as they shimmered out and Brad shimmered back into his living room.

The dark pony femme looked up to see her hubby shimmer back into existence in their living room, looking pretty rough around the edges. She put down her dust rag and ran over to him, hugging him tightly.

“I'm so glad you're back, Hon! I missed you terribly!” she proffered up.

“Um, I'm glad to be home, too but you're getting yourself dirty, Janet.” he countered. Giving her a long, loving hug, he peeled himself away from his mate afterward. “You can hug me later, after I get this metal-bearing ink out of my fur.”

“Metal-bearing ink?” she asked, looking confused by that information.

“Yeah, ink that has fine metal ground up in it. Nick and I got sprayed with it when we blew the vault in that world's Louvre.” he admitted.

Janet tested it with her window cleaner, seeing that the ink didn't want to break down. “Uh, you know, I might have to get you some dye to cover it up with,” she mused, grimacing at the thought that she would have to help him color himself.

“Well, if that's what it takes, I'll have to do it.” Brad said as he peeled off his shirt and turned it inside-out. “I also told them that Nancy and Ronald were to be left alone. That was the deal, Nancy would adopt and Ronald wouldn't father any more children while I took care of their debts to the Gods.”

“Why do you think they're going back on their agreement?” she asked, taking his shirt from him.

“I’m not sure, Jan. All I know is Grandpa and Grandma have been indicted for what amounts to bovine droppings, and now this.” He stopped talking but then decided to share his inner thoughts. “To be truthful, Nick and I almost bought the farm today. The situation wasn't what we were told and we had to blow a hole in a whorehouse wall to escape.”

“You escaped through a whorehouse?”

“Yeah, it wasn't funny at the time but I guess it is kinda silly, now that I think about it.”

While Brad stripped down to his birthday suit and got into the shower, his wife retrieved some gritty paw-cleaner from the garage. “Here, try this. It might work, since it will get grease and tar out of your fur.” she suggested once she returned with the cleaner in her possession.

“It seems to work,” he mused, scrubbing his arms with the cleaner. “Jan, I haven't ate in about twelve hours. Could you fix me a bite and have it ready when I get out of the shower?” he requested.

I can do that for you,” she replied, leaving him to shower up.

As soon as she had left the room, he took his pendant in his paws, slumped down against the shower wall and cried his heart out. He didn't want this total insanity for his daughter and brother. It was bad enough that his Grandparents and he were in this mess. Being an Agent was something he wouldn't wish on his worst enemy.

Ingvar sat on a tree branch, watching the huge wolf stare at the huge femme that was walking around in the Svensen's property. The black felid wasn't sure who this fur was but she was different; her soul, for a lack of a better word, was not like the others of this planet. There seemed to be two souls inside her, one human and one wolverine, intertwined with one another. She also seemed to be somehow communicating with the devices she was setting out. Whoever this was, she would have to be eliminated so he could complete his mission.

This part of his assignment by the Malefic Council seemed like suicide to him; somehow ingratiate himself with the Immortal Couple, then turn them when the time was right. He knew they could be brought over to the dark side *if* WhiteChrist would turn his back on them. So far, just the *Big Fur* had possibly forsaken them but the lion would be another story. Would *The Son* forsake them?

It had been a long time since the *Son Of God* had committed himself to watching over his Christian Agents and only a single time had he deliberately forsaken an Agent. That one Agent was Ingvar Gamel.