

*The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' & Victoria Angela (nee Connell) Svensen, James Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' (nee Hunter) Svensen, Brett, Dana Lynn (nee Svensen) and Sabrina Angela Kasbnikov, Roger, Gytha Louise (nee Svensen) Roger Jr. & Heather Louise Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn (nee Barrett) Svensen, Bradley Torvald 'Brad' & Janet Lee (nee Mondragon) Svensen, Trenton, Nancy Jeanne (nee Svensen), Trenton Junior '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 Tisdale & Wilhelmine Marie 'Willi Marie' (nee Kurzweil) Delancey, James William & Nancy (nee Roland) Kurzweil, Erich Martin & Inanova Marie 'Ina 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Hunter Auto Parts[®], Right Way Groceries[™] and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission. Any resemblance to any fur or person, either living or dead is purely coincidental. Fender, Guild, Gretsch, Jackson, Charvel and Squire are the property of Fender Musical Instruments, Inc. Gibson, Les Paul and SG are the property of Gibson Musical instruments. (Gah, this is tedious!) *Note* More rambling credits/warnings below! Please read and heed! Aslaug "The Angelbreaker" Larsdatter and Varghöss are the copyrighted properties of Joan Jacobsen, 2005-2010 Her writings may be found at a wonderful place called "Aslaug's Axe Shed" and the URL is as follows; <http://www.aslaug.eu> Please have a look and enjoy her writings. The characters of Joe and Annie Latrans are copyright The Silver Coyote 2003 - 2010, and are used here with permission. Stories containing Joe and Annie Latrans along with The Silver Coyote's writings may be found at <http://thesilvercoyote.net/> Tell them Kellan sent ya. ;-)
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“End Game”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 17 – “The Reading”

The huge stallion still seemed very despondent several days later, much to Victoria's concern. Torvald had chopped wood for some time the day before, stopping only when Joe Latrans dropped by, looking quite the worse for wear. He had taken the coyote home, then came back, had a small bite to eat then returned to chopping wood again.

Looking out the kitchen window this morning, she spied her hubby, still in the same spot he was in the night before. He was currently sitting on the patio, just staring at the hillside behind their home. He hadn't ate or drank much since they had come home and in fact, he had sat there on the patio all night long. The tigress was very worried about his mental well-being.

Victoria went out onto the deck and after pulling a chair up next to his, the tigress sat down and took his paw in hers. He gripped her paw in return, first lovingly, then stronger as he began to sob again.

“Why?” he asked quietly as he continued to stare at the hillside, shaking his head. “Why must it be those who did not deserve it?”

“I don't know, Hon.” she replied.

Torvald thought for a moment, then continued his thoughts. “All I know is, we will never again do the dirty work of the . . .” The phone in Victoria's other paw ringing interrupted them.

“Hello?” she said, getting the phone comfortable in her grip. “Good morning, Annie. Um, yeah, he's right here if you want to talk with him.” She gave the phone to her hubby.

“Good morning,” Torvald said after he got the phone in a comfortable position to converse.

“Good morning, Tor.” the vixen replied. “Listen, Joe didn't say much when you brought him home yesterday. He kind of went straight to bed when he got home so I'm not sure about what he was mumbling about in his sleep. Something about it was over now for all of you.”

“Yeah, it's over, Annie. We are no longer active Agents. We're retired now. Joe included.”

“Finally!” Annie blurted out. “You do not know how long I have waited to hear that!” Torvald could hear her sobbing on the other end. After a few moments, she pulled her composure together. “Tor, I think Joe was shot again. He has a new scar on his body that looks suspiciously like a bullet wound.”

“He didn't elaborate on it to me,” the stallion offered up. “It's irrelevant now. From now on, Joe will only be using the Internet to find Agents that want out and Victoria and I will put them up here at the ranch, providing them a safe-house. Aslaug will take care of the other more dangerous things.”

Annie was quiet on the other end for a minute. “So, no more off-world running around for this new endeavor? No more hearing Joe complain of landing in blueberry bushes?” she asked.

“No, we're staying right here on this planet.” he retorted. “Well, we have to. You probably didn't hear that Victoria and I were found guilty of not obtaining sanction from the Celestial Court for our missions that would impact destiny. We have to serve five years probation where we can't leave the planet.”

“Oh My!” the vixen blurted out.

“No, it's really no big deal.” the stallion put forth. “We actually like the idea that the Gods can't change their minds and have us take a mission. We have the time now to start up our teen program.”

“Tor, who's this Celestial Court?” Annie asked.

“Well, they claim they were around long before the Gods ever decided to dabble in the affairs of mortals. Forseti even acknowledged that they were ancient.” the stallion offered up. “I was told the group that Wilhelmine belongs to, The Consortium, is very old, too.”

“Oh . . .” Torvald could hear the confusion in her voice.

“We're not going anywhere for a long time.” he stated. “Eyr will eventually come up with a way to remove our immortality without killing us and I think that's what Victoria has wanted ever since our first mission together. She has really come to hate being immortal.”

Annie sighed. “All of you have been through a lot, Tor. I'm glad I've only went a few times with Joe, and those missions were more like camp-outs to me. No real action, mostly traveling and camping.”

“We had a mission like that,” Torvald said softly. “It was a very laid-back one where we never even drew our weapons. The fur we were after surrendered to us without a fight.”

“I'm just glad it's all over with,” the vixen stated.

“You know, I don't want Joe getting soft.” the stallion told Annie as a smile spread across his muzzle. “I'll plant some blueberry bushes by the barn so Joe can jump out of the hay loft into them, just to say in practice.” That made Victoria and Annie both laugh.

“I don't know, Tor. You'll have to take that up with him.” the femme fox retorted. He could hear a hint of a smile in her voice, too.

"I'm glad you called, Annie. I think you broke my blue funk," he suggested.

"Well, I'm glad too," she replied. "You and your wife are very good furs. I hate to see some fur stuck in a blue funk," she explained.

"Annie, who are you talking to?" a familiar voice was heard asking on the other end of the phone.

"Tor, hold on," the vixen asked, then spoke to her hubby who had joined her in their kitchen. "Joe, it's Tor. I called him to ask a few questions."

"Annie, may I talk with your mate?" the equine asked.

"Sure, hang on," she replied, giving the phone to her hubby.

"Hi, Torvald. Thanks for bringing me home yesterday," Joe said with a smile to his voice. "Feels good to no longer be an Agent," he added.

"I know what you mean," the stallion retorted. "You know, I didn't get the whole story from Forseti so could you please fill me in?"

"No more unwilling Agents," the canid replied. "If they want out, they get out. And I think by the way Aslaug was talking about it, that includes Dark Agents."

"What about immortality? That too?" Torvald asked for his edification. He put the pawset on 'Speaker Phone' for Victoria to hear Joe's reply, too.

"No matter how a fur gains their immortality, they can have that lifted, too. No strings attached," he replied.

"So, our immortality would be removed with no further obligations?" the tigress asked.

"Oh, Hi, Victoria. Didn't know you were listening," Joe put forth. "You're right; no strings, no fine print. Like I told your hubby earlier, from now on, no more unwilling Agents, ever"

Joe and Torvald talked about other things while that one fact caused her to think, the knowledge that their immortality could be removed with no 'fine print', began to bug her. She gave thought to the call from Nancy, then her subsequent 'passing' yesterday. The fact that she had been given no choice in the matter and had been forced by that blasted Uriel to choose death, those thoughts began to make her mad.

Getting up to walk off her anger, for some reason it only made it worse. They had been told there would be no more unwilling Agents and any immortal could have their 'curse' lifted for them. This contradicted Nancy's situation completely. She had not been given these choices. Her life was cut short for no reason. In Victoria's mind, that was not right at all!

"Oh brother, if I could just get an audience with that uppity lion! Just five minutes alone with him in a dark alley!!" she muttered under her breath, clenching her paws as she strode back and forth on the deck, trying in vain to vent her frustration. "I would just love to put my foot so far up the arse of that dirty, conniving, double-talking . . ."

Torvald had ended his conversation with Joe and gotten in her way, stopping her from pacing because it

was not like his mate to do this. It frightened him when he could see her eyes were glowing like white beacons and her hair was starting to look like the wind was blowing, despite the calm morning air.

Torvald made a simple suggestion to his mate. “Victoria, you need to calm down . . .” She didn't entertain that suggestion for one bit.

“The *Hell* I'll calm down!!” she hissed back, grabbing his shoulders and shaking him to make sure she had his attention. “Did you not stop to think that Nancy didn't have to die?!?” she practically shouted at her hubby, her voice taking on a slight demonic tone. “She could still be here with us, dammit!! She could have had her immortality lifted for her and she could have retired, too!! Think, Torvald!! Think!!!”

“The Gods didn't give her that . . . choice . . .” His voice trailed off as the reality of it all sank in.

Victoria spoke up again when she observed her hubby finally gaining a bit of clarity in the situation.

“She wasn't given those choices, Tor!! She was short-changed by that winged bastard Uriel!!!” Victoria backed away from her hubby, looked at the sky and shook her fist at the Gods in anger. “*You short-changed her, do you hear me?!? She didn't get a choice!! You ripped her off big-time, do you hear me?!?*”

Her eyes were like glowing brighter than Torvald had ever observed before and her hair stood out on end, blue sparks crackling from the strands as she continued her tirade, now directed towards one particular Heavenly entity;

**“DAMN YOU, CHRISTOPHER!! DO YOU HEAR ME?!?
YOU STOLE HER LIFE AWAY FROM HER!!
YOU TOOK HER FROM HER FAMILY!!
YOU TOOK MY GRAND-DAUGHTER AWAY FROM US, DAMMIT!!
CHRISTOPHER?!? DO YOU HEAR ME??”**

Victoria clenched her paws, shaking in sheer anger as she gritted her teeth and tried to blink away the tears pouring from her eyes. Looking skyward again, she let out a feral roar that sounded unearthly, scaring her hubby enough to make him step back away from her. The tigress stomped her foot on the deck hard enough to crack several deck boards and launched into what could only be described as a hissy fit.

**“DAMMIT!! DO YOU HEAR ME, CHRISTOPHER??
YOU STOLE NANCY'S LIFE AWAY FROM HER,
GOING AGAINST WHAT YOU HAD
ALREADY AGREED TO DO FOR ALL AGENTS,
YOU DAMNED, DIRTY, NO GOOD . . .”**

. . . The world around the tigress suddenly went white . . .

Dana stood at her parent's front door, wondering why no fur had come to let her in. It was just after ten in the morning so her parents should be at home. Her mom's mini-van was in the driveway and her father's '49 Ford was under the carport, just as usual. It was times like this, when things didn't look out of place that bothered her.

Something didn't feel right so she decided to investigate the situation. Repositioning Sabrina in her arms, she walked down the steps to the front porch and headed around the side, by the garage. Dana checked the hood of both vehicles, finding them both cold so that meant they hadn't been anywhere this morning. Peeking through the family room windows, the house was quiet.

Continuing on, she rounded the corner only to see her father, sitting on the deck with a phone in paw. He seemed rather upset, too.

“Hi Dad, I came around back because you must not have heard me ringing the doorbell,” she said as she sat down by her father. For some reason, the chair seemed a bit warm, like some fur had been sitting in it just recently.

“Hi, Hon. I didn't hear you at the door,” Tor replied, giving her a halfhearted smile.

“Where's Mom?” the young femme asked, giving Sabrina to Torvald to hold. “I need to warm a bottle for the little one,” she said as she headed for the kitchen, hesitating at the patio door to hear where her mother had went to.

“Um, I don't know where your mother is,” the stallion replied, giving his daughter a look that meant he really didn't know.

“What happened?” Dana asked, turning to look at her father. This didn't sound good at all.

Tor Grimaced. “Well, she got pissed off about Nancy having to give up her life. It seems that it was agreed upon that all Agents can retire if they want. Those Agents that are immortal can also become mortal again, if that pleases them.” The stallion shook his head. “She was ranting at Christopher about Nancy getting the short end of the deal when she just . . . shimmered out.”

“Oh Dad! No!!” Dana blurted out. “She was in one of her hissy fits, wasn't she?”

“She was.” he confirmed. “It was a grand one, too.” he added.

“Think she's going to come back?” the young Svensen mused.

“I hope so,” her father replied, getting both granddaughter and the phone into more comfortable positions. “I'm on hold, waiting to talk with the judge because your mom is definitely not on the planet right now and I don't want her going to prison for violating probation.”

“Oh Good Grief!” the femme feline mix said, shaking her head. Dana knew her mom was very hard to provoke but once she got her fuse lit, it was over in a hurry.

“Well, maybe she won't . . . hold on,” the berserker said as he turned his attention back to the phone. “Hello, Judge Talmadge?” he queried.

“This is he,” the voice on the other end confirmed.

“Um, Judge Talmadge, I just wanted to let you know . . .” The canid interrupted Torvald.

“I know where your mate is,” he offered up. “She's standing about three feet away from Christopher.”

“So you know?” Torvald mused.

“Yeah, can't say I didn't see this coming, Torvald.” he replied. “Don't worry, she's technically conversing with her employer but I have to tell you, I wouldn't want to be that lion right about now.”

“How so?”

“I can only guess that she's pissed off.”

“She was.” the stallion confirmed.

“Need I say more? Heaven hath no fury like Victoria scorned.” the judge offered up. “Don't worry, Mr. Svensen, she'll be home soon. Thanks for calling, though.”

“You're welcome, Judge.” Tor said just as the line went dead. He grimaced, then looked up at his daughter. “She's probably reading Christopher the riot act.” He sniffed, looked down at the face his grandkit was making, then heard the somewhat muffled sounds. “Um, Sabrina needs a clean diaper, too.”

“Okay, bring her in and I'll change her.” Dana offered up. “Um, Dad, have you ate?”

“Not this morning.”

“After if fix up Sabrina, I'll make you some breakfast.”

“Thanks, Dana. I could use some food and maybe a cup of coffee.”

Tor held the little one while his daughter prepared the changing table. He shook his head, wondering just how Christopher was handling one of Victoria's 'Reading Of The Riot Act', long version.

The stallion knew his mate was right; Nancy didn't need to give up her existence just because Uriel wasn't up to speed on the new policies. If anything, the angels were almost always behind the curve on most things that happened in their realm. He did wonder, though if his great-granddaughter would be given a second chance. With Victoria at bat for her, that might be possible. He knew his mate wouldn't back down, once her mind was made up to do something.

Another thought crossed his mind at that moment; would Nancy want a second chance?

Joe was standing in his kitchen, watching his mate fix breakfast while he waited for his coffee to brew. It

felt . . . good . . . to know he would no longer be asked by the Gods to traipse across the known parallel worlds, doing their dirty work. Looking at the carafe to judge the proper moment to steal that all-important first cup, an odd feeling came over him.

He stood there, grimacing slightly while the feeling faded, wondering what had just happened. He turned to his mate and spoke up.

“Annie, I just had an odd feeling wash over me.” he admitted.

She looked up from her work, seeming somewhat concerned. “What did it feel like?” she asked.

“I'm not sure,” he admitted. “It was kinda like that movie where the one fur comments that he felt a great disturbance in the force.”

“Joe? How so?” Annie queried.

“I . . . I don't know but I'm almost positive it might have had something to do with an Agent.”

“Joe, maybe you had better call Torvald. See if it was something that happened at their house.”

“I think I will,” the canid replied as he set his coffee cup down and picked up the pawset.

Victoria looked around herself to see she had somehow been transported to Christopher's realm. She felt the tracking band still on her wrist but she quickly dismissed the thought that she would go to jail for leaving the planet without permission. That fact was inconsequential now. It would be worth every minute in a cold, damp cell if she succeeded with this one last mission, a personal mission for a family member.

Hearing a noise behind herself, she turned around to see a very confused lion staring back at her. The very one that was the focus of her anger.

“You!” she blurted out as she pointed a claw at him, her anger boiling over again. “You unfairly took Nancy's life away from her, do you hear me? You promised that all Agents could retire . . .” The male feline tried to interrupt her train of thought.

“Victoria? How did you get here?” he asked, since he had not brought her here himself.

“Don't you *dare* try to change the subject!” the tigress shot back rather tersely. “You took her life away from her when she should have been given a choice in the matter!!”

“Um, Victoria, could you calm down?”

“Don't you *dare* use that 'calm down' line with me!!” she snarled. “You and Tor are just alike; afraid of an angry striped femmel!” she put forth in a sarcastic tone, advancing upon the deity while she clenched her fists.

“You seem a bit tense,” Christopher stated, hoping to change the subject. She was pissed beyond belief and it was unnerving him to a great degree. He had never observed her so fired up.

“I am not just a bit tense!!” she hissed, “I’m so pissed off at you right now I can’t see straight!!” she added as she prepared for 'the reading'.

“Now, now, Victoria Angela, maybe we can talk this out . . .” She didn't wait to hear the end of his sentence.

“NO! You listen to ME, Buster!!” She began her tirade in earnest as she got right up in his face. “You and your angels, specifically Uriel, took Nancy's life away from her after you said you would allow *all* Agents to retire and become mortal again!! She has a family that needs her, there are a number of people that depend on her to be there every day *and now she's not there!!* How can you stand there and ask me to calm down when you've taken our great-granddaughter away from her family, friends and the world as a whole?!?”

“You never gave her that choice, you Indian-giver!! You never told her that she could be mortal gain!! You *never* told her she could call it quits as far as these insane missions go!! Can you look me in the eyes and tell me that you gave her these choices?? how about Brad and Ron?? Did you give them these choices too??

“No, you didn't make this generous offer to any of them!! I can see it in your eyes, Mister!! And don't think for one minute that I'm afraid of you!! You were flesh and blood just like me once!! Because of that, I am not afraid to stand here, right up in your face and demand you right this wrong!!

“I demand that you make this right, RIGHT DAMNED NOW!!!”

Christopher was shocked, to say the least. He had no idea that the tigress had the guts to read him the riot act, right in his own back yard, no less. The look that was on her muzzle was more feral than sentient at the moment, her body shaking from pure rage and anguish.

“Victoria, you're right. I didn't give her those choices.” he admitted. He knew this was a grievous oversight on his part and he would have to do something to correct it. “Maybe we should ask Nancy what she wants to do.”

“Grandma?” a voice was heard asking. A familiar voice.

The tigress looked to her right to see Nancy walking up to them.

“Grandma, I thought I heard your voice,” she offered up she she hugged the femme feline. That seemed to calm the tigress a great deal.

“Nancy! Oh Hon, I couldn't let them short-change you like this,” Victoria stated.

“Grandma, I didn't get shorted,” the femme equine retorted. “It's nice here. I've talked with numerous family members from Mom's and Trenton's families that I only knew through stories and photographs.”

Victoria was glad to see her great-granddaughter but she needed to clarify something with her;

“Nancy, I have something important to ask; did you know that you could have retired from being an Agent and had your immortality removed, no strings attached?” Victoria asked her.

“WHAT!?!” the young femme blurted out. “No, I was not told that,” she added, her voice taking an irritated tone. “It doesn't matter anyway. I would only have ended up committing suicide somehow.”

“That was your immortality affecting you,” Christopher interjected. “Some furs even go insane from it and that's the main reason we do not grant immortality freely. An insane Agent is of no use to us.”

Nancy was thinking about this; she wanted to stay here but she had a family that needed her.

“If I go back,” she asked, “Will I still have these thoughts of self-destruction? That was the reason I chose death. I was tired of fighting it, to tell you the truth.”

“No you will no longer be plagued by thoughts of suicide.” she was assured by their host.

“So, no more missions? And more importantly, I would be mortal?”

“You will have to guard your life if I send you back,” the lion put forth.

Nancy turned to Victoria. “Could I go back with you? I'll want you and Grandpa to be there when I go home to Trenton, Chelsea and TJ.”

“I will let you go home with Victoria,” Christopher stated. “Your earth-bound body has been found by a search party but it has not been identified as of yet. When I send you back, that body will be restored to you in a healthy state. The unfortunate coroners will just have to try to account for a body, one that they can't quite remember what it looked like, that has somehow went missing from their morgue.”

The younger Svensen spoke up. “Um, what about Aslaug? I feel like I asked her to do something that didn't need to be done.” Nancy put forth.

“I suppose I should apologize to her,” the lion put forth. “She is a minor deity, being a Valkyrie and all. I do owe her an explanation at the very least. I also need to round up those blasted Archangels and brief them on our new policies. I don't want this happening again.”

Now that the tigress had calmed down, she realized that she had overstepped her bounds in a big way.

“Christopher, I owe you a big apology.” the femme feline stated. “I'm sorry I read you the riot act. I had no reason to do so, even if I thought I was right. I really . . .” The lion held up his paw to stop her.

“Victoria, if there is an apology due, it's from me to you and your family. My father and I have failed you time and time again. Even if he won't admit it, I will. We have allowed the two of you to get into some very bad situations and we have even allowed you to become lost on a planet in a parallel reality. I will promise you that I will strive to do better. I will watch over what Agents that I have left, the ones that will stay in my employ.”

Those words seemed to stir the tigress' soul, causing her to get teary-eyed.

“Watch over those who do your dirty work. They deserve your attention.” Victoria said somberly.

“I will give them the help they need to do the work that needs to be done.” Christopher put forth. “Now that we have that put to bed, it's time for you two to leave.”

The world around Nancy and Victoria, without warning, went white . . .

The male hyena technician pulled out the drawer marked 'Jane Decedent #187' only to find an empty tray. He knew there was a body there just a few hours ago, when the coroner had brought it in. Looking at the paperwork hanging on the front of the door, all of the information was filled out except the description of the decedent. The photographs seemed to show pictures of the ground where some blood was spilled but no body was in view.

“Hey Art!” the tech shouted, bringing his partner in, a pronghorn stag. “What did you do with the body?”

“Didn't do nothing with it, Hank.” the cervine offered up. “It was right here . . .” he touched the tray, wondering about this himself. “It was a . . . hmm . . . an equine? A male? Geez, I can't seem to remember what the vic was that the meat wagon brought in.”

“Well, I can't either.” Hank offered up. “What do we do now?”

“I don't know, Art. Let me call the coroner that brought the body in. Maybe she will know.”

Dana looked up from feeding Sabrina, only to see her mother and Nancy materialize into solidness on the patio. Her mom was openly sobbing, still hugging the femme equine tightly.

“Dad! Mom's back and Nancy is with her!!” Dana blurted out, getting up to go greet the two travelers. Her father, who was talking with Joe again, dropped the phone on the counter and beat her to the back sliding door, almost knocking it off the tracks on his way outside.

“You're both back!” he shouted, grabbing them both up into a loving hug.

“Yeah, we're back to stay this time,” Nancy put forth. “I'm no longer an Agent or immortal, Grandpa.”

“I'm so happy for you, Sweetheart but your Grandmother had better not pull that stunt again,” he retorted, kissing both of them.

“What stunt?” the young equine asked, obviously confused by that statement.

“Your Grandmother became mad at the Gods, specifically Christopher.” he informed her. “She became so enraged she transported herself to his realm.”

“You can do that, Grandma?” Nancy asked the tigress.

“I have to be very upset to do it,” was the reply. The tigress knew that she needed to cool her temper before one day it would get the best of her.

Dana hugged Nancy and her mother once Torvald let go of them, glad that they were back home for

good now. The young equine gave Sabrina a kiss, then took her when Dana offered to let her hold her.

“I would love to have a kit of my own, now that I'm mortal,” she said with a sad tone. “The sad thing is, I'm too old to think of having kits now.”

“Nancy, you're not much over 25, physically.” Victoria pointed out. “Being immortal stopped your body's clock, so to speak. You're still healthy enough to bear a kit.”

“You know, you're right. Dad quit using that theatrical gray in his fur so he looks real young now. Too young to be my father anyway.” she offered up.

“Well, are you ready to go home?” Victoria asked.

“I am, Grandma.”

“Okay, let's take you home. I'm sure Trenton and the kits will be overjoyed to see you again.” she suggested, herding them towards the house.

The femme lynx looked at the phone that was ringing, wondering when the day would wind down. She had already been to four fatalities today, three vehicle accidents and a hiking fatality. She answered the phone, sounding somewhat irritated because the call was on an internal line.

“County Coroner's office, Allison Branch speaking,” she stated just to annoy the fur on the other end, tapping her pencil on the desktop to a tune on the radio.

“Hi, Allie. This is Hank over at the morgue. Um, did you do something with body 187?”

“No, I dropped that DB off what, a few hours ago? You're not playing games with me again, are you?” she stated, seeming to be peeved by the two male's games and endless practical jokes.

“No I'm not, Allie. By the way, what was the DB?” he asked.

“Oh, that's not funny!” she blurted out. “The vic was a . . . um . . . a burro. A femme burro. I think. Maybe not, um . . . Oh, she was a buckskin so maybe she was a cross? Oh, you just wait until I walk over there, Hank. I'll get even with you two for this practical joke!”

Trenton heard the doorbell ring again, trying his best to ignore it. He didn't feel like dealing with furs today but the furson at the door obviously wouldn't give up.

He stood, straightened his pajamas and with a big sigh, headed to the door. He was hoping it wasn't more of those Neo-Naturalists. Only an idiot would wipe their behind with old newsprint. Even the flyers they gave out were printed on rough, recycled paper.

He looked through the peephole, spying the Svensens standing on his front porch. Opening the door, he greeted them.

“Grandma, Grandpa, come in,” he offered, seeming very despondent at the moment.

“Good morning, Trenton,” Torvald offered up. That made the buffed Belgian/donkey mix give them a crooked smile in return.

“If you say so, Grandpa Torvald.” the shorter equine stated.

“Trenton, could we talk in the family room?” Victoria asked, remembering what Nancy wanted to do.

“Sure,” he replied, indicating the way. “You didn't have to come all the way down here,” he stated, actually wishing that he could have had no visitors today.

“No, we came down here because we've brought something for you that we're sure you'll want,” the tigress stated, trying her best not to smile. This would be a surprise.

Nancy had slipped into the house practically right behind her grandparents, using the hidden key on the porch to quietly let herself in. she crept down the hall, glad that her hubby had left her indoor leather slipper boots by the front door where she usually kept them.

She took up a hiding spot by the doorway from the kitchen to the family room where she could hear the conversation. Looking around, she realized just how much she missed her home. Her and her hubby had designed this house and they had watched it rise from the foundation to become their home.

While she listened to the Immortal Couple talk with her hubby, she heard a gasp behind her. Turning to see where the sound had come from, she spied Chelsea standing there, appearing totally gob-smacked to see her mother still alive.

Nancy quickly motioned to her daughter to be quiet, then gently hugged her to assure the young femme that her mother was indeed back from the grave. Nancy then quietly whispered to her to be silent so she could surprise Chelsea's father.

Victoria was talking, telling the story about what had transpired. She covered a few key points, finally getting around to the line that would signal Nancy's entrance.

“Well, I somehow managed to convince our boss that things needed to be corrected.” the tigress stated, clearing her throat as a signal. “he agreed that I was right, so he corrected a wrong. That meant Nancy could come home with me.” That was when Chelsea led her mother into the room, smiling and sobbing.

“NANCY?!?” Trenton blurted out, appearing totally stunned. He stood shakily, walking over to his mate and touching her just to make sure this was real. He tried to say something several times, finally having to shake his head to clear it enough to speak. “You were . . . I mean, Nancy, I . . . we . . . you . . . you were going to . . .”

That's when he finally fainted.