

*The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' & Victoria Angela (nee Connell) Svensen, James Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' (nee Hunter) Svensen, Brett, Dana Lynn (nee Svensen) and Sabrina Angela Kasznikov, Roger, Gytha Louise (nee Svensen) Roger Jr. & Heather Louise Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn (nee Barrett) Svensen, Bradley Torvald 'Brad' & Janet Lee (nee Mondragon) Svensen, Trenton, Nancy Jeanne (nee Svensen), Trenton Junior 'TJ' 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 'Willi Marie' (nee Kurzweil) Delancey, James William & Nancy (nee Roland) Kurzweil, Erich Martin & Ivanova Marie 'Iva Marie' (nee Schmidt) Kurzweil, Jason & Natasba 'Tasha' (nee Porter) Cummeron, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito[©], Leonard's Restaurant[©], Hunter Auto Parts[©], Right Way GroceriesTM and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission.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. (Gab, this is tedious!) *Note* More rambling credits/warnings below! Please read and heed!*

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“End Game”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 13 – “Prosecution”

The two crime scene investigators took numerous photographs of the severed limb resting on the Svensen's carpet, reviewing them before they removed the paw for forensic analysis. The Immortal Couple were currently occupied, trying to explain where they had been while this 'event' had transpired.

“So, Detective Svensen, just to make sure I have this straight, you say you were at your youngest daughter's house, visiting?” the ferret asked, writing down some notes on his pad.

“Yeah, that's where we were, Jim. Could you drop the 'Detective' and just call me 'Torvald?'” the stallion asked.

“We had consumed a few beers so we didn't want to drive,” the tigress added, giving the law-fur a serious look.

“Well, that's what your daughter Dana told me a few minutes ago. She said she didn't want you two to drive.” Detective Thorlo informed them. “Gah, it actually looks like some animal actually ate that unlucky feline. Not to mention those oversized feral wolf tracks.” He used his pencil to point out the bloody paw prints leading out of the living room, through the kitchen to the patio beyond.

“Those are some very big prints,” Tor agreed, putting his hoof by one of them. The paw-print was clearly almost twice the size of his appendage. That made the detective make an observation.

“Tor, I've seen some weird things in my life but this one is really out there. That wolf would have to be as big as a horse to make prints that big.” Jim put forth. “I've seen big feral wolves but this one . . . this one would be a giant.”

“Do you think a wolf could get that big?” Victoria asked.

“I don't know what to think at this point.” Jim Thorlo replied, giving her a crooked smile. “I'll just put it in my report anyway. The Chief knows your reputation so I guess he'll just close the case rather than

investigate further.” he explained for Torvald's edification. “It's how those tracks end . . . like the animal just leaped into the air from your patio and didn't land.”

“All I know is we have a big clean-up project ahead of us.” Torvald put forth as he saw his former working partner to the door.

“I don't envy you,” Jim put forth. “Err, you might want to get that carpet out of the house before it starts to reek.” he suggested.

“You right, Jim.” Tor replied. “Take care and say 'Hi' to my replacement.”

“Will do,” the ferret retorted, shaking their paws before he left the premises with the crime scene investigators.

Tor turned to his wife once the police furs left and gave her a concerned look. “Victoria, you said you might know something about this?” he questioned.

“Yeah, about that,” she replied, turning to look at the mess before she continued. “Um, this might have been done by Aslaug's mount. She has a huge wolf that she uses for transportation.”

That seemed to answer a few questions for the huge fur. “Well, I guess we can't be mad about it if Aslaug was involved. Or can we?” he suggested. That made Victoria smile.

“Well, let's get this carpet out of here like the detective suggested. Our house is a wreck and we don't need the stench of putrid blood to make it worse.” Victoria grabbed Torvald by the paw, leading him back into the living room. “You cut the carpet into strips, I'll roll it up. Just remind me to thank Dana later this evening for covering for us like that.”

“Yeah, that was nice of her to help out on such short notice,” Tor put forth as he used his Buck knife to begin cutting up the carpet. “I'm just looking forward to the day when our family doesn't have to cover for us all the time.”

While he did his part to remove the damaged floor covering, Torvald thought about what had just transpired. He had nearly lost his life, he had once again put his wife in danger and they had yet to be tried in court.

He now realized he had lost his way concerning his faith. He had slowly become a pseudo-Christian by accepting too many of the tenets associated with the God of Abraham. That is most likely what had led to the situation at paw. Had this all been an elaborate plan by *Allfather* to make him remember his past, recall who he was, a *Hedni*? If it was, it was a plan that could have had a terminal outcome for the two of them.

And what of this upcoming trial? Would they actually be tried for the deaths of two common criminals? If their employers didn't step in for them, this could be their undoing. All of these questions were doing nothing except make his head hurt at the moment. Torvald knew what he needed right now; answers that mortal furs couldn't give him.

Nancy, Bradley and Gary were sitting at the mage's dining table, consuming a light fare put forth by their erstwhile host. Nancy was pushing her salad around on her plate, trying her best to keep her emotions in

check while her father and the magician made small talk.

Looking at the back of her paws, covered in their normal blond coat, she worried that it was now impossible for her to carry on with her part of the mission. There was no way in Hell she could blend in with the local population and she was pretty sure this mage did not have sufficient powers to make her look human again.

This whole mission had been tough on her; first being captured not once but twice, being raped by two strange men then being groped while cuffed and unable to defend herself. All of this, ending in her disguise being prematurely removed was stressing her out to no end.

“Excuse me,” she said to the mage and her father as she stood and left the table, wiping at the tears that began to flow down her muzzle. Curling up in a nearby chair, she fought to keep from becoming distraught over this. This recent violation of her body had brought back memories she had fought for years to suppress. The more she tried to put it out of her mind, the clearer those memories became.

Nancy recalled that she had been just out of college, working for a small family-owned General Contracting firm as a job cost estimator. She was at a party that was being thrown to celebrate the newest big contact the firm had been awarded when her boss, the youngest son of the owners, began to cozy up to her. The booze had flowed freely and it was no secret that she would tie one on from time to time. This particular party was no exception, the young filly was slightly inebriated from her drinking binge.

She had gone outside for a bit of fresh air and the young lion had followed her outside, talking with her about maybe going back to his place, since he didn't want to see her driving while intoxicated. They had gone back and forth about it and he finally agreed to drive her home instead. He did take her to her home but what transpired after that was not planned.

She woke up the next morning with her boss Aiden Cole, Junior in bed with her. She remembered some of what had happened the night before; once inside her home, she had fallen down on her living room floor due to her drunken state. Aiden, proclaiming to be a gentlefur, helped her up and guided her to the bedroom. After that, things got a little sketchy and she couldn't be positive about what had transpired.

Nancy managed to ignore her nasty liquor-induced hangover and made breakfast for Aiden that morning, then allowed him to take her back to the parking lot where her car was parked. That was sweet of him but her opinion of her boss changed once she returned home. Picking up her clothes from last evening, she noted the buttons were torn off of her blouse, the zipper on her skirt was broken and torn away from the waistband and the jacket that matched that skirt was turned inside out as if it had been forcefully removed from her body. She kept thinking that she might have done these things herself but a few weeks later she finally knew what had happened.

The blond femme was working late on a big multi-story apartment building estimate when Aiden came into her office, closing the door behind himself. Being very blunt about it, the lion explained to her that he really enjoyed their roll in the hay and if she would just put out occasionally, he would see to it that she got a substantial raise.

Nancy was shocked to hear that, explaining to Aiden that she would not prostitute herself for an increase in pay. He shook his head, grabbed her and threw her to the floor.

Her boss was tall and muscular so he had no problems with holding her down while he tore her slacks and underwear from her body. He then proceeded to tear open her blouse and grope her, totally ignoring her pleas to stop. At one point he punched her in the side of the muzzle, telling her to shut up or he would hit her again.

She laid there on the floor, sobbing while her boss used her body for his own pleasure. After he was done with her, he told her to go home and take the next day off. Nancy waited until he had left her office space before she put on what was left of her clothes and hurriedly left the building.

Nancy remembered just how devastated she was but she was totally ashamed to admit this even happened to her, not even to her own family. Pushing the incident to the furthest recess of her mind, she took the day off and went to the coast, spending the day at the beach while she decided whether or not to stay at her job.

She stayed on, but the young feline was still interested in ill-gotten pleasures. He molested her twice more in her office space, once while she was sure his father was still in his office two doors down. This was now bordering on insanity to her and she needed to do something about it. She knew she had to do something before she lost that last shred of dignity she had hung on to. The next time Aiden made his move, she did something about it.

He entered her office space and shut the door as usual, taking off his pants afterward in preparation to rape her once again. She played into his advances, appearing to willingly take off her blouse for him. Once he had gotten close enough to her, she kicked him in the groin several times with her left hoof which was now sporting a glued-on steel shoe. Archaic, heavy and very effective.

Aiden dropped to the floor like a brick, his physiology so shocked by the brutal impacts to his crown jewels that he found it hard to even breathe. She took a quick moment to check the VHS video camera she had borrowed from her uncle Ronald to make sure it had captured all of this action before calling the police on him. Nancy then collapsed in a sobbing heap on the floor.

Aiden's father came to see her the next day at her apartment, begging her to drop the charges against his son, stay with the firm and he would make sure the young lion would be sent down the road, never to bother her again. Nancy gave it some thought, eventually telling the father, Aiden Senior, that she would return on those terms. That's when things went sideways and she learned the fruit didn't fall far from the tree.

The father approached her, asking for a kiss to seal the deal. When she refused his advances, he roughly grabbed her arm, saying she had put out for his son, so she should put out for him. Nancy shook herself loose of his grasp and told him to go before she hurt him but he wouldn't accept that suggestion, continuing his advances on her. She backed away from him, eventually ending up with her legs up against her home office desk with no other route for escape.

She warned him to leave her home immediately as she reached behind herself and found her letter opener on the desk with her left paw. The old lion scoffed at her statement as he continued his advance, taking his jacket off and pitching it over the back of her couch. She warned him again that if he didn't leave, there might be dire consequences for him. All she could see in her mind was her body, beaten and bloody on her living room floor and that thought drove her on. The last thing that he said to her was for her to just give it up to him and all would be right with the world.

She knew it was now or never just as he put a paw on her shoulder so she used her letter opener, a gift

from her father to defend herself. She drove that genuine military issue Ka-Bar USN Mark II Fighting Knife deep in the feline's belly, giving it a twist as she did so. As he fell backwards away from her in shock, she hung onto the one point one pounds of steel, ripping it brutally from his abdomen and she was still clenching it in her left paw when the police arrived.

The Cole family had tried to get her prosecuted for attempted murder, which was the best that they could do. The unfortunate elder Cole managed to survive his encounter with her 'letter opener', albeit now with a permanent colostomy for his troubles.

It was her good fortune that the security speaker button had jammed on her as it was wont to do when the security guard had called up to inform her that Aiden Senior was there to see her. The guard on duty for her apartment complex heard the whole exchange and testified on her behalf. The court threw out the lion's lawsuit and she won the counter-suit she filed against him. The Cole family was ruined by the bad publicity, forcing them to sell their business to pay the substantial court judgment placed against them.

She had tried to forget that period in her life, so much so that she eventually moved from Seattle to Southern California to find work. In time, Nancy found a good job with a firm on the move and she met her future husband Trenton not too long after that.

This mission, and the things that had happened to her, had brought these nasty memories back to the forefront and it was clear to her now; she couldn't continue to do these 'Missions for the good of all furkind' if this was the norm. Realizing that fact, she broke down in tears, knowing her life was now forfeit.

Gary and Brad had been so engrossed in their conversation that they didn't really grasp the fact that Nancy had left the table until she started crying. Her father went to her, kneeling by the chair.

“Nancy, what's wrong, Hon?” Brad asked, hoping she was just upset about something.

“I don't want to talk about it, Dad.” she replied, trying to get her composure back. “Just let me be, please? I'll be alright in a bit.” she begged between sobs.

“This has to do with what happened the other day, doesn't it?” her parent inquired.

“I don't want to discuss it.” she said flatly, still trying to recover her composure.

Gary came up behind her, reaching over the back of the chair to put his hands on her shoulders as he spoke to her.

“Nancy, if there's anything I can do . . .” She interrupted the mage very tersely.

“Get your paws off of me!” she said loudly. “Don't touch me! Ever!”

“I'm sorry, Nancy,” the mage stated as he backed away from her a few steps.

“I shouldn't have yelled at you like that, It's not you,” she said softly to the mage, shaking her head in embarrassment. “I . . . I was raped when I was in my twenties. It was my first job out of college and he was the son of the owners, a real bastard.” she finally put forth. “It was a period in my life that I wanted to forget completely but I was unfortunate enough to get raped again just a few days ago. It . . . it brought it

all back . . .” she began to sob openly again.

“Hon, let me hold you?” her father asked, gently pulling her into his arms. She snuggled against him, still very upset. It was clear to Brad that his daughter was in no shape to stay up at the moment. She needed some quiet time to recover from this episode.

Gary, Would you open the door to the guest room?” he asked, scooping up his offspring and carrying her towards the second bedroom.

“I’ll get the covers,” the mage offered up, moving ahead of them to open the door and turn down the bed covers. Brad put her on the bed, then covered her and tucked her in.

Nancy, I’ll be in the next room,” he informed her, satisfied that she heard him when he observed her nod in acknowledgment. The two males then quietly left the room. Once the door to Nancy’s room was closed, they heard her begin to sob all over again.

Torvald and Victoria had finally rid the living room of the destroyed furniture and the damaged carpet so they had taken the time to get cleaned up. The tigress had slipped on her pale gray lounging shirt and pants combination so she was kind of curious when her hubby put on some sweatpants and a sweatshirt.

“Tor, what’s with the clothes? Are you going somewhere?” she asked.

“I’m going in search of answers,” he replied before he turned and left the bedroom.

His mate followed him, wondering what he was up to now. He went through the house, getting his Long Axe and Franciscas from their display racks, testing their edges to confirm the sharpness of the weapons.

Victoria was genuinely concerned at this point because he seemed to be getting into a mindset that she had observed on numerous occasions. This was the mindset of a Berserker; kill or be killed. He went into the back yard once he had retrieved a forty ounce bottle of Steel Reserve High Gravity lager from their refrigerator, a brew Torvald had proclaimed “Worthy for consumption by a *Hedni*.” They went up to the high patio, the huge fur in the lead as they ascended the steps. He stopped momentarily at the edge of the patio clearing to give the brew to his mate for safekeeping while he took care of some business.

Torvald moved the patio furniture off to the side, then marked off two intersecting lines on the Cardinal Points with the butt of his Long Axe. He then began to mark a circle, starting near his wife and being careful to keep it concentric. Once her returned to the starting point, he stopped short.

“Victoria, I am searching for answers to questions this evening, answers that no mortal fur can give me.” he told her. “Once I close this circle, no one may enter or leave until I allow it. You may seek wisdom with me, if you wish.” he added.

The tigress stepped through the opening, not really knowing what would happen but she felt it was something she had to do. Victoria had observed him do this once before, a long time ago. She knew in her heart she needed to be here at the moment, if only to be his moral support.

“This circle is now closed. No fur may enter except for children and animals,” Tor announced, finishing his markings in the decomposed granite of the patio. He took the bottle of brew from his mate and

opened it, allowing it to foam up just slightly. He poured a portion of it on the ground at the four points where the Cardinal Lines bisected the circle, took a sip of it then offered it to his wife. Once she had partaken of the drink, he sat the bottle on the North point.

The Berserker gave the tigress one of his Franciscas, then got the other one in his left paw and adjusted his grip on it before he spoke.

“To gain knowledge, we must give up something in return.” he stated. “I want you to cut my arm, from elbow to wrist. I will then do the same for you.”

“Um, Tor . . . Do we have to?” she asked in a apprehensive tone.

“Yes, we have to.” he replied as he pulled off his sweatshirt. “Here, hold my paw to steady my arm while you cut me. Not too deep but it must bleed.” he directed.

She followed his directions, holding his paw tightly while she pulled the razor-sharp blade down his arm. The cut was deeper than she intended to go but it did bleed. She then slipped off her top and gritted her teeth while her hubby cut her arm in a similar fashion. He then held her paw in his, turning their arms so their blood dripped freely to the ground as he began to speak.

“Odin, Freya, Frigg, Týr, we give our blood freely as payment for the gift of wisdom. We humbly ask that we be given some insight as to what lies in our future.” he asked, closing his eyes and seeking out with his mind. Victoria followed suit, closing her eyes and quieting her thoughts. Momentarily, they were taken to a scene that was certainly their back yard but obviously in mid-summer by the heat, not mid-winter and a different time of day.

What they observed was a number of their family milling about, probably having a party of some sort. It did seem somewhat somber to them, though. There was a pair of small equine males running about, zebra-striped but their base color was buff, not white. A young femme with diluted tiger coloring was nearby, playing with a smaller femme that was similarly colored. Once the older one had moved on to do something else, the smaller femme kit came over to them, tugging on Torvald's sweatpants to get his attention.

“Grampa, why are you here and over there, too?” she asked, pointing out the other Torvald across the way.

“Can you see us?” Victoria asked, now somewhat self-conscious of her waist-up nudity.

“I can see both of you, Gramma.” she replied. “How come you don't have a top on?” she asked.

“Um, I forgot to put one on,” she replied, now very embarrassed by the situation. They were all interrupted by the arrival of Dana, obviously unable to see her parents. She seemed a bit older now, as did all of the furs in the yard.

“Tabitha Lynn Kashnikov! I've been calling you!” the mother scolded her kit, picking her up. “Sabrina came when I called so why didn't you come too?” she asked.

“I'm talking to Gramma an' Grampa,” she replied, giving her mom a big smile.

“Your Grandparents are over there,” the buff-colored femme retorted, turning to show her little one the

pair standing by the barbecue. "Come with me, Honey. Let's get some of your Grandpa's burgers while they're hot."

Tabitha waved 'Bye' to them as her mother carried her over to the assembled group. They watched as the furs all got a plate of food and found a place to sit and eat. They noted that it was mostly immediate family that were present, except for Trenton Corbin and his kits TJ and Chelsea. They were probably the most reserved at the moment, the young femme wolf fighting back tears while she opened a Samuel Smith's Oatmeal Stout. After she had done that, she walked over to a small table and sat the brew by a picture of some fur. Who that fur was, Torvald and Victoria couldn't tell due to the angle that the picture was sitting at.

"What does all of this mean?" Victoria asked, confused by the symbolism of the act.

"I think it means we will carry on but one of our family doesn't, for whatever reason." Tor replied. "I see that the rest of our family, although older appearing, seem to be doing fine."

Victoria still seemed confused by all of this, certainly more so when Joe Latrans came down from the bunkhouse with an unfamiliar fur. The male otter seemed somewhat nervous or apprehensive when they approached the group to join them. The Immortal Couple overheard the coyote talking to the unknown fur as they walked by them, obviously unable to see the Immortal Couple standing by the path.

". . . You'll be fine here, Gerald. Tor and Victoria will let you stay here as long as it takes." the canid put forth. "I'll be talking with Aslaug in a day or two about having your immortality lifted for you."

"Um, yeah . . ." the otter responded. "Uh, you're talking about that scary equine femme, aren't you?" he questioned.

"Look, she told me what happened, Gerald." Joe related to his charge. "She had no other choice except to bust you out of there like that. She didn't kill your jailer, if that's what's bothering you . . ."

"What do you think that means?" the tigress asked, turning to look at her hubby. That's when she noticed they were back on the upper patio and it was dark now.

Tor seemed dazed for a moment, then looked at his mate as he replied. "I guess we have something important to do that involves Joe and Aslaug." he replied as he knelt to pick up their discarded clothing. Once they had put their things back on, Tor rubbed out a section of the circle he had created. "This circle is now open again for all to cross." he stated before picking up the bottle of brew.

"Tor, do you think we make it through whatever the courts do to us?" she mused.

"I think we do." he replied. "I just wish we knew who the unlucky fur was, I mean will be."

"What would you do? Try to save them?" she asked.

"Um, I'm not sure it works that way." he responded. "I'm not sure the Gods would let me tamper with the timeline like that."

They were suddenly in another realm, one that was familiar to them; Odin's realm.

"No, we would not let you tamper with things of that nature," a well-dressed bear stated as he walked up

to them.

“Forseti,” Torvald spoke the deity's name, then bowed to his presence. Following suit, the tigress bowed too.

“I see you know me, Berserker,” the bear said with a slight smile on his muzzle. “You know then, what you have just observed is your destiny, as long as you do nothing to alter it.”

“Forseti, I'm sorry but I'm having a hard time interpreting what we just observed.” the tigress put forth.

“Do not worry, my dear Victoria. I'm sure you will soon understand the wisdom you have received.” the bear replied. Suddenly, they were in their back yard again.

“I don't think I will ever get used to that,” the tigress commented. Before Tor could say something in reply, they were joined by Cami.

“I'm glad I finally found you two,” she stated, giving them the tracking bracelets to put back on. “I just found you two up here a moment ago and I was over by the furniture when you two blinked out for a brief time. Um, I guess I should tell you tomorrow morning is your hearing.” she added.

“Well, I guess we'll just have to find out how it goes, then.” Victoria mused.

Yeah, we better get some sleep,” Tor retorted, hugging his wife lovingly. “Tomorrow might turn out to be a long day.”

As the trio walked back down to the house, Victoria kept thinking about the wisdom that had been given them. According to that they had observed, they did manage to survive their encounter with The Celestial Courts. Whatever the sentence was, it must not have been too severe. Their future selves seemed to look not much older, so maybe they were still immortal at that point in time.

All she knew was she had a burning desire for them to get out of the business but this vision clearly indicated that they still had work to do. What that work was, she wasn't sure. She just hoped it wasn't dangerous or that it put them in the line of fire again. She had certainly had enough of that insanity to last her several lifetimes.

Morning arrived to find the Immortal Couple awake, showered and dressed for their appointment with destiny. Victoria had put on one of her business skirt-suits, a conservative black one that matched well with the black suit Torvald had chosen to wear. While Cami got dressed, they had a bowl of cereal just to calm their nervous stomachs.

Victoria took off her jacket and washed their dishes slowly, almost methodically. She was thinking this might be the last time she did this for a long time. Sniffing back her tears as she dried her paws, she sat the towel on the counter and went to her stallion to hug him tightly.

“Tor, I love you,” she said, trying not to break down. It wasn't working.

“I love you too, Victoria.” he replied, holding her tightly. “Don't cry, Sweetheart. We've already observed the fact that we make it through this.”

“I know, Hon. It's just . . . it's . . . I'm scared,” she finally admitted.

While Torvald held his wife to calm her nerves, their bodyguard made her appearance. Cami was dressed in her Royal Australian Army dress green uniform, her eleven ribbons, an Australian Service medal and her Purple Heart all gleaming on her chest. The two glaring additions were her sidearms, A desert Eagle chambered in .50 caliber and an Armalite AR-10 with a twenty round clip.

“Well, let's get this over with,” the femme wolverine commented while she fiddled with a portal device, finally opening a path to the reception room on the Celestial Court's home world.

They stepped through to that white room where an electronic sign guided them to the courtroom reserved for their prosecution. They made a stop to be checked for weapons, which for some reason the security personnel didn't even ask Cami for a permit of any sort, then the trio made their way to the appointed place. Entering the courtroom and taking a seat behind the table for the defense, they nervously awaited the beginning of the proceedings while Cami excused herself to take care of some business of some sort.

Judge Talmadge made an appearance just as soon as they had sat down, motioning for them to come into his chambers. He closed the door behind them, then turned to look at them.

“Torvald, I wanted to make sure you've recovered sufficiently to stand trial.” the canid offered up.

“I think so,” the stallion replied, nodding a bit. “I'm still a bit sore, especially this one injury to my spleen.” he added. That seemed to satisfy the judge.

“As long as you feel up to it, we'll proceed.” Mr. Talmadge stated. “If you become weak or ill, please let the court know.”

Torvald and Victoria returned to the main room only to find their counsel had arrived. Thomas Iskenderian and Bethany Carmel were discussing the case while Wilhelmine, Mala and a slender femme Chinese dragon sat down in the seats behind theirs. The tigress also noted the fact that her parents were there too.

“Mom! Dad!” she blurted out, quickly making her way across the courtroom to her family. “Um, how did you get here?” she asked.

“Honey, your bodyguard Camille came for us.” her mom replied. “She said you really wished we could be here, so here we are.” Her mom hugged her, then continued. “I'm just having a hard time believing we're on another planet altogether.” Mr. Connell piped up with his two cents about the matter.

“I'll agree with your mother. It's a far stretch of the imagination to think this isn't our world.” her father chimed in.

Victoria nodded in agreement. “It's hard to think in those terms. That last planet we were on seemed so much like ours, Mom. We lived in Modesto, on Magnolia Street while we took care of business.” she related. “It was different in one way, though. Imagine if the Nazis had won World War Two. The predator species were treated somewhat like the Nazis treated the Jews.”

That shocked her parents. “Honey, how did they treat you? That is, if you don't mind answering,” her

father asked, seeming upset by that notion.

“It was crazy,” the tigress replied. “At first, I was treated very badly. Then, our mission assistant rounded up my real birth certificate when I was trying to get a weapons permit. Being born before a certain date made me a full citizen, not a restricted rights citizen.”

“That is just insane!” her father put forth. “As if this whole thing isn't absurd? You're charged with crimes against the universe, which seems impossible to me.”

“It's true, I guess.” the young tigress stated. “Either that, or we're just dreaming this whole thing.”

“It is not a dream,” Forseti said as he sat down next to Harriet Connell. “They have been charged as such but I see no real problems with this hearing.” he added. “By the way, I am Forseti. I am honored to meet the parents of Victoria.” He bowed ever so slightly to them.

Victoria seemed a bit confused by the ursine's presence. “Forseti, why are you here?” she inquired.

“I have been directed to attend by Odin. Since *Allfather* is all knowing, I am sure I am here for a good reason.” he replied. “Just as it appears the Archangel Michael is here for some reason too.”

The tigress looked up to see the feline seraph sitting down a few rows back from her parents. “I see,” she commented as she took her seat again, fidgeting in her seat from nerves. A jury of twelve furs filed in, taking up their seats in the jury box. Although all twelve were furs, they were not familiar to her.

“All come to order!” the bailiff, the human from their initial visit to this courtroom announced. “All rise, court is now in session. The Honorable Judge Harold Talmadge presiding!”

The judge made his way to his seat and made a point of scanning the courtroom before he sat down. He then gave a piece of paper to the bailiff. The bailiff gulped before he spoke.

“Counselor Bethany Carmel, Mrs. Wilhelmine Delancey, Mrs. Mala O'Kendranal, Miss Xi Chin, please approach the bench.” he stated, in a firm, yet somewhat apprehensive tone. Just as he did the last time, he stepped away from the femmes when they approached the bench.

Judge Talmadge covered his microphone with his paw, and spoke quietly to the females standing before him.

“I do hope the four of you will not cause a scene in my courtroom,” he stated, looking to see if all of them understood him.

“I speak for all of us,” the small, petite dragon began, “We will not cause a scene, as you say. We are here as observers only.”

The judge nodded and waited for them to take up their seats again. He nodded to Forseti and the ArchAngel Michael, then indicated for the bailiff to continue.

“In the matter of The Celestial Courts versus Torvald and Victoria Svensen, this hearing is now under way.” the bailiff announced.

“Counselor for the prosecution, please make your opening statements.” the canid stated to the

prosecuting attorney. The pudgy ferret named John Murcheson stood, straightened his suit coat and began.

“I intend to prove without a shadow of a doubt that Torvald Arend Svensen and Victoria Angela Svensen are both guilty of crimes against the universe. They have needlessly taken the lives on two sentient beings without sanction from this court and patently ignored proper procedures as set forth by our law.”

The ferret seemed smug when he called Torvald to the stand. After swearing the stallion in, the small, rotund fur continued. “Torvald Arend Svensen, can you tell the court who you work for?” he asked.

“By day I'm a reserve police fur and I also do the bidding of The Gods.” he put forth. In anticipation that he might be on the stand for a while, the huge stallion unbuttoned his coat to get comfortable.

The prosecution continued. “And were you recently on IS-31908, doing this 'Bidding of The Gods'?”

“Yes, I was.” the stallion answered.

The smallish attorney pushed his glasses back up on the bridge of his nose and looked at his notes. “And would you tell the courts what happened when you had a run-in with a certain Edward Irwin Harper?” he questioned.

“I attempted to detain him after my wife was assaulted by him with a high powered pistol.” was Tor's reply.

“Is that all that happened?” the lawyer asked.

“No, Mr. Harper was armed with a high-powered pistol and he wouldn't relinquish his weapon. I shouted several times to him, demanding he disarm himself. When he failed to comply with my orders, I began to fire my weapon in his direction.” Tor stopped to let the stenographer catch up, then continued. “He tried to hide behind the door of his vehicle and at one point attempted to climb in his vehicle to possibly escape me. When I arrived at the vehicle, still making verbal demands that he disarm himself, he pointed his weapon in my direction. I fired at him first, killing him.”

The ferret smiled as he turned back to Torvald. “I contend you violated proper procedures, never gave a verbal warning and you were in a rage when you murdered him in cold blood.”

Torvald knew where this was going. “I will reiterate the fact that I did verbally warn him, directing him to disarm himself. I followed proper police procedure in the way I conducted myself from the very beginning of the incident.”

“So, you intended to shoot him once in the shoulder, once in the ankle and you did indeed shoot him in the head, just above the bridge of his nose?” the ferret asked.

“I had hoped that I would be taking him into custody. I did not have intentions of shooting Mr. Harper.” Tor replied.

“That isn't what I asked, now is it?” the attorney questioned.

“No, it's not.” the stallion responded.

“Did you intend to terminate Mr. Harper's life?” the prosecution asked in a louder voice.

“Objection, your Honor.” Mr. Iskenderian shouted. “Counsel is pressuring the witness.”

“Objection sustained.” the judge agreed. “Mr. Murcheson, please get to the point.” Judge Talmadge directed of the ferret.

“Yes, your Honor.” the attorney replied, turning back to Torvald. “Now, was it your intention to avenge your mate's attack by killing Mr. Edward Irwin Harper?”

“No, it was not my intention to murder him. He was armed and he wouldn't drop his . . .” Tor's explanation was interrupted by Mr. Murcheson.

“Thank you, Mr. Svensen. I have one last question,” he stated then he paused, giving thought to his wording. “I would like to know if you had been given specific sanction from the Celestial Courts for this mission.”

“No, I did not receive sanction.” Tor replied, shrugging his shoulders.

The ferret seemed rather pleased with himself. “That will be all, Mr. Svensen. Counselor Iskenderian, your witness.” he said, smiling at the jackal widely. Sitting down at his table, he made a few notes for later.

Counselor Iskenderian approached the witness stand, straightening his tie just so. He looked at his client, frowned and looked up at the judge.

“Your Honor, may I call for a short recess? My client is bleeding again.”

Torvald looked down to see his shirt was developing a rather large red spot right over his spleen injury.