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## **“End Game”**

By Kellan Meigh

### Chapter 12 – “Realizations”

Dana looked up from her project of rearranging the ammunition displayed under the back counter to see her hubby Brett coming back into the shop, playing with little Sabrina.

“You two look like you're having fun!” the femme feline pointed out.

Sabrina purred while her father scratched her under the chin. “Yeah, she wanted to get into everything within reach at the store,” he replied. “She almost pulled over a battery display, Hon. I had no idea she was that strong!”

“Sabrina does seem to have a strong grip, that's for sure.” Dana agreed. “Did you get some glass cleaner? I forgot to put that on the list.”

“Got it,” Brett replied, giving her the bag of supplies he was holding by one finger, the same paw that was supporting their daughter.

“Oh good, you got some paper towels, too.” she stated. “I used the last of them just a few minutes ago. Um, may I ask when was the last time you cleaned the insides of the windows in this counter?”

“Too long?” he offered up, giving her a kiss to smooth things over.

“Yeah, too long, Mr. Kashnikov.” she agreed. “Now, give me our daughter so you can finish putting the ammunition away. I want the rimfire stuff in this corner, then the 9mm, then so on by caliber.”

“Yes Ma'am!” Brett snapped back, doing a WW2 British-style salute.

“Just get the counter loaded, please?” she asked, trying not to smile at his attempt at comedy.

“Okay, Boss. I'll get it done.”

“Now don't start with that 'Boss' stuff, Brett!”

“Yes, Dana.”

“Brett?”

“Yes, Hon?”

“Get Busy!” she said in an authoritative tone, smiling to herself when he started loading the counter. “If you're good, I'll fix my Mom's spicy meatloaf for dinner.” she added.

“Oh, would you? Please? For me??” he begged, giving her his 'sad eyes' look.

“Okay, I'll go home and start fixing it right now.” she informed him. “Now Sabrina, you and I are going to go fix Daddy some dinner,” she told the little one, giving Brett a kiss before she left the shop.

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Mike and Doug had finished up with their triage, discovering Torvald had a collapsed lung and a perforated spleen, among other injuries. The taller male trimmed the fur around the wounds while the jaguar and the tigress set up a temporary shelter to protect them from the elements while they stabilized the stallion.

“Doug, you need to fix that lung,” Mike suggested, noting Torvald was struggling to breathe again.

“I'm on it,” the feline replied, putting on some nitrile gloves then pulling out an emergency surgery pack. “Mike, give him some oxygen, please?” he added, finding what he was looking for.

Doug disinfected an area on the stallion's side, then pushed a large gauge needle in between two of his ribs. Blood began to drain from the needle, letting them know why the lung had collapsed.

“He must be bleeding pretty bad internally,” Mike offered up while he checked Torvald's pupils again.

“Well, yeah, I suppose so. I hope this will help to stabilize him so we can take him to our facilities.” Doug retorted.

Victoria looked on while the two males worked to stabilize her hubby's condition, wondering where it would all end. Torvald still looked very rough but his breathing had slowed and some color had come back to his lips. This all bothered her to no end because they were now dependent on others for aid.

She knew in her heart that Willi Marie probably had something to do with Mike and Doug's presence and she was grateful for her assistance. Victoria just hoped that they would somehow get through all of this and things would get back to normal, or at least what passed for normal for them.

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Wilhelmine and Richard were wandering the local Subaru new car lot, trying to find a replacement for Willi's destroyed Forester. Since that particular model had been given a 'Five Star Plus' rating for safety by an independent testing laboratory, they were extremely hard to find new and totally overpriced used.

“How about a black one?” Richard offered up, pointing out a new Forester in the next row.

“Well, are you going to wash it for me when it gets dirty?” she retorted, noting it was already in need of a bath at four in the afternoon.

“You have a point,” he mused, hoping to find one in a suitable color at this dealership. The last dealership they were at didn't have a single Forester on the lot but they did direct them to this dealer. Willi was pondering that black one when a salesfur confronted them.

“Good afternoon!” the red fox todd offered up, giving them a cheesy smile. “Name's Al Dexter. How can I help you two?”

Willi seemed a bit put off by his sudden appearance. “We're looking for a Forester.” she replied curtly.

“I have a nice black one right over here,” he offered, pointing out the very one that Richard had already spotted. The sun glinted off of his watch, momentarily blinding the mare.

“Um, we saw that one but it's black. Richard said he wouldn't wash it all the time for me.” she put forth.

“So, how about a burgundy red one? I have one on the back lot,” he stated, smiling that cheap smile of his that seemed to bug the femme equine. That salesfur didn't know just how much Willi detested car salesfurs. To them, she was just another 'Up', another pigeon to fleece.

“I think we could look at the burgundy one,” Richard suggested, hugging his wife around the shoulders. She looked up at him, rolling her eyes in disdain.

Letting the salesfur get ahead of them, Willi quietly made her thoughts known. “You know I do not like to car-shop. I would prefer you did the leg-work and just left me out of the process.”

“Willi! This will be your car!” Richard whispered. “You're going to drive it so you had better pick it out.”

“Oh all right!” she replied quietly. Up ahead, the salesfur was waiting for them.

“I have this burgundy one and I have a white one,” he offered, indicating the two cars.

“Are they the same price?” Richard asked.

The todd nodded. “Yes, they're optioned just alike.” he replied. “I also have a Forester Limited Edition in dark green metallic, if that would be better suited to your tastes,” he added, looking closely at his call sheet.

“My last Forester was a Limited, a 2011 model.” Willi stated. “Um, could we see that Limited?” she asked.

Mr. Dexter gestured towards the rows of cars across the driveway. “If you would follow me,” he asked, headed for the car in question.

The threesome made their way over to the vehicle in the next row and the salesfur checked the VIN number just to make sure it was the one he wanted to show them.

“I'll go get the keys,” the todd stated, heading off towards the showroom. That gave Willi and Richard a moment alone.

“It's nice but just look at the price!” Willi put forth, cringing at the sticker price. “Um, Richard, it's almost thirty-five thousand!” she blurted out after scanning the information.

“They're not cheap, Hon. Would you rather give that much for a used one?” he asked.

“No, I wouldn't,” she offered up reluctantly. “So, can we afford this?”

“We have eighteen thousand to put down so I don't see why not.” Richard did some quick mental calculations, then nodded. “Yeah, as long as we can get it out the door below thirty-eight thousand.”

Willi thought it over for a moment. “Do you think he'll go that low?”

Richard nodded. “We have a huge down and bank financing. I don't think he'll let us off the lot with our money still in paw.”

Willi Marie looked around to see if they were alone, then turned to face her hubby. “Richard, um, not to change the subject, but The Consortium wants me to take on more responsibility.” she admitted.

“What kind of responsibilities?” the male queried.

Willi looked at the ground momentarily before she answered. “They want me to take on a charge and teach her to control her powers.”

“And she would live with us?”

“I'm sure she would, Hon.” Willi replied. “It won't be for a few more weeks that I will have to do this.”

Her hubby nodded. “Well, as long as she can't burn the house down, I don't have any objections.”

They continued to look at the vehicle while they waited for the salesfur to return with the keys but the thought kept going through Willi's mind that she didn't feel ready to have a charge of her own. She had barely become in control of her own magic so this request by The Consortium for her to take on this responsibility was bothering her to no end. Maybe she would do just fine. Willi really hoped so.

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The two rhinos were waiting patiently by their vehicle while Mr. Sleight 'took care' of Ingvar. They had taken his advice and stood back, calling him and eventually bringing him to the Svensen residence where they had located the Dark Agent, obviously up to no good.

Randall looked up from lighting his cigarette to see Morgan, running down the Svensen's driveway like he was being chased by Death himself. The badger was trying to say something to them but he was out of shouting range and he was also out of breath from running.

“Hey, you okay? Need some help with something?” Jesse shouted up the drive, looking just as confused as his partner.

“Get in the car! Now!” Morgan wheezed out once he was in range, making frantic paw motions to indicate for them to get into the vehicle. He almost knocked Jesse over getting in the back seat of their

rented Commodore, pulling the door shut behind himself firmly.

The two Agents got into the front seat and the elder rhino looked into the back seat to see a very frightened fur looking back at him. “Morgan, what's this all ab . . .” The badger interrupted Randall in an urgent, almost panicked tone.

“Just drive, dude! Drive like your life depended on it because it does!” Mr. Sleight related to the elder Agent, looking back through the back glass of the vehicle to see if whatever was back there was following him.

Randall started the engine, put the car in 'Drive' and pulled away from the curb before he queried further. “So, what happened back there that spooked the hell out of you?”

“It was mother-fracking huge!” Morgan blurted out. “Oh Gawd, hold on, Randall. Stop the car! Now!!” he requested in an urgent tone. The badger then got out of the back seat once they had stopped on Glenn Ranch road and promptly lost his dinner.

“Damn, Morgan! You sure you're okay?” Jesse asked once he got out of the car and checked on their reluctant working partner.

“No, I'm all fracking shook up, Jess. That was a huge mother-fracking wolf, dude. Big as a warhorse, I'm tellin' ya. I almost soiled my shorts back there!” Morgan then became very silent when he started getting the dry heaves.

“A wolf? Where?” Randall asked.

“It was inside the Svensen's home, Bud, fracking eating that goddamned Ingvar alive, no less!” the detective related to them between bouts of nausea, pointing in the general direction of whence they came.

“No shit . . .” That thought scared Jesse just a bit.

“Yeah, No shit!” the badger shot back. “Come on, dudes. Let's get the frack out of here.”

They got back into the rented Commodore and headed back towards their motel rooms. After a few miles of silence, Randall broke the tension in the air.

“Um, so . . . where does this leave us?” he asked.

“In not so good of a position,” Morgan replied, wiping his mouth on his shirt sleeve. “Without Ingvar to question, I'll have to go up the ladder a rung to the next likely suspect.”

This confused Jesse so he asked the obvious; “Who would that be?”

Morgan replied with only one name; “Rumjal.”

While they drove on, Morgan kept thinking about this whole situation. He felt like he had been set up in a way, that some being wanted him to perish right along with that feline. Maybe it was just his luck the wolf was too busy consuming that damned Ingvar to go after him. At any rate, he had to go confront Rumjal, a particularly devious fallen fur. Hopefully he would walk away from that confrontation with his life.

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Nancy slowly put her hands in the air, inwardly cursing herself out for allowing herself to become a captive once more. The mercenaries had caught them off-guard, surrounded them and trained over a dozen nocked and drawn arrows on them.

“Ah, the pale one and a female that resembles him in a way,” the leader of the soldiers stated in a smug tone. “The wizard was right about you; you did return this way, just as he predicted.”

Brad was angry but he fought to remain cool and composed. “Listen, kind Sir, we mean you no harm. I only wished to recover what was mine to begin with.”

“Save it,” the soldier retorted, motioning for three of the men behind them to shackle the trio. “I will return you, pale one, to the wizard. The lady, here I hope will be my reward if that mage agrees with it.”

“What of me?” Kimma asked.

The leader smiled a malicious smile. “You, Kimma Cesh, will be returned to your rightful owner, the tavern keep in Bosnav'va. I will get one hundred sovereigns as a reward for your return.” she was informed.

“I do not belong to him! I am a freeperson!” the female blurted out.

“I have been told you illegally ran away from him and married against the laws,” the brigand stated, giving her a serious look. “I have been instructed to return you by the magistrate. That order I cannot disobey.”

One of the men that was shackling up Nancy took his liberties in feeling her up. She quickly knelt down, grabbed a handful of his crown jewels and stood back up.

“Let go of me!” he shrieked in a voice that was an octave higher than normal.

The leader walked up to Nancy and scowled. “Please let go of Neff. He has been punished enough for his indiscretion.”

Nancy released his gonads, which allowed him to slip to the ground in pain before she spoke up. “You really fucked up, you know that? So help me, if you so much as harm . . .” The lead highwayman interrupted her train of thought.

“I will not harm you, my lady. I would not think of harming my reward, the female that would be my lover.”

“I already have a husband,” she stated in a tired tone of voice. “Please let us go?” she begged.

The bandit thought this over for a moment. “If you have a mate, where is he? Is this your mate?” he asked, indicating Bradley.

“No, that's my father.” she replied. “Listen, we mean you no harm, Sir. Just let us go and no one will be the wiser.”

“Ah, but I would know, fair lady.” he retorted. “Alas, as much as you would not wish to, I must bring you to the wizard.”

The trio were placed on their horses and secured to their saddles, preparing them to be taken to their imminent meeting with this wizard.

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Victoria looked up from holding an oxygen mask over her hubby's muzzle to see a vehicle come into the clearing. Lin was sitting in the tire that was on the hood of the small truck and Hrist was in the passenger seat, looking a little green around the edges. Doug looked up, then looked at the tigress.

“Is that Hrist?” he queried, quickly looking back to his work, suturing up the ailing stallion.

“That's Hrist and that small femme Lin is with her,” she replied, noting that Lin now wore a gray short-sleeved jumpsuit and the small femme was packing a sidearm, too.

“Lin?” Michael asked, looking up to see it was her and an old acquaintance, Vadiu Bunch.

The small femme got off of the truck and came over to see how things were. “Vicki, I have returned with my husband and your friend Hrist. I'm sorry I didn't speak standard with you earlier.” she related in very passable English. “My husband has a well-stocked medical facility at our domicile.”

Michael in the meantime had gone to greet the canid. “Vadiu, would you have a stasis field generator in your facility?” he requested.

“Mike, that's a silly question.” Vadiu retorted. “I have an almost-new Vasda Stasis Generator. Just traded a Romulan Quantum Singularity container for it a few months ago.”

“Well, let's get Torvald there, then.” Mike suggested. “I need to use something to halt the cellular degradation around his injuries while we put him back together.”

Victoria stood by while the males put her hubby into the back of Vadiu's vehicle and secured him for the ride back to this facility. Torvald did seem to be doing better now that some attention had been given to his collapsed lung. Doug had removed the needle and had placed a drain tube into his side, allowing the fluids to escape and allow his lung to re-inflate.

At Lin's insistence, the tigress helped to gather up the remaining equipment and put that in the vehicle with her hubby. What worried her was the lack of seats for all of them. While she was busy packing the vehicle, a huge warhorse descended from the sky and walked up to Hrist.

“*Hello, Stridshest. Did you miss me?*” Hrist asked in Old Norse. That made the tigress smile because she could speak a fair amount of Tor's native tongue. She walked over and joined the Valkyrie.

“I take it this is your mount?” she asked, petting the huge horse gently. The equine closed his eyes and nuzzled against the femme feline in return.

“Yes, he is my spoiled rotten mount and he seems to like you, which is odd.” Hrist replied. “Usually he does not care of others to touch him.”

Victoria was scratching Stridshest under his chin and the huge horse seemed to enjoy it. “He seems to like this,” she commented, the horse almost pushing her over by leaning against her.

“It is a good thing he likes you because you're riding with me back to Mr. Bunch's home.” That got the femme feline's attention.

“Are you sure? I've never been on a Valkyrie's mount before.” Victoria brought up.

“You will be fine,” Hrist said with a smile. The Valkyrie smoothly vaulted onto Stridshest's back, then put out a paw to help the tigress up. Once Victoria was seated behind Hrist, Michael used a ground transport device to move the truck and the rest of them to the facility.

“Where did they go?” she asked, looking around at the now-vacant clearing.

“They have gone where we are going right now. Please hang on to my belt better than Willi Marie did when she rode with me,” the equine femme Valkyrie requested. Hrist then urged Stridshest on.

The huge equine charged across the clearing, getting up to a very unnatural speed for such a large feral horse. He then vaulted upwards, taking to the sky.

Victoria was clinging to Hrist for dear life as the charger accelerated to a speed that seemed very impossible. The force of the wind should have blown them off of the warhorse's back but instead it seemed like a mild afternoon breeze.

Looking down, it seemed like they were covering the distance at a speed that only a jet aircraft could go. The tigress redoubled her efforts to hold on, wondering if she actually fell off of Stridshest, would she survive the impact with the ground? She also wondered what kind of mount Aslaug used. Maybe that huge wolf-kali Torvald spotted behind their house was actually the filly's mount.

Tapping Hrist on the shoulder, she asked the equine a question; “Um, what does Aslaug have for a mount?”

“She has this huge gray wolf named Varghöss. Why do you ask?” Hrist replied.

“Oh, no reason,” Victoria stated, making sure she had a firm grip on the Valkyrie. Maybe that was what Torvald observed in their back yard; Varghöss, Aslaug's mount.

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Nancy stood patiently while her father was removed from his saddle without allowing him to use his hands, which were still shackled securely behind his back.. She tugged at her bonds again, thinking it was strange that Megan had not come when they had called out for her last night while camped out on the road to this destination. Two of the soldiers with the group had already taken Kimma to be returned to the Innkeeper while they were to be escorted into the wizard's lair.

The leader, whose name she had learned was Tomad Ciles, had talked with her on the way to their destination. He seemed to be learned but it was apparent there was a reason he was doing such menial work. Whatever that reason was, he would not divulge. It became apparent that he only desired her for a mate, what he called a “Bonding Soul”. He meant her no harm, only wanting her to be his wife. Her musing was cut short by Tomad urging them up to the front door of the home.

The wizard's keep was just a modest home with a well-kept grounds in front. There were fruit trees and a



type of rose that had a very intoxicating aroma to it. The grass seemed like it might have been mowed and the walk was carefully edged. Too modern in Nancy's estimations. The walkway might have been concrete, too. The journey from the gate to the front door seemed all too short.

"All right, inside, you two," Tomad said quietly, standing aside for them to enter before him. Once inside, they came face-to-face with the mage.

"Ah, Mr. Tomad Ciles, you did a good job of following my orders not to hurt my wayward friend," the mage stated, walking around them slowly. He was a rather short man, not much over five feet tall and he seemed young for a mage of his reputation. His sandy-blond hair was neatly trimmed and his clothes, although of contemporary origin seemed clean and neat. "Here is your payment," the wizard stated, giving the brigand a pouch full of coins.

"If you would, I would like the female for payment instead," Tomad suggested.

"No, this female is not for bargaining," the wizard retorted, running a hand through her blond hair to feel its texture. "Tomad, be on your way. I have a long day ahead of me with these two." Once the soldiers were out the front door, Brad spoke up.

"Okay Gary, what's with all of this?" he asked, seeming a bit irritable at the moment.

"Brad, you know I told you not to come back and here you are, with a new traveling mate." the mage replied. "So, tell me, who is your new companion?"

"I'm his daughter Nancy, if you must know." the blond femme pointed out. She looked at her father and asked the obvious; "Dad, you know this wizard?"

"Um, yeah, I do," he replied, obviously embarrassed by the situation.

"Bradley, why don't you tell your daughter how it is you know me?" Gary asked of him.

The elder Svensen reluctantly nodded. "He took me in after I sent Nick home at the end of our last mission. I was subsequently injured trying to wrap things up and I had a case of amnesia as a direct result of my injuries. I had no idea I was an Agent."

The mage smiled as he added some information. "Your father had battled a Dark Agent, I think is what he eventually recounted after he regained his memories. He was badly injured and he had suffered a serious concussion. He was with me for a long enough time for me to discover he was an immortal."

"So, what is the reason you wanted us captured?" Nancy asked.

"I did not know you were with Bradley but it was your father that I wanted." Gary put forth. "I wanted your father to stay with me for a while so I might study his physiology. Before I came here, I was a doctor of internal medicine. I was banished here by The Consortium for using my magic too frequently to heal my patients."

"You can't leave here?" she inquired.

"No, if I leave this planet, I will die." he replied. "I was in hopes to discover the secret so I might leave this backwater planet and go home. I prefer my homeworld's Golden, Colorado over here any day."

“Gary, not to change the subject but can we dispense with these shackles?” Brad asked.

“I suppose so, since I placed a ward on the windows and doors this time.” the mage replied, using a gesture of his hand to open the bonds securing father and daughter.

“Thank you,” Nancy said to Gary, rubbing her wrists where they had been chafed by the manacles.

“Here, let me see,” the mage asked, taking Nancy's arm and examining the raw, abraded skin around her wrist that was slowly healing. He gently placed his fingers over the injuries, allowing a little magic to flow between them to speed up the process. Her skin healed up in a flash but another thing happened right after that; a coat of blond hair began to sprout from her arm.

“What in the world is this?” Gary mused, looking closer at her arm.

Brad shook his head before he replied. “Gary, you're about to witness our big secret. We're not like you at all.”

“Dad?” Nancy blurted out, noting her other arm was beginning to return to its normal appearance too.

“Um, Hon. You had better slip off your leggings and boots pretty quick,” the elder equine suggested, watching as his daughter slowly turned back into her proper form.

“Dad, I'm itching everywhere!” she informed her father as she sat down on the floor, her balance going off with the conversion from feet to hooves. Within a few more moments, she was back to her proper form.

“Nancy, are you all right?” the mage asked, walking around her slowly to see that she was now a full anthropomorphic equine.

“I . . . I guess so,” she replied hesitantly, examining herself to see that she had reverted in form completely.

The mage looked at Brad, still somewhat shocked. “So, you actually look like this too?” the mage questioned, pointing at the younger agent on the floor.

“Yes, Gary. I look like that.”

“I see . . .” the mage mused, giving thought to this turn of events. “I think we need to talk about this, Brad. You seem to have opened a door to a new set of possibilities for me.”

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Victoria looked up from where she was sitting to see Michael and Doug coming out of the combination examining room and impromptu surgical unit. They both seemed pleased with the results of their work on Torvald as they sat down with her.

“He's going to be fine,” the feline informed her, taking her paw in his and squeezing it gently. “If you would like to, you can go in and see him right now.”

She didn't wait to answer him, she just went to her hubby's side. Torvald was breathing shallowly and his body felt cold as ice.

“He will fine, as soon as his body warms back up.” Vadiu informed her. “When we put him in stasis, he is supposed to be cooled off until his body functions stop. Since he's immortal, that particular point never came.”

“Victoria? Is that you?” the stallion whispered, trying to open his eyes to see her.

“I'm right here,” she replied, holding his paw tightly.

“I'm c . . . c . . . cold,” he pointed out just as he began to shiver.

“Ah, that's a good sign he's recovering.” the canid stated. Lin came into the room with some heavy blankets that had been warmed, placing them over Torvald and tucking him in tightly.

“B . . . buh . . . better,” the stallion commented, trying in vain to keep his teeth from chattering.

“He should feel fine in a few hours.” the small vixen pointed out. “I will be back with some warm soup in a mug for him,” she added right before she left the room.

“Victoria, I have something I want to say.” Tor put forth. “If we get out of this, we have to get out of the business. For too long we have followed our orders from *On High* without . . . question . . .” He stopped talking, realizing what he had just said.

“Tor?” she questioned, noting that a strange look had crossed his muzzle.

“Hon, I just realized something.” he replied. “Since we have been 'in the business', we have always done the bidding of *The Almighty* without question. In your religion, because of dogma, whatever the God of Abraham says to do, you just do it without question. Because he is supposedly perfect, whatever he says to do is perfect and should be followed explicitly.

“My religion, however, is different. We are encouraged to question our leaders. We should ask, “Why is it our turn again?” Or we should be asking, “Why are we doing this?” Or telling the mission dispatcher, “We're tired. Let another Agent handle it.” What we are doing might be okay by your religion but not by mine. I should question our orders.”

The tigress started to say something but Torvald stopped her.

“Hon, this is not what we think. Yeah, the Malefic Council wants us as their Agents but that's secondary. I really think this was meant to make me realize I have strayed from my religion. I have lived with Christians for so long that I have begun to accept, maybe adopt, so to speak, many of the Christian tenets. This is wrong, Hon. As much as you need to hang onto your beliefs, I need to do the same.”

He took a sip of water offered, then continued his thoughts. “Your religion says if someone strikes you, you should turn the other cheek, maybe getting that one struck too. My religion says that if you strike me, you had better put me down with that one blow or by Týr, I'll take my best shot and deck you solidly.”

“Oh My . . .” the tigress said reverently. “Tor, as much as I thought I knew your religion, I have to admit I was blind to this. You're right; we should have questioned some of the things we have been ordered to take

care of.”

“Hon, there's something else I might like to bring up.” Tor stated. “Um, where is that soup I was promised? I'm getting very hungry now that I've warmed up a bit.”

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Conrad sat his spoon back in his bowl of oatmeal and grimaced, thinking it was going to be just like last time. His parents were missing again, while not unusual for them since they had gotten into the business, they would once again miss seeing him play at the Superbowl.

“Cathy, why is it my parents never make it to my biggest games?” he asked, not expecting an answer to a question that was more rhetorical than most.

She looked up from her breakfast, feeling empathy for her hubby. “I really don't know. Maybe they will be back in time for the game.”

Conrad nodded, knowing it was a slim chance at best. “Yeah, I hope so. I would like for them to see it live, just one time. Even if my team loses.”

He knew in his heart that this was just a possibility that they would be there at best. It seemed destined that his parents were never around for his achievements. He had to temper that, since they were doing this work for the good of all furkind. Maybe they would be there, just this once.

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The huge equine/giraffe cross assisted Torvald from the medical building, through a breezeway to Vadiu and Lin's living room, which was part of the complex of buildings that made up their home. Tor didn't think he needed the help but Michael insisted. Once there, he was practically tackled by his wife.

“Tor, let's go home. I've had enough of romping around the known parallel universes.” the tigress offered up while she hugged him tightly. “Michael brought us a pair of bands that will take us to our home, where we belong.”

“Well, I'm feeling pretty good so maybe we should go home. I'm sure our family are all worried about us.” he retorted. They accepted the bands and put them on, pressing the activation buttons at the same time. The world went white momentarily before reforming into the entry hall to their home.

“Oh, it's so nice to be ho . . .” Victoria stopped talking when she viewed their living room. “What the hell?” Victoria blurted out, observing the room in shambles and blood everywhere. “What the hell happened in here?” she shouted, scanning the room for clues while she shouted 'words' to vent her anger.

“Dammit! I knew we needed a burglar alarm!” Torvald stated loudly, walking over to the couch that was busted up quite thoroughly. “My couch! Look at this!” he shouted.

“Um, Tor? Look at this!” the tigress stated, motioning him over to the spot in the room that seemed the bloodiest. “Do you see what I see?” she asked, pointing to the carpet.

“Yeah, I see it and know who that fur was,” Tor replied, looking down at a feline paw, covered in black fur and blood. The ring on the paw was familiar to the two of them; it belonged to Ingvar Gamel.