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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 22 – “The Covenant Of The Thirteen”

Willi Marie pushed open the door to Kashnikov Firearms in downtown Irvine with her hoof, at the same time trying to juggle a cardboard box carrying a not-quite-legally obtained payload. She stepped through the portal, got the box back under control and headed for the counter.

“Good morning!” Dana offered up from behind the counter, taking the box from the mare. “So, this is it?” she asked, pulling a smaller box from the container.

The tigress mix opened the unmarked box of bullets and removed one, giving it some scrutiny. The tip was a dull gray, somewhat of a spire-point shape with a copper driving band. Nothing out of the ordinary for her.

“Those were a real pain in the posterior to obtain,” Willi offered up, taking a projectile and examining it herself. “Ablative tip armor-piercing bullets in point three-one-zero inch diameter. When fired, the ablative coating over the core goes white-hot on impact, melting the impact zone enough to allow the penetrator core to go on through. Even ceramic armor can't stop this stuff. That's why it's illegal on more than a few planets.”

“This is going to be functional in AK chambering?” the femme feline mix asked.

“All we need is about two thousand feet per second velocity.” Wilhelmine stated.

“Hello Willi!” Brett offered up as he came out of the back and joined the femmes. “So, that's your special request?” he asked, pointing at the box.

“These are the bullets I told you about, all eight thousand, eight hundred of them.” she agreed. “They weigh one hundred and fifty three grains. I hope that's not an issue.”

“As long as you're not using any really long-barreled rifles, I don't see an issue.” the tiger replied. “I have three Dillon presses set up to run these for you. I've also tested all of the rifles that you *will* disavow where in Hades that they came from. You're picking up one RPK machine gun, that I will give to you in pieces for obvious reasons, one AKS-74U 'Suchka', five Romanian AK underfolders and six Glock 19 pistols. I also have a shit-load of forty round Molot-manufacture magazines that are broke down into 'rebuild kits' with some bandoleers, every one I could find on such short notice. Put the magazines together at your own risk of being arrested for post-ban hi-capacity magazines.”

“Gah, I hate these stupid California gun laws.” the femme equine mused. “Anything that we need to know special?”

“Yeah.” Brett replied. “I pressed the barrel out of the RPK but I marked the headspace with some tape. Just press it back in or tap it in with a soft-faced mallet on the marks, drive the barrel pin back in and you're good to go.”

“I've done that before.” Willi offered up.

“Oh. One more thing.” the armorer put forth. “Your special request, a nineteen inch barreled Super Vepr precision rifle in the same chambering.” He took it off the shelf and gave it to her to examine. “It has a magazine lock installed but I'll give you the tools to remove that little piece of annoyance.”

“This will take an AK magazine, right?” she asked while she checked it over, dry-firing it a few times.

“Sure, Willi. I modded it myself. All of the long-arms will take the same magazines. I also put fresh batteries in all of the laser sights.”

“Thanks, Brett.” the mare said with a smile. “What are the damages?”

“Canton gave me his credit card number.” was the reply. “Tell him it came to a really ridiculous amount so I only charged him eight thousand even.”

Wilhelmine was shocked. “Brett, you have to make a profit!” she blurted out.

“Not this time.” he put forth. “This is to take care of a family annoyance that threatens every last member. Just bring back a decent-sized piece of Zagam's hide for me and in return I'll call it even.”

“I don't know what to say . . .” Willi was stunned by that generous offer.

“The balance owed on the rifles is on the house.” Dana put forth. “Believe me, if I didn't have Sabrina, I would come with you.”

“Thank you.” the mare finally offered after she pulled her thoughts together.

“I'll have the ammunition for you this evening.” Brett put forth. “Your Grandfather asked me to bring the cartridges up to his house.”

“Thanks again, Brett.” Willi replied. “I don't know what we would have done without you.” She stopped for a minute and gave something Brett had said some thought. “Tell me, what does 'Suchka' mean in Russian? Or do I really want to know?”

The tiger smiled as he replied, "It means *'Little Bitch'*. When you see it, the name will make sense."

###

Dana watched the palomino mare drive off toward her grandfather's home, letting out a big sigh as the Subaru went out of sight down the street. She turned to go about the morning chores of dusting the weapons on display, only to face her hubby who was giving her a very serious look.

"You would go with them, wouldn't you?" he questioned. "I just got my femme feline back in her normal form and now she wants to skip out on me to go demon hunting?"

Dana frowned at his serious demeanor. "Well, wouldn't you like to go demon hunting?" she retorted.

"I'm not sure." Brett replied. "I think one tour of Iraq was enough for me." he put forth. "It was hell. You never knew when the next incoming mortar had your name on it. Just driving down the street was an exercise in panic control. IED's were everywhere and they didn't care who you were, the insurgents would make every effort to send you home feet-first."

The tiger put his key in the cash register and turned it on for the day before he continued with his thoughts.

"I still remember the last few days that I was there. We were about two clicks East of Habbaniyah, which is West of Fallujah, escorting this load of food and medical supplies for the Iraqi civilians. The lead M966 Humvee spots this Corolla coming down the road at us, swerving around like a drunk. He stops kinda crooked in the road so we all stop and prepare for the worst. He fires a rifle at us so we fire a few fifty-cal rounds on him and the Iraqi blows up like he's packed to the gills with Semtex. Shook my M1046 Humvee like a good old fashioned California earthquake."

The feline took a sip of his morning coffee, then continued. "We get to Habbaniyah and meet up with a recon unit that was asked to find us a safe location to off-load. They had found this warehouse that was not too shot up so we start to unload our cargo.

"We're just about done when this little femme wolf Iraqi runs up to our Squad Leader, whips out a grenade and pulls the pin on it. Sergeant Eric Robbins grabs her paws, keeping her from letting go, so she chomps down on his left wrist to get him to let go of her. He's trying his best to shake her off while maintaining control of that grenade so she starts kicking him in the shins.

"Sarge starts hollering at us to cap the little bitch, but she's just a . . . just a little kit, you know. I froze for an instant. I had her in my sights, but I was just froze to the spot. Drexel to my left caps the femme and sarge has the grenade in his paws now. He pitches it away but then he's pinned by at least a dozen rounds from across the street, high, and drops to the ground, screaming. After the dust cleared, I see that Drexel is slumped over a crate with most of his face missing."

Brett sat down on a stool with tears forming in his eyes. "The femme wolf had another grenade that she's trying to use. She's so shot up, I could see that she had no strength left to get the pin out. I'm just amazed that she's even alive but then she twitches a bunch of times and she's dead after Emilio Gonzales hammers her with his Squad Automatic Weapon. Emilio then falls down from the shrapnel after an RPG hits our Humvee, totaling it. He's trying to hold his guts in but he's dead before I can reach him. Sarge is still screaming and we're pinned down in this warehouse which was coming apart at the seams from enemy

fire.

“We called in air support, giving them our coordinates. They're twenty clicks out at best so it's hunker down now. I get lucky with my grenade launcher and put one through the window of the office building across from us, the main fire that was coming down on our heads. The grenade blows and three or four insurgents come out through the plate glass next to the window I shot through. Sarge Robbins finally stops screaming. I look, he's not breathing. Still can't get to him because we're pinned down.

“I'm sure I'm not coming home when my *Piece Of Shit* M4 jams solid on me, just as it had for weeks before that. I was wishing that I had picked up an AK of some kind along the way. At least it would still run under those shitty conditions. Private First Class Glen Keesee is over by the door, trying to stop a car coming down the street but a grenade rolls up to him, making him spatter all over us. I think I threw up at that point.

“I get my bolt freed up and start firing at this bastard on the roof across from us. I sat patiently until he popped up to fire. I still wonder just how long it took him to fall all three stories. Then the building across from us just vaporizes from a Warthog finally making an appearance with an AGM-65 missile. It wasn't until then that I finally realized that I had taken this one in the shoulder.” He tapped his right shoulder for emphasis.

“Brett? Are you okay?” Dana asked, since he was shivering with tears streaming out of his eyes but he wasn't crying.

“No, I uh . . .” He turned away from his wife. “I, uh, I'm okay.” he replied in a small voice. “It . . . I've needed to tell that story and get it off my chest.” he finally admitted. “When the dust settled, Sarge Robbins, Gonzales, Drexel and Keesee were all dead. I guess what pissed me off was the insinuation by our government that I was a hero that day.”

“Brett?”

“I wasn't the hero that day, Dana. Let me tell you who was the hero that day. Robbins, Gonzales, Drexel and Keesee, they were the heroes that day. They gave their lives in the line of duty. There is no greater sacrifice . . .” The tiger finally broke down in tears, sobbing openly, unable to finish his thoughts.

Dana wrapped her arms around her hubby tightly. “It's all right now . . .” Brett interrupted her train of thought.

“It will never be all right, as long as there's a Darkness spurring the wars ahead.” he stated firmly. “Yeah, I will go demon hunting, if it means you and Sabrina are safe from harm. Yeah, I will do it. I will do it for you, for our kit, for your family and mine, and for my lost friends.”

###

Zagam sat at his desk, looking over the various reports concerning the Svensens. He was pleased with the progress of causing mayhem for the Agents Of Light and their families, all meant to either turn them to the Darkness or eliminate them. What he really hoped for was a successful flip, gaining a pair of powerful Agents on his team.

Torvald, Victoria, Wilhelmine and her husband Richard were now out of the way for the moment, stuck in a time and space that would prevent them from returning. The tigress, he suspected might return

somehow, only to have to make some hard choices about her allegiances.

He would then make an offer to the femme feline, that he would return them to their rightful reality and time, in exchange for their loyalty. That might gain him a sorceress in the bargain if he were successful. If not, he would probably turn the tigress by brainwashing her mind, making her a juggernaut for his cause. Zagam wondered if she could be forced to try to take out Lucifer himself. Victoria is a very powerful femme, he knew, so powerful that she has no idea what she is truly capable of. The bovine was fairly sure, properly goaded, the tigress could become a one-femme wrecking crew to be turned loose on the Malefic Council.

While he gloated and organized his documents, he was interrupted by an assistant.

“Zagam, I have some bad news.” the small terrier offered up.

“Okay, what is it? Don't leave me hanging.” the demon retorted.

“Uh, the tigress, her husband, that sorceress and her mate are all back in their correct reality and time-frame.”

The bovine looked up to regard his hired help. “Heh, now that's funny. Good joke.” the ebony bull put forth.

“Not joking.” the small canid shot back. “Something's wrong 'cause they're back like they had never left and Eldon's dead as a door nail.”

“Eldon is dead?” Zagam repeated. “No, no fur can kill a dragon . . .” His assistant interrupted him.

“Ever heard of a Dragon Slayer arrow?” the assistant put forth, tossing the remains of the one that killed the drac on his boss' desk. “It will punch right through heavy armor like, you know, dragon scales.”

The demon nodded. “Okay, let's put a little more pressure on the tigress and her stallion. Have a crew go to her son-in-law Brett's home and kill him. That should put some pressure on them. Be sure to leave a message that they need to meet with me before I kill more of their family.”

“Will do, boss.” the canid agreed.

“You're in charge of the crew. Don't fuck up.”

“Yes, Sir.”

The terrier left the room, allowing the demon to return to the business of procuring the Svensens for his Agents. If he had them on his side, he would be able to dictate what happens on the Malefic Council. Nodding in agreement with the thought that he was on the right track, Zagam leaned back in his chair and lit up a Cuban cigar. This would be a triumphant victory for him.

The demon thought about the recent work he had asked Jenna to do for him. She had apologized for not killing the tigress' son, but maybe that was fine, since Conrad wouldn't play that game called football for a long while. He knew about the deception with the golems, so why allow things to be easy on the tiger and his mountain lioness mate? Maybe a little meddling of his own would place a little more discomfort on the tigress and her stallion.

###

Victoria was guiding her clients through a tract home in the Northwood area of Irvine, pointing out the amenities that were offered. She was not on her game this day, having been out of the business of selling real estate for some time now. She just hoped that her clients would be understanding.

“Well, you've seen the whole upstairs so what we have down stairs is a large living room, a formal dining room, a large country kitchen with a walk-in pantry and a laundry room.” she offered up. “Around the corner, here is a home office.”

“Was that added on?” the male saluki asked.

“Yes, Mr. Siddiq. The owners added that just last year.” the tigress replied.

“So, where did they find the room?” Mrs. Siddiq questioned.

“If you would follow me,” Victoria began, “I'll show you.” she stepped into the garage, which was three car bays wide. “The third vehicle bay is normally twelve feet deeper. They took that extra footage and created the office. It has its own side door so clients can enter the office without going through the home.”

“It's kind of warm in here.” the femme saluki commented as she unzipped her jacket.

“I don't think any of these homes have insulation on the outside walls in the garage.” the striped femme offered up while she unbuttoned her red realtor's jacket to be more comfortable. Her clients immediately noticed that she was packing heat.

Bob Siddiq spoke up out of concern. “Mrs Svensen, are those loaded?” he asked.

“Now don't panic.” Victoria replied calmly. “I'm sorry if this bothers you. If you want me to, I'll go put them in my van.”

“It's not that.” Debra Siddiq retorted. “It's just . . . it's just that both of us did not grow up around firearms. Too many of our family lost their lives to the unrest in the Gaza strip. When our parents came here, they shunned firearms of any kind. Bob and I have not spent any time around them, to tell you the truth. Neither one of us have ever touched one.”

Victoria felt embarrassed about the situation. “Well, I wasn't big on firearms until I married my second husband. He's a retired police officer, in case you're wondering. Because of that, I have a concealed Carry Weapons permit issued to me.”

“There is such a thing?” Bob asked.

“Yes, there is,” the tigress replied, showing them her permit which was tucked into its holder on her shoulder holster.

“I deal in rare coins so I'm worried that the police will not be able to protect me.” the male offered up.

“I hate to tell you this but the reality of the situation is the fact that the police are not here to protect any fur. They are only here to enforce the law. Even my husband will tell you that.” Victoria pointed out.

“That is not right.” the femme canid offered up.

“I will agree with you.” Victoria chimed in. “It's just the way our country is. It truly depresses me to think this is the best we can do.”

The male spoke up hesitantly. “How would one get training and a permit?” he asked.

“My son-in-law Brett runs weekday and weekend training courses in both paw-guns and rifles.” the tigress put forth. “I can give you his number, if you're interested.”

“If you would, please?” Bob replied. “I have to tell you, I feel very uncomfortable carrying large amounts of cash or coins.”

Victoria took out one of her business cards and scribbled Brett's number on the back. She gave it to Mr Siddiq and then she put her pen away. She started to say something about the home having side yard access when the male canid interrupted her.

“Excuse me, maybe you shouldn't put that pen away just yet.” he suggested.

“Um, okay. Why is that, Mr. Siddiq?” Victoria countered.

“Because we would like to place an offer on the home.” Mrs. Siddiq replied with a warm smile.

“Well, that's what I like to hear!” the tigress said cheerily. “Let's go back into the kitchen and write up an offer!”

While they prepared a very generous offer on the property, the femme feline kept thinking about her twin sister. She hoped that Virginia would be able to find herself and make herself a place in this world. It didn't sit well that her sister had stated that she might want to go back to Halstlund. Sir Varn Kerlew would be waiting for her but that meant that Theresa wouldn't marry the human male. That wouldn't fair to the femme canid sorceress.

Even though things seemed to be coming around, the situation was still in turmoil. Hopefully, this pending confrontation with Zagam will settle things back to normal. All the tigress wanted was a little bit of sanity in her life. Was that too much to ask for?

###

Wilhelmine sat at the work table with her Grandfather and her Grand-uncle Troy, assembling the magazines that she had picked up earlier. As she watched him, she wondered just how much she was like him. They were both quiet except when provoked. The two of them were good tacticians when it came to planning this war. There was something that bothered her, though. It was something Mr. Latrans had said to her adoptive family about a year ago. She decided to share this with her newly-discovered family to get their viewpoint.

“Grandpa, could I ask you a question?” the sorceress put forth.

“Go ahead.” he replied, smiling at her. It was clear that he cared for his descendant.

“Um, the Svensens were told by a friend, that if we went to the underworld and stirred up the pot, we would be starting the real war. The one that might end things.”

“I don't think so.” the dapple gray male replied. “No, allowing it to escalate to a world-ending war would not be in the Malefic Council's best interests. The Council needs souls to carry out their deeds. End it all and they have no new blood. See my point?”

“I think so.” she agreed. “So, how do we destroy this Zagam? Is it even possible to destroy a demon?”

“A Coven.” Tank put forth. “We convene a Coven Of Thirteen.”

“Okay, I'm lost now.” Willi put forth. “This sounds like something out of the Salem witch hunts.”

“It is.” her grandfather offered up in a matter-of-fact tone.

“No, you're both pulling my leg now.” the femme sorceress stated.

Troy Long Hill smiled at his family member. “You forget, we were both schooled at The Academy. This is just textbook stuff that comes from practices carried out a long time ago. We form a Coven Of Thirteen. We have to have a Governor to preside, and twelve members that are adepts or better. That would be class four or higher. We each pledge allegiance to the Covenant and pool our power willingly. The Governor will then direct the cumulative power to the one designated as the Conduit. The Conduit then does the bidding of the Coven.”

“Is that all?” she questioned, still somewhat confused.

“Well, we do draw a Pentagram on the floor, a circle within that, then we cut our paws to anoint the inner circle with our life source.” Canton added. “And there are the blue robes for the males and maroon robes for the femmes.”

While they were discussing the finer points of a coven, the door to the workshop opened and in stepped a dapple gray male equine that while he resembled Canton and Troy, he dwarfed them both. He had to be nearly eight and a half feet tall and well over five hundred pounds, all up. He walked straight over to Wilhelmine and picked her up in a gentle bear hug, kissing her on the cheek before he spoke up.

“You look just like I pictured you would in my mind.” he stated in a deep baritone voice. “I'm Canton and Troy's older brother, Montgomery Bartell Hill, at your service.” He then sat her back on her hooves.

“Wow!” was all the femme equine could say. After a moment to get her composure back, she made a statement; “I'm glad you're on our side.” For some reason, he seemed familiar to her, then the connection was made. “You played 'The Hulk' in the television series! You're Monty Bartell, actor and bodybuilder!”

“I was sure they would never figure out how to dye my coat green without leaving it stained afterward.” he commented. “So, I understand we're going demon hunting. I brought along my war-axe and my broadsword, just in case you didn't have traditional weapons big enough for me.”

“We're doing it with modern weapons, Monty.” Troy put forth. “Actually, we have Alexi Saiga as our point-fur. I think you might remember him. We bailed his butt out of an Andorean jail just for this little job.”

“Oh, is that why Amber is out shopping for a few items?” the tall one asked. “Julianna was at the house, packing our backup gear into some backpacks so that's how I knew where to find all of you.”

“Yeah, Amber and Alexi are out, attempting to round up some CBRN-rated gas masks for us.” Canton admitted. “You never know what we might run into in the underworld.”

“Oh . . . Shit . . .” Monty said reverently. “We're going to the heart of the problem, eh?”

“You might say that.” Troy chimed in. “Seems the word on the street says the bovine won't step cloven hoof outside his little enclave. It's not fenced in or anything like that but it is guarded to a degree. We will have to kill to get in and out with his sorry ass.”

“We're bringing him back?”

“We are.” Willi put forth. “I was being briefed in the workings of a Coven of Thirteen when you showed up.” That information seemed to bother the tall equine.

“So, who's the Conduit?” Monty asked with a bit of trepidation.

“You are, my brother.” Canton put on the table. “Biggest, strongest and with the most experience. Just the fur for the job, if you ask me.”

“I was afraid you were going to say that.” he mused. “And who's going to bring me back to life if the demon manages to focus his force on me in his last seconds of life?”

“I guess I will.” Willi Marie put forth.

“You have experience with restoration of the body and soul?” the huge stallion asked.

“I restored life to a femme that was dead and growing cold.” the femme sorceress replied. “She still lives to this day, which proves it was not just a temporary reanimation.”

“Okay, good enough for me.” the elder Hill said firmly. “I won't be in pieces, it's just that the concussion from being hit by the focused Dark Energy will most likely stop my heart and disrupt any higher brain functions for a few minutes. Kind of like how positive and negative energy, if they are both equal, null one another out. Keep in mind that you might have to do CPR on me for a little bit.”

“I think things will be just fine,” Canton put forth. He then looked at his older sibling. “Well, did you bring 'Betty' with you?”

“Who is this Betty?” Willi asked.

Monty smiled. “Betty is my bolt action battle rifle. She's chambered for point nine-fifty JDJ.”

“Wha . . . ???” Wilhelmine was stunned by that 'little' piece of information.

Canton spoke up. “Wilhelmine, meet the only fur ever known to fire that caliber from the shoulder and remain standing to talk about it.”

Montgomery pointed a finger at his brother. “Let's qualify that. I was still standing, barely, but I had a

dislocated shoulder and two broken ribs. For the record, that rifle has the knockdown power of a World War One Renault FT tank.”

###

The German Shepard femme staggered as she completed her spell, grabbing at the edge of the desk to keep her balance. The energy she had expended to complete the requested conversions was incredible. She finally gave up on remaining standing and dropped to her knees to get her strength back.

“Were you able to complete your spells?” Zagam asked.

She nodded. “Yeah, it's done.” she added. “I don't understand why you would do this, but I managed it, just barely.”

“Thank you.” the demon bid. “This should be the straw that breaks the feral camel's back.”

###

Madelyn finished ringing up a sale and made change for the customer, happy that her hubby was now back in his correct form. It had been difficult to explain Axel's sudden absence to all of his 'special' customers but now that he was back, he could catch up on these matters in the next few days. 'John Parks' was busy rearranging the keyboard area while his mate, 'Annette Parks' was helping out by rearranging some storage in back.

The zebra femme felt relaxed this evening, since things had been kind of quiet all day. She had heard from Dana concerning the demon hunt that would go down soon and they took a moment to discuss a possible barbeque on Sunday to celebrate. While the femme equine straightened the front counter, she was startled when 'John' staggered and dropped to one knee.

“Hey, are you okay?” she asked as she came around the end of the counter and headed toward the honey badger. He looked at her strangely, then shook his head again. “Conrad?” she asked, knowing in her heart that something was very, very wrong.

“I'm Quillam.” the badger blurted out, still trying to get his bearings. Looking around again, he began to look panicked. “Oh No . . .” he said as he tried to stand. “If I'm here, where is Conrad?” It then dawned on him at that moment, exactly where the tiger was.

“Help! Something's bad wrong!” the femme honey badger blurted out when she staggered out of the back room of the shop, appearing very disoriented, right before she sat down on a stool. Looking around, she spotted a familiar face. “Madelyn, we have a problem.” she put forth. “I . . . I'm Karyn. I need to call Cathy right now to make sure she's all right.”

“Karyn!?” the male badger blurted out.

“Quillam??? Oh No . . .” she retorted. She got her thoughts back on track and grabbed the phone, frantically punching in a phone number. “Let me call Cathy first, please? It's important.” she asked.

“Where were you just now?” Quillam asked the femme badger.

“On the US 50 East, half a mile from the exit for the Rancho Cordova store. We were stopped in a

traffic jam, thankfully.” Karyn replied. She then turned her attention back to the call. “Cathy? Are you all right?” she asked. After a moment, she spoke again. “Yeah, Quillam is here.” A moment later she nodded. “Okay, I will. Call me when you hear from him. I think Quillam and I are both worried for your hubby.”

“Well, what was that all about?” Madelyn asked.

“Cathy is okay, but she's going to turn around and go back to the hospital.” Karyn offered up as she ended the call. “If Quillam is here, Conrad is now in the hospital, recovering from the injuries received by Quillam.”

It was fortunate that the former golem had recovered enough to catch the zebra femme when she fainted from mental overload.

###

Conrad worked to shake off his disorientation, finding himself in a hospital bed in a room that might have been in a medium-care facility. Taking stock of himself, he was in a skeletonized fiberglass double hip spica cast from his toes to high up on his chest and there was a cast on his left arm from his paw clear up to his armpit. He had an IV in his right arm, he was wearing a hospital gown and it must have been meal time, since he had a plate of food in front of him, cut into small bite-sized pieces.

“Dammit!” he cursed under his breath. “Why does this shit keep happening to me?!?” he spat out, gritting his teeth from trying to move his left arm to examine it further.

Feeling the pain wash over his body, he found and pressed the call button to get a bit of assistance. It was interesting that he could taste carrots in his mouth, not his favorite but he would eat them. He was washing the taste down with some water when the nurse arrived.

“Is there a problem, Conrad?” she asked, checking his monitor closely.

“I'm hurting pretty badly.” he replied. “Could you get the doctor to give me some pain meds?” the tiger replied.

The nurse looked at her watch, then smiled at him. “Can you wait two hours? That's when you get your next scheduled dose, since Doctor Peyton took you off of the continuous medication infusion.”

“I . . . I can try.” Conrad replied.

The nurse, a pretty femme skunkette, checked his gums. “You must be in pain, since your nose and gums are pale. Let me call Doctor Peyton for you.”

“Thank you.”

Conrad watched the femme leave his room, hoping the doctor would allow them to administer more medication. It was a foregone fact that it would be a rough two hours if he did have to wait. Just then, his cell phone started to ring. After a short search of his bed with his good paw, he found it and answered the call.

“Conrad.” he said as he put the phone to his ear.

“Conrad!! Are you okay?!?” Cathy blurted out.

“Yeah, if okay is a relative question.” he countered. “I’m in a big world of hurt.” he added.

“I’ll be there in twenty minutes!” the lioness stated firmly.

“Don’t hurry.” the tiger told his mate. “I’ll be here when you arrive. I’m going nowhere at the moment.”

“Okay, I have to go, Honey. The battery on my phone is dying.”

“Sure, you drive safely, please?” the male put forth. “I don’t want you sharing a room with me.”

“Bye!”

Bye!”

Conrad closed his phone and shook his head. This deception didn’t go very well in his estimation. It was apparent that some fur knew about the situation besides the furs involved. No doubt this had something to do with that ass-hat Zagam. The tiger hoped that the pending demon hunt would stabilize things, since he was growing tired of the incessant underworld shenanigans.

Hopefully, his immortality would kick in soon and heal his injuries to some degree, at least enough that he could begin to move around and train again. He hated the fact that he would miss the Superbowl, but there was always next year. One issue, at least he didn’t have to worry about. Mr. Rawlings had told Quillam that his place on the team was secure.

Letting out a sigh, he started to eat his meal. He discovered that he was a bit hungry, after all. While he ate, the tiger wondered if they had some Tabasco® sauce available for his mashed potatoes. Nothing like a little heat on the squashed spuds.