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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 05 – “Paging Doctor Howard, Doctor Fine, Doctor Howard . . .”

The hospital emergency burst into pandemonium once Torvald and Victoria had arrived via ambulance. Nurses were starting IV's and placing electrodes for the heart monitors in their room, carefully shaving quarter-sized spots in Victoria's coat to place the pads. This bothered the striped femme, since her fur had just grown out long enough to trim it up and even it out. During all of this, the tigress was beginning to get worried that a doctor unfamiliar with the situation would arrive and start performing unnecessary procedures on them. She was relieved when Doctor Peyton made his appearance, accompanied by Nurse Wood and Jenna, who was dressed like a doctor.

“Doctor Longbow, please take a look at the tigress' injuries while I tend to the stallion.” he ordered, wasting no time in making it appear like he really was checking over the huge equine. After looking over the heart monitor, he checked Tor's eyes, making sure to give the left one a little more scrutiny. “Close your right eye and tell me how well you can see.” he directed.

“Well, that eye is not as blurry as it was earlier,” the stallion offered up, looking across the room as a few signs that were posted.

“Good to hear that, Torvald.” Bruce commented. “We'll be taking you into surgery in a moment. Don't worry, the entire O.R. staff is with us. We'll clean this blood off of you, make your stitches visible and generally just make sure you're healing properly. Does that sound okay to you?”

“That's fine.” Tor replied. About that time, a lanky male ferret came into the room with a hypodermic in his paw. He smiled, then whispered into the stallion's ear;

“I'm with Longbow.” The male then stood up, and prepped Torvald for the injection. “This will relax you but it won't put you out. It will help to keep you comfy while we do what we need to do.” he explained. Once he was done with his task, a young gray mouse femme came into the room and assisted the ferret in wheeling Tor off to the operating room.

While Doc Peyton cared for Torvald, Jenna was examining Victoria. She carefully cut the tigress' clothing

away, then she did a cursory full body exam for other injuries before starting on the actual wounds.

“Victoria, how do you feel? Be honest with me, too.” the otteress asked.

“I'm feeling very rough right now, to be very honest with you.” she replied. “My wrists in particular are really hurting.”

“I thought so.” Jennifer commented. “I'll give you something to relax you just a bit and take the edge off, then we will use locals while we work on your injuries.”

“Thank you, Jenna.” the tigress put forth.

“No, don't thank me,” the otter retorted. “It's I that should be apologizing. I should have been quicker in coming to your rescue.”

Several male raccoons made their way into the room and began to work on her wrists first. The elder appearing one leaned over and whispered in the femme feline's ear;

“We're with Longbow.” He then stood and administered some medication through her IV. “I'm Ron Bunch and my partners are Terry and Mike, my younger brothers. We were all medics in the military but I have to be honest, this is just about the worst type of an injury to have to deal with.” he offered up.

Terry gave Victoria an injection just about mid-forearm and swabbed at the dried blood while it took effect. He eventually tapped her wrist, looking to see if she felt that or not.

“Can you feel that? Is your arm numb?” he inquired.

“No, I didn't feel that. My wrist is numb now, I guess.” she agreed.

“That's good. If you start feeling pain, let me know.” Terry, the middle brother then began to clean her wounds, making sure the injury site was well-cleaned and examined while Mike assisted.

Victoria was laying there in her gurney, wondering where this would all end up. Here she was, being cared for by Dark Agents and being somewhat bothered by the fact that there had been no assistance from 'On High'. She thought that maybe Denise would have shown up, at the very least. With all the other 'Agents' around her, maybe that wouldn't be such a good idea at the moment. She was eventually joined by Axel, who looked like a nervous wreck.

“Mom? Are you okay?” he asked.

“I'm doing okay, I guess. What I want to know is, how are your sisters and your brother holding up?”

“I think Dana is relieved that you and Dad are both still alive.” he offered up. “Gytha is on her way home from Conrad's house and Nancy is on her way here, too. Valerie is outside in the waiting room and she is being very impatient to see you after me.”

Victoria looked up at her son and asked what seemed to be an important question to her;

“Now, tell me truthfully, what kind of shape is my house in and what's that trailer doing in the driveway? Does that trailer belong to the Delancey family? And don't try to play it off, Son. I saw the blue tarps

covering the back of the house.”

Axel grimaced. He hoped his mom didn't explode when he told her what was up. “Well . . . I have to meet with a structural engineer in a little bit. The back of the house took a beating, Mom. The family room, the kitchen, the living room, your office and the master bath all have damaged walls. Almost all of the windows are broken out, the front doors are damaged and there is substantial water damage to the parquet flooring in the kitchen and dining area from a broken water pipe in the kitchen. The roof is sagging in a few areas and missing in a few others.”

“No fire?” she asked calmly.

“No, nothing caught on fire, Mom. Just a butt-load of damage.” Her calmness seemed to bother the young stallion.

“And the trailer?”

“It belongs to Brett's Grandma and Grandpa Hebert.” he admitted. “We thought it would make a good base of operations while the house was being repaired.”

“You thought we weren't coming back, didn't you?” Victoria had to know the truth.

“Well, Mom, there is a twenty foot-deep hole where the barn used to be. We searched out the property for any sign of you or Dad and once we came up empty-pawed, we just assumed that both of you were gone.”

“A twenty foot-deep hole?” That thought made the tigress' nose and lips turn pale.

“Twenty feet to the bottom, more or less. There's a big pillar in the center, right up to ground level. Must have been where you and Dad were standing.”

“I can't say that I knew we would survive the blast, Axel. It was Jenna that assisted in our escape. We owe her big-time for that, too.”

“Who's Jenna?” he asked.

“I'm Jenna,” the femme otter replied from behind the stallion. Once he had turned to face her, she introduced herself. “I'm Jennifer Longbow. You will eventually find it out so I'll just get it right out in the open; I'm a Dark Agent that wants out of the business. I'm hoping your Mom and Dad can help me with that.”

“A Dark Agent? You're kidding me.” Axel retorted. “Mom and Dad would never have any . . .”

“Axel?” the tigress said to her son, getting his attention. “We're going to be helping Agents to get out of the business and assist them in becoming mortal again. We have already agreed to help out Jenna and her associates.”

“Mom, are you sure about this?”

“Axel, we're very sure. This has to be done. No more unwilling Agents on either side.”

###

Nancy paced her office, waiting for Trenton to arrive and take her up to see about her Great-grandparents. She would have driven there by herself if she had not been so upset about the situation. If there was one thing she didn't want, it was to be just one more accident on the road. It was better to let her hubby drive her than to be distracted and have a wreck. Especially since she was no longer immortal.

She was happy that they had actually survived a direct attack on their lives but it still bothered her that they were not being left alone. She hoped that she would be left alone, too. An attack on her life would mean sure death.

The blond femme locked up her office, went downstairs and walked outside the front of the office building, impatient for her hubby to arrive. In an effort to stop her pacing, she lit up a cigarette. Nancy knew in her heart that she shouldn't take up this bad habit again but her nerves were jangled and she needed something to calm down with. Taking another puff, she was torn between crushing out her cancer stick or finishing it. In the end, her nerves won out and she finished her smoke. That was fortunate, since her hubby made his appearance at that moment, obviously driving a new Ford F-450 pickup that must have been borrowed from the dealership.

"Nancy, are you as upset as you look?" Trenton asked, waiting until his mate closed her door and buckled up before hitting the street.

"Trent, I'm really on edge." she admitted. "Axel told me they looked like war-zone casualties." Nancy added.

"Do you think that The Malefic Council might come after you?"

"I don't know, Hon. I just did that one mission with Dad, so I'm not sure if that was enough to end up on some fur's radar."

"Gah! All you did was follow what those blasted Angels told you that you had to do!"

"Now Trenton, don't get all worked up about it. I'll have Grandpa check for me, if he can."

The male Belgian/Mammoth Jack cross mule tried to keep his mind on driving but this information given to him by his loving wife disturbed him deeply. Nancy had confided in him the 'small' matter of her immortality before they were married. Because of that issue, they had been very conscious of practicing 'safe sex', ever since they became husband and wife. If there was one thing that they didn't want to do, that was to pass along her immortality to an offspring. Last night's discussion in bed concerning their having a foal of their own now had a decided dark cloud hanging over it.

"Trent, um, about that discussion we had last night," Nancy brought up, startling her hubby due to the nature of the content, "Um, maybe we should hold off on having a kit of our own."

"Nan, you must have been reading my mind." he retorted. "I was just thinking about that myself."

"Well, I think it would be wise for us to hold off, just for a bit."

"I agree, Nan. Maybe your Grandparents can find out where you stand in all of this."

“You know, I was thinking,” the femme equine put forth, “I’m not sure if they can check for me. I mean, they’re supposed to be inactive Agents. Maybe Dad can find out for me.”

“Um, I hadn’t thought about that. Maybe your father can find out exactly where you stand.”

“Yeah, I’ll call Dad after I see about my Grandparents.” Nancy offered up. “I know Mom will want to know about Grandma’s condition.”

The former Agent looked out the window at the scenery passing by, wondering how this would all end up. All she wanted was to be a wife and a mother. Was too much to ask for? The truck going through a deep pothole, jarring her, brought her musing back to the present.

“Um, Trent, why did you borrow this truck from the dealership, anyway?” she questioned. He did have a very nice, sporty vehicle provided to him by his employers.

“My Falcon GT is in the shop for scheduled servicing,” he offered up in reply. “They didn’t have a regular vehicle to lend me so they pulled this one from the rental department.”

“It rides kind of rough, Hon.” she commented as the truck was jarred quite severely by another deep pothole on the 805 North.

“Yeah, it does ride rough.” he agreed. “It’s higher in capacity than a one-ton truck. We could put your Plymouth Prowler in the bed and this thing would hardly notice it.”

Nancy thought for a moment before she commented. “You said you wanted a new truck. I hope it’s not one like this.”

“No, not this heavy of a truck.” he assured her. “I would like to have an F-250 Crew Cab. They ride substantially smoother than this and they have the smaller 6.7 litre Cummins inline six diesel. That one gets almost thirty miles to the gallon of bio-diesel. This one has the 8.3 litre Cummins inline six and I’m fairly sure that it only gets eighteen miles to the gallon.”

###

Kenji looked at the wallet in his paw, shaking his head. Rumjal had really set him up good in this banishment, making sure that he would survive to meet The Angelbreaker. The felid had first discovered the wallet was an endless source of twenty dollar bills, the billfold filling back up to the sum of five-hundred dollars just as fast as he could empty it. Throwing it away did no good, either, since it would just reappear in his back pocket in a few moments. Even the key to the motel room in his front pocket would reappear if he disposed of it or gave it away. He was meant to stay right here, patiently waiting to be found and destroyed.

The cheap little compact car that he had attempted to purchase and drive away to safety in wouldn’t start for him so that means of escape was not an option. The bus lines and the airlines for some reason wouldn’t book passage for him either. This sucked big time. Punished for doing what he thought was a proper thing to do for The Malefic Council.

While he stood in line at a fast food joint, he pondered about how long it would take for Aslaug to find him. Most likely it wouldn’t be right away, since he couldn’t detect her presence nearby. Kenji even thought that it might be less painful to go offer himself up to Torvald and Victoria. At least they wouldn’t try to do

a 'Blood Eagle' on him. Well, maybe the tigress wouldn't. He didn't know if the stallion would or not.

The feline wasn't hungry but he couldn't ignore the fact that he most likely wouldn't die from starvation if he tried that avenue. Kenji knew he would just get to a point that he would have to eat something to quiet his growling stomach. Even that little run-in with a transit bus earlier was a failure; he had just 'passed through' the bus, coming out the other end without so much as a scratch on himself. Sitting down with his lunch of burritos and a soda, he shook his head. Maybe he would see about approaching the Svensens. That seemed like the most logical thing to do. It would probably be less painful, too.

Thinking back to his days before he was 'recruited', he remembered the waning days of World War Two. His family had taken refuge in the mountains above their home in Obihiro on Hokkaido, the large northern island of Japan. Kenji remembered how his father and uncles did not buy into what they deemed to be the insane rantings of Emperor Hirohito. His uncle Hikaru had openly stated that Hirohito would be the downfall of the Japanese Empire. He remembered keeping a close eye on the Americans that were looking for military deserters, doing this chore by his father's orders, carrying his first wakizashi given to him by his elder. Kenji felt out of place, a woodworker trying to be a warrior.

After the occupation of Japan was over with, his family tried to return to their business but by that point in time, their good family name was ruined. That was when a fur approached him, looking for someone to 'take a job'. The money was good so the feline accepted the offer. The jobs kept coming, each a little more intricate and malicious than the last, until he was finally asked to murder a high-ranking official that was said to be corrupt.

Kenji remembered turning the job down, then changing his mind when his boss, a canid of indeterminate origin, offered up a King's ransom. His family needed the money so he took the job.

His new employer, one Artemis Blair, gave him a katana and a tanto to do the deed with, telling Kenji that they wouldn't be detected. The leopard went forth as he had been directed, showing some 'credentials' to enter the private home of the soon to be deceased. He strolled into the office of the official and calmly split him from shoulder to groin, the katana exhibiting a supernatural sharpness in its duty. It was when he went to leave that things went sideways.

The guards on the premises chased him out into the garden, then into the woods beyond. The bad part was the fact that they were armed with automatic weapons. Despite the fact that Kenji was quick on his feet, the guards had shot him up to the point that he fell down in a heap on the forest floor.

The feline laid there, waiting a very long time for the guards to arrive and finish their work, wondering just what had happened to them. Surely they should have found him by now. He then heard one singular fur walking towards him, slow and steady.

“Kenji? Can you hear me?” Artemis asked, kneeling by the stricken feline.

“I . . . I can hear you.” The leopard swallowed hard, then spoke again. “I'm . . . I'm dying.”

“I can save you, Kenji, but you have to agree to do my bidding, when I ask it of you.”

“I . . . I don't . . . want to die.”

“You don't have to die, my friend. Tell me that you agree to do my bidding.”

"I . . . I feel like I'm making a mistake." Kenji whispered. "I'll do your bidding."

Mr. Blair put a paw on the feline's shoulder and Kenji felt a sudden surge of warmth go through him. Feeling better now, he sat up. The sight before him, however sickened him. Seven trained guards, more like paid assassins, were piled up, completely dismembered.

"Kenji, how do you feel now?" Artemis asked while he helped his new employee to his feet.

"I am alive, Mr. Blair. I am thankful for your kindness." the leopard started to bow to his benefactor, as a sign of respect but the canid stopped him.

"Well, don't thank me now, Kenji. I was just doing my job, my friend. You may hate later for what I have made you into."

The feline returned home with his payment in paw but he now felt hollow inside. He suddenly realized that he had actually done a heinous crime, a murder for money. Blood money. Tainted. Something he had sworn he would never do.

Once he had arrived back at his home, Kenji took his wakizashi from its display and knelt down with it in paw. He prepared himself, clearing his mind. Placing the tip of the blade against his abdomen, he asked his ancestors for forgiveness.

He felt the blade slice through his body, a hot, burning sensation but something was wrong; he was still kneeling, still breathing. The leopard felt behind himself, assuring his mind that the blade was indeed completely through his body. While he pondered this strange turn of events, he was joined by Artemis.

"You cannot succeed in that endeavor," the canid pointed out. "You are an immortal. An immortal that cannot take his own life."

Mr. Blair carefully removed the blade from Kenji's body, wiped it clean on a rag that had appeared from nowhere and placed it back on the stand. He then turned to the feline and made this statement;

"You cannot die by a mortal's paws or your own, my friend. You may die only if The Malefic Council so desires. Even then, it must be at the paws of an Agent Of Light."

###

Doctor Peyton removed the ventilator tube from Torvald's mouth and then he carefully removed the gauze pads that were taped over his eyes. Making sure that it all looked legitimate, he tapped the stallion on the cheek gently.

"Tor, you can wake up now. We're finished with what we needed to do for you," the moose offered up.

"Um, did I fall asleep?" the equine asked, blinking his eyes a bit to clear them.

"You did fall asleep, but how you could do that while we were working on you, I'll never know."

"I was tired?" Torvald offered up.

"I suppose so." the doctor replied. "So, how do you feel? Do I need to give you something for the pain?"

“I'm hurting pretty badly,” the stallion replied, flexing the fingers on his left paw. “It's kind of stupid to ask, but could you look at my left paw? It's really smarting right now.”

“You're bruised pretty badly across the back of your paw.” Dr. Peyton stated. “I can put it in a soft cast to hold it still for a few days.”

Torvald was watching the doctor do his work, wondering how this would all end. He had been injured quite seriously but he wasn't sure the medic had told the whole story.

“Doctor Peyton, be honest with me. What kind of shape was I in when Jenna rescued us?”

The moose looked up from his work and replied, “Torvald, let's just say you had at best, just a few moments of life left when I started treating you. I really believe that you had bled out completely since you stopped bleeding from your open wounds not long after I started working on you. In fact, I started an IV of whole blood and it took a bit for it to start flowing into you. Your body just soaked up a number of pints of blood, far more than any fur that I've ever treated.”

“That sounds like I was already gone.”

“I think it was a possibility that you were.” the huge cervine agreed. “Like I had stated before; you immortals just boggle my mind that you can survive like you do.”

“Listen, I noticed Jenna was still bleeding from her wounds earlier. Is there anything you can do for her?”

“I've done my best, stallion.” Bruce replied. “It's that spell that Kenji put on the metal in those bombs. It's keeping her from healing, for some reason. The same reason you're healing so slowly.”

The injured equine gave thought to this information given him. If the doctor was right, they had come within a one of cashing it all in. At this point in time, he wasn't that worried for his mate's condition or his own. What he was worried about was the rest of his family. Torvald was concerned with the Council sending Agents to take out his mortal descendants. With the Collection Of Evil, nothing was 'off limits' in their mission to achieve a goal.

###

The young stallion was walking through his parent's home with Donald Lake the engineer, a gray-haired beaver that had been sent out by the insurance company. A crew had put up some bracing in the house earlier, making it safe for them to roam through the house at the moment to make an assessment of the damage.

“Mr, Svensen, I don't think the house is too bad of a shape,” the beaver stated. “You see here; this wall could be pushed back upright and the rafters re-secured. Right now, the ceiling joists are resting on the header plate.” he pointed out. After a few moments of studying his notes, the engineer looked up from his notepad. “I'll recommend that we repair the home instead of tearing it down. That would much faster and more economical.”

“Is it alright with you if I have my family help remove the furniture and belongings from the damaged rooms?” Axel asked.

“I don't see why not.” Mr. Lake replied. “You really should clear all of the rooms so nothing gets damaged or stolen. The carpenters will have a crew clear away any debris left behind before they start work.”

“Thank you, Sir.” the young stallion bid. “I'll have a couple of moving pods brought up this afternoon.”

The young stallion followed the engineer back out of the house, sitting down on the front steps to watch the beaver drive away. Giving thought to it, he wondered just how this would all end up. He knew that his mother and father would survive this little action by the Council but would the evil ones leave them alone now? Not likely, in his estimation.

Axel knew he had his job cut out for him. Calling his siblings, he arranged for them to assist him in emptying the house so reconstruction could start. He made one more call to secure the pods needed, then he got back into his car, his destination being the shop. He needed to spell his wife so she could take care of a few things herself.

###

Torvald looked over at the bed next to his, noting that his mate was napping at the moment. She had knee-high soft casts on her legs and a new set of black fiberglass casts on her arms, from fingers up to her armpits. He could see through the gaps in her casts that her wounds had been bandaged up for her and they didn't seem to be bleeding, either. That was a good sign. While the huge equine was watching his mate sleep, Victoria turned her head towards him, opened her eyes slowly and smiled.

“Good to see you're out of surgery,” she commented, trying in vain once again to get her arms comfortable.

“Yeah, I fell asleep while they were working on me. Imagine that?” he admitted.

“Tor, you could sleep through a nuclear blast.” That made the huge stallion smile.

“You're right, I probably could.” he agreed. “So, how are you doing?”

“I'm in a lot of pain,” the tigress offered up. “I've been immortal for so long that I have honestly forgotten just how bad a serious injury could hurt.”

“I'll agree with that.” her hubby retorted. “I'm in a big world of hurt, too.” After giving thought to the matter for a moment, he brought up an important matter. “So, where are we going to stay until our house is repaired?”

“Axel suggested that we could stay in the Hebert's fifth-wheel coach. He did mention that it was designed to be handicapped-accessible for Mrs. Hebert.”

“That sounds like it would work out.” Tor mused. “Would you be fine with that?” he asked.

“If it means we're not laying around in the hospital, yeah, I'm fine with that. Let's see what Doctor Peyton thinks about that idea.” Victoria put forth.

###

Willi Marie looked around the interrogation room again, wondering if the Malefic Council had a paw in this. Lieutenant LaCourt had promised to keep her in the background of his investigation but it was apparent that her name had been red-flagged at some point in time. Not caring if any fur was watching her at the moment, she made another Diet Dr Pepper® appear, along with a bag of Sun Chips®, Original flavor.

This was becoming very tedious for her. Willi knew if she wanted to, she could just 'pop out' of here and go home where she could be comfortable. Giving thought to that idea, she stood and converted the hard, unpadded chair into a high-end leather covered wing-back office chair, complete with heat and massage. Now that was more like it. That also seemed to get the attention of the fur behind the mirror.

Opening the soda, she sipped it before she set the massage on low. That was good. Tearing the bag of chips open, she made a paper plate and a napkin appear on the table. No need to wipe her paws on her jeans when a napkin could be had.

Musing about the situation, It had all started when Agent Reed had come to pick her up and he had been very apologetic about it. He didn't cuff her or make her ride in the back seat of his car, either. Maybe that was out of respect for her powers. At any rate, he didn't argue for even a moment when Willi suggested that they stop and get some coffee at the local Tully's Coffee® that was on the way.

When they had arrived, she had been frisked again by what must have been departmental goons, brought to this room and cuffed to the table before she was left alone. As soon as the furs had left the room, she removed the paw-cuff by making it disappear. That was some eight hours ago.

Willi's cell phone began to ring so she removed it from her pocket and answered the call, noting it was her hubby on the other end.

“Hi Sweetheart.” she stated, getting the phone into a comfortable position to talk.

“Willi, are you okay?” Richard asked.

“Yeah, I'm fine but I must be on some fur's radar. I think they're trying to figure out a way to detain me.”

“They might have to let you go, Hon. I just spoke with Torvald a few moments ago. He and Victoria are over in Mission Regional Medical Center and he said I should call you and let you know that.”

“Oh, thank the gods that some fur did save them!” she blurted out. “How are they? Did he say?”

“He said they're both in pretty rough shape but the doctor in charge thinks they will both be fine, given time to recover.”

“Gah, I tried to do my best for them,” she offered up. That was about the time the 'goons' showed up, demanding her phone.

“Lady, gimme yer phone, now,” the burly black canid requested, giving her a stare that would have intimidated lesser furs.

“You just hold on!” Willi replied tersely. “This is my phone, buster and I'm having an important conversation with my husband!” she shot back.

“No, you listen here . . .” The lead canid was making a move towards her but he suddenly found himself frozen in his tracks. “What the?!?”

“You had better shut up before I freeze you solid, buster!” she warned. The two other canids left the room while they could, choosing preservation over duty. “I’m sorry Richard, I had a smart-mouth here wanting to cut our conversation short.”

“Wilhelmine! Are you here?” a deep male voice called out. A moment later, a huge rhino burst into the room, weapon drawn. “Are you Wilhelmine Delancey?” he asked.

“That’s me. Um, who are you?” Willi asked. “Um, Richard, I’ll call you back.” she told her hubby before closing her phone.

“I’m Special Agent Randall Trask of The Consortium’s Internal Security division.” the huge fur offered up. “We’re getting you out of here, right now.”

That information seemed to bother her for some reason. “This isn’t illegal, is it?”

“No, it’s not,” Randy replied, putting his firearm away. “I just get a bit jumpy around some of the goons that the FBI hires,” he related, indicating the motionless 'hired thug' on the floor. “I think he was a former Blackwater employee.”

“Randy? I know you’re down here!” another male voice shouted. “Come on, I don’t have all day!”

“It’s okay, Willi, it’s just another of our operatives.” the rhino pointed out. “Bob, we’re in 322.” he shouted down the hall. Momentarily, they were joined by a hedgehog, Agent Bob Bowen.

“You know, I think you need remedial training on operative recovery procedures.” the elder agent commented.

“Hey, I didn’t bust up the place, now did I?” Randy retorted.

“No, you didn’t.” Bob agreed. “Willi, here’s your things back, all accounted for. I personally took the red flag off of your file so you won’t be bothered like this again.”

“Thank you, Agent Bowen.”

“Call me Bob, please? We all work for the same group.”

“Okay, Bob. Um, I really need to go see about my aunt and uncle.”

“No problemo,” Randy said with a slight 'Terminator' accent. “I brought a ground transport device with me. The best thing is to close your eyes . . .” Agent Trask looked around them to see that they were in the parking lot of Mission Regional Medical Center.

“Forgot I could do that?” Willi asked, smiling ever so slightly at his momentary confusion.

“Um, yes I did.” the rhino agreed. “Well, let’s go see about your adopted relatives.”