

The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' Svensen, Victoria Angela 'Vicki D'nan' Connell-Svensen, Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' Svensen, Dana Lynn Svensen-Kashnikov, Brett Kashnikov, Gytha Louise Svensen Delancey, Roger Delancey, Roger Jr; & Heather Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn Svensen, Valerie Connell, Joseph & Harriet Connell, Barbara Caine, Wilhelmine Marie Kurzweil-Delancey, Richard Delancey, James William & Nancy Kurzweil, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito[®], Leonard's Restaurant[®] and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission.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.

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“A Loss Of Rights”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 14

Torvald's troupe had pressed on, still searching but now the thought that they needed to stop for the night began burning brightly in his mind. Spotting an encampment ahead, he stopped his mount, motioning for Joe to ride up next to him.

“What is it, Tor?” Joe asked, giving his friend his full attention.

“We need to stop for the night. It's late and we all need the rest so I'm hoping that camp up ahead is friendly. That way, we won't have to build a fire tonight.” The elder equine gave it some more thought, hoping he was doing the right thing.

“Good thinking, Tor. Let's go see if they're friendly.”

The group rode on, finally getting within range of the camp. They dismounted, Joe and Axel helping their prisoners down from their horses. Torvald and Joe went first, followed by the bandits then Axel. As they grew nearer to the clearing, Torvald called out to the camp in his usual manner.

“My name is Torvald Svensen. I mean no fur harm.”

This caused the two females sitting at the fire to get up quickly and look in his direction, both of them now seeming very confused by their actions and body language.

“Uncle Torvald, is that you?” the young filly asked, not sure if she heard what she had heard.

“Torvald? Is that you, my love? Show yourself,” the tigress ordered, wiping the tears from her eyes.

“Show yourself and do not break my heart any longer.” Victoria was trembling, her emotions rampant at the moment, waiting in anticipation for him to step into the light and reveal his face to her.

“Victoria? Is that you?” he asked, stepping into the light of the fire. He was really hoping that he wasn't seeing things right now. His lost mate appeared to be standing not twenty paces from him, alive and well. He stepped closer, hoping that he was right about this. “Victoria, I am Torvald, your husband,” he said loudly, hoping in his heart it really was her. The tigress then began to run towards him, crying.

The huge fur scooped her up in his arms, holding her tightly while they both cried tears of joy in one another's embrace. He started to set her down but she stopped him, letting him know what she felt in her heart.

“Do not let go of me just yet, my husband. I must know in my heart you are real. Hold me, some more, please?” she begged, her facial fur becoming matted with tears. “It has been a very long time since I have felt you hold me. Please indulge me for a few moments more.” She buried her face in his chest, smelling his musk, trying desperately to reawaken a lost memory. There was something very familiar in this feel, the touch of this huge stallion. His warmth, his strength ...

“Dad, are you going to hog Mom all night?” Axel asked, waiting for his father to reply. Victoria caught sight of her son and grabbed his arm, pulling him close to his parents.

“No, there will be plenty of time to get reacquainted with one another,” she said, pulling him close to give him a kiss on the cheek. “Please, you and your father, come to the fire.” she motioned for them to head that way so Joe spoke up.

“Nice to see you again, Victoria,” he said, giving her a smile. She stopped, looking at the coyote while she tried desperately to jog her memories.

“Your name is ... Joe ...” she said hesitantly, not quite sure of her ability to remember the canid's moniker. “You're a ... close friend, right?”

“Yeah, close enough that I didn't hesitate to come with Tor to look for you,” he replied, leading the bandits along. She then spied the threesome in their custody, hands bound and that fact made a smile creep slowly across her muzzle.

“You've captured the Marsden brothers, I see,” she noted, nodding her head. “We have been looking for these highwaymen for a while, Joe. There is a bounty upon their heads, mostly to capture them and get them to trial, where they might be jailed or punished for their minor petty crimes against others.”

Axel had went back and retrieved their mounts, bringing them over to tie them up by the others, taking the time to unsaddle them. Thinking it to be an appropriate time to do so, Victoria grabbed Torvald's hand and brought him over to the horses, showing him her mount.

“Torvald, please do not get mad at me for this,” she asked of him, “This is my personal warhorse. I did not know clearly the association when I named him, but I knew the names meant something to me. I gave him your names, Torvald of Arend.” She gave him a pensive smile, hoping he indeed had a sense of humor. She saw him smile as he petted the huge beast.

“I think it's a good name for such a noble warhorse.” he replied to her. “Come, let's go get by the fire, sweetheart. It's cold out here and I don't want to get chilled.” They went and sat by the fire where the warriors were passing the wine around. Once they had sat down and warmed themselves by the fire a bit, Torvald looked at Willi Marie, who seemed to be happy now that there were more familiar faces around her.

“Willi Marie, how did you get here?” he asked, sure she should have been back home with her husband. She looked at the ground, then her spear, which she hadn't let go of since coming here.

“I was just telling Joe that I was holding my spear and I made a prayer to the gods to watch over all of you and if there was a way for me to help, to show me. The next thing I knew, I was standing in a meadow a few miles from here.” Wilhelmine tapped her armor, shaking her head in amusement. “My armor came with me, even though I wasn't wearing it.” She smiled a nervous smile at the huge fur as she asked, “The gods will be able to get me home somehow, right?”

“We'll get you home one way or another,” he replied, giving her a smile in return. “As soon as we've rested a bit, I think we should call for Odin and be on our way home,” he suggested, waiting to see what everyone else thought about that. There was but one lone dissenter in the group.

“Torvald, I am sorry, we cannot leave just yet,” the tigress spoke up, looking somewhat upset. “I have unfinished business at the castle that I *must* attend to before I leave here.”

“What business do you have that is that important?” her husband asked, noting that she seemed upset about something. There was an uneasy silence for a few moments before she answered him.

“I was not sure of things, Torvald. I did not know if I would ever see you again, my husband,” she said in a sad tone. “I had promised to life bond to Sir Varn when I returned to the castle.” She leaned over and put her head against his chest, trying to keep from crying. He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer to himself.

“I'm sure this person, Sir Varn will understand when we explain things to him,” Torvald suggested, putting his chin on top of her head, hugging her tightly.

“I am afraid he will not understand,” she retorted, looking up at her stallion. “He has been begging me for ten years or more to join with him ...” Morri cut her off.

“Miss D'nan, he has courted you for twelve and a half years,” her squire corrected her, noting she was very upset at the moment. He was sure things would not go well once they returned to the castle.

As everyone finally prepared to bed down for the night, the Immortal Couple were deciding on just how to handle this situation. It had been a long time for both of them, so things were feeling just a bit awkward for them at the moment. Torvald put his thick blanket down as a mat for them to lay on and the two of them used their other blankets to cover up with. It was cold this evening, so she snuggled up next to him, keeping herself warm from his body heat. He put his arms around her to pull her closer but he felt her tense up, which was odd, to say the least. Normally, she would have just melted into his arms, not acting as if it were the first night together for them.

“Victoria, is there something bothering you, sweetheart?” he asked, wondering what the problem was. Maybe she was nervous after all.

“No, it's just ... it's been a long time since you have held me in your arms,” she admitted, giving him a nervous smile. “It feels ... strange to me. I'm sorry, I do not mean this in a bad way ...” She was confused by the multitude of feelings that were running rampant through her mind and heart.

“No, you're right, it has been a long time.” He hugged her, giving her a kiss on the cheek. “I would not blame you for feeling this way after all of these years. We do not have to ...” She cut him off by putting

her hand over his mouth, giving him a pleading look.

“I do wish for you to hold me, please?” she asked, snuggling up tighter to him. “It has been a long time so I do ask this of you; let's take it slowly, getting to know one another again. You do understand, don't you?” She looked up at him with tears in her eyes, her body trembling again from her runaway emotions.

“I understand how you feel,” he replied, reaching up and wiping the tears from her eyes. “I will let you set the pace, then. I love you too much to hurt you in any way.” She nodded in acknowledgment, snuggling up to him as close as she could get. Torvald laid his head against his saddle, using it as a pillow while his tigress used his shoulder to lay her head on. After a while, he felt her relax and begin to snore lightly so he closed his eyes, drifting off to sleep himself.

Conrad was running down field, keeping an eye out for the quarterback's throw. He saw the tall equine release the ball, keeping his eye on the ball spiraling lazily towards him. He jumped up to grab the ball and a split-second later, he found himself landing on the ground hard, face down with a huge husky on top of him. Thankfully this was the last practice scrimmage for him today.

“Gotcha, Conrad! Hurtubise the Horrible strikes again!” the canid stated in a dramatic voice, getting up off of his teammate. The husky reached down, preparing to pick up the tiger when Conrad pulled the ball out from underneath himself.

“Sorry, Gary, you weren't fast enough,” he retorted to the huge fur in question, flipping the ball up to the canid with a smile. His teammate helped him to stand and they both walked off towards the bench for a well-deserved drink of Sports-Ade.

“How the hell did you catch that? You're not wearing claw caps, are you?” Gary asked, looking over at the feline wide receiver. That had to be the only answer as to how he plucked that ball out of the air. Conrad shook his head, expressing the claws on his paw nearest the canid.

“Yeah, I do wear caps, Gary. These silicon caps were originally made for basketball but they don't glue on. You use a trimmer to shape the claw a bit, then suction holds them in place.” He pulled one off after a short struggle, showing it to the husky. “My cousin Willi Marie Delancey wore them when she was at UC Santa Barbara. I'm glad the 49ers association finally got them approved for NFL play because I hated the glue-on ones I wore throughout my high school and college years.”

“Do they make them for canids?” Gary asked, looking the cover over carefully. Conrad was nodding, remembering the various species they were made for including canids. This seemed a better alternative to the husky than getting his claws blunted, rounded and polished every week. “So, you just push them back on, eh?”

Yeah, they push back into place just like this,” Conrad demonstrated, pushing it back onto his claw. “See our equipment manager this afternoon if you have a chance. He located these caps and the trimmer in just a few days after I told him what I wanted.” The canid nodded, slapping the tiger on the shoulder as they parted ways.

“Hey Conrad! Conrad Svensen!” the wide receiver coordinating coach for the 49ers hollered,

motioning for him to come over to him. Irving Kanagawa, a red fox tom, had been with the club as long as Conrad, having been recruited from UCLA about the same time as the tiger. Once Conrad was near enough to him, he gave the tiger a very concerned look. "Listen, is there something going on with your family again? You looked completely distracted out there. Gary nearly had you on the last ten scrimmages you ran, especially that last one." Conrad nodded his head in agreement.

"Yeah, Irv, there is something going on. Mom's been spotted again so my Dad, my brother and a family friend is off looking for her. We think my cousin Willi Marie might have went too without telling us." he proffered up. There was no way in hell he could tell the coach the real story so that one would have to do for now.

"Damn, son, it seems your family has the worst of luck," he stated, looking at the ground. "First your Mom went missing while you were still in high school, then Willi Marie broke her pelvis in that car accident her senior year in college, missing her chance at a championship, then this. I'm sorry, son." He looked up at him and asked, "do you need a little time off? I can talk with the General Manager on your behalf, if you want me to."

"No, but thanks anyway, Irv. I think we have it under control without my helping out," Conrad replied, looking over to see a very familiar face in the crowd on the sidelines. "Listen, I have to go see a friend, Irv. Talk to ya later," he said, giving him a pat on the shoulder.

The tiger jogged over towards a familiar femme, a tall, spotted equine. She was looking very out of place on the sidelines in comparison to the others standing around her. Her clothing, even though they were modern in design, just didn't look right for this particular Valkyrie to be wearing.

"I see why Aslaug likes this game," Hrist stated, watching Gary Hurtubise mow down another receiver solidly. "There is a lot of skill and thought given to this game of brain and brawn."

"Yeah, it's just a little more complicated than it looks in the surface. So, what brings you here, Hrist? Some good news, perhaps?" he asked, nodding for her to walk with him over to a quiet spot out of earshot.

"Willi Marie has been located by Odin and Freya. She is near your father, Conrad. We cannot go there and help because that planet they are on will block our powers. We would be like mortals there." This brought a sigh of relief from the tiger to at least know they were close together. "We will make sure she comes home when the time is right, when Torvald calls out to Odin for transport."

"Thanks for coming to tell me this," Conrad said, giving her a hug. "I needed a little good news today." Hrist nodded, giving him a hug in return.

"I will come again, when I have more news," she told him, looking like she wished she had more at the moment. "I will come see you at your home the next time, so I do not need to dress like this." She indicated her 49ers sweatshirt and military digital urban camo BDU pants, most likely suggested by The Angelbreaker herself. She smiled at him, turned and quickly blended into the crowd near the benches. Conrad turned to see the husky running his way.

"Hey! Where'd that tall, beautiful filly go to that was standing right here, talking to you?" Gary asked as he reached Conrad's location, looking around for her. "I was hoping you would fix me up with her!" This thought made Conrad chuckle. "And what's so funny about that?" the canid asked, giving the tiger

a serious look.

“I'm sorry Gary, trust me, she's not your type.” Conrad replied to his teammate. “She's from the old world and I'm very sure you wouldn't have anything in common.” Once Gary had went off in hopes of finding Hrist anyway, Conrad pulled his cellphone out of his camera bag and made a phone call. When the fur on the other end answered, he smiled a slight smile. “Hi Sis, this is Conrad. I have some very good news for you and Richard ...”

It was early morning, the sky just perceptibly getting light. The tigress had rolled over to face her mate, having been awake for a while and she needed to settle her mind about a few things. Biting her bottom lip, she nudged him very gently in the shoulder.

“Torvald, my stallion, are you awake?” she asked quietly, giving him another nudge just in case he really was.

“Can I have five more minutes, please?” he replied sleepily, yawning widely. “My alarm clock hasn't gone off yet, hon. I don't need to be at work until nine.” He then began snoring again.

“Torvald, please wake up, my husband. I need to talk with you about something important,” she pointed out, giving him another nudge for good measure.

“OK, I'm awake honey. What do you want to talk about?” he asked, blinking his eyes to clear them.

“Torvald, how old am I?” she asked, looking up at her hubby pensively.

“Well, you were fifty on your last birthday this year. Why do you ask?” he inquired, looking at his wife with curiosity.

“You do know about my 'condition', you know ...” She just couldn't bring herself to come right out and say it, even to her own husband.

“Your immortality?” he suggested, hoping this was what she was referring to.

“Yes, that ...” She swallowed hard, her emotions trying to get the better of her. “Are you immortal also?” she asked, wondering about this herself.

“I'm immortal too but I'm a lot older than you,” he replied. “I'm more like one hundred and sixty.” This caused her to look at him very strangely for just a moment, until it made sense to her. He was immortal, after all ...

“You do not look much older than I,” she pointed out, snuggling back up to him. “You look to be not much over forty.”

“If it makes you feel better, with the exception of our grandchildren, the whole family knows we're immortal,” he told her, hoping to lift her spirits. She nodded, laying her head back down on his shoulder.

“It will take me a long time to get readjusted to our life together, I fear,” she stated, giving him a kiss on the neck. “I hope you will have patience with me, my husband. Please be patient.”

“I will be patient for your sake, Victoria. You can bet on that,” he stated, hugging her closer to him.

“One more thing, my love.” she said quietly. “When Wilhelmine said last evening that we weren't from here, she meant not just this land, she meant we were not from this world, am I right?” The tigress had her suspicions about this ever since she had been deposited in that bush all those years ago.

“You're right, Victoria. We aren't from this world but ours looks not too much different from this one, with the exception of our modern conveniences. I'll do all that I can to help you readjust to your real home.” Torvald knew in his heart this would be the hardest thing he had ever had to do; help his mate to become herself again.

“I think I will sleep a bit longer, my stallion. I'm still tired,” she told him, snuggling up closer still. He waited until she had slipped off to sleep once more before doing the same himself.

The buckskin mare had her left front hoof on top of the thief's throat, holding him to the ground while she waited for her partner to pull herself back together. The highwayman, a ferret, had crept into their camp in the early morning and clubbed Hilda to incapacitate her, in hopes of stealing the woman's mount and wealth. It didn't quite work out for him that way, since Glenda, not tied up, was able to knock him down and stomp on him a bit 'lightly' before somehow detaining him.

“Glenda Jean, who effing hit me on the head?” the red haired woman asked angrily as she sat up, rubbing the growing lump on her head. “If you've got him in your custody, kill 'em, please?”

“I have him right here, Hil. You really want me to kill him for ya?” she asked, giving the bandit a harsh look.

“You truly *are* a talking horse!” the highwayman blurted out, giving her a shocked look. “I should have known by the way you were watching me, you were an enchanted creature of the forest.”

“Enchanted my ass! I'm supposed to be a felid, a bipedal leopardess with a Master's degree in Quantum Engineering, for your information.” the horse shot back tersely. “I got screwed by Hilda calling dibs on the bipedal form for this mission, so now I'm the horse, with my hoof on your throat.” She gave him an evil glance as she said, “Prepare to die slowly, bandit!”

“Please do not kill me!” the ferret begged, giving the mare a pleading look as she started to put pressure on his neck. “I would do anyth ...” Hilda cut him off after looking at her bracelet.

“Glenda, he's one of them, a mark,” the female said, looking at the flashing jewel in the gold bauble on her wrist. “Go ahead, let him up. Quickly.” The horse looked rather perturbed but complied with her partner's request anyway, removing her hoof from the highwayman's neck. “Come here and face me, Sir ferret,” she asked, indicating for him to come to her. The ferret, not knowing what else to do, did as he was asked.

“Why have you spared me?” he asked, very unsure of this situation. Just moments earlier, that horse

was ready to kill him and now he was being allowed to live. The female stood up, still rubbing her head but now she was holding a metal device in her hand. Glenda squeezed her eyes shut and turned her head away from the other two while her partner pointed the device at the male, pressing a stud on the body of it. This made the ferret feel strange all over, like ants were crawling on him. Hilda smiled as she finally answered his query.

“You were just telling me traveler, how you were going on your way to see family nearby.” she replied. The bandit nodded, looking at her strangely.

“Do I know you?” he asked, scanning about the encampment. “And may I ask as to how I arrived here?”

“You came to my camp in hopes of warming yourself by my fire for a few moments,” the female stated, giving him a smile as she put the device away in her tunic pocket.

“Ah, I see ...” he said, giving the female a funny look, as if he was not sure of that answer she had given. “I hate to ask but do you have some wine? I have a slight headache, most likely from traveling for too far without rest.” he stated. Hilda nodded, retrieving her wine bag from its place in her saddlebag.

“Here, take these pills with some wine, kind Sir. They were given to me by a magician and they will help your headache.” The female gave him two Bayer[®] aspirins and her wine bag, filled with a nice Napa valley 1998 Gamay Beaujolais. He thanked her, taking the pills with a few modest sips of wine. Glenda in the meantime was poking at the man's bow and quiver with her hoof, trying to signal her partner.

“Oh, your horse appears to be interested in my hunting bow,” the ferret commented, picking the bow and quiver up, putting the quiver over his shoulder. “I thank you for your hospitality, fair lady. I must be on my way to see my ...” He had to stop and think who would be living in the next village. “It must be my sister I am on my way to see,” he said, still not too sure of things. He bowed deeply and left, headed for the road.

“Enchanted creature of the forest,” Hilda said with a snicker once the ferret was out of earshot. Glenda pushed her from behind, almost knocking her down.

“I am not some magical pony with hearts painted on my butt!” the mare said sourly, going back to her bowl of feed. “This had better be worth the hassle we're having to go through.” Getting herself a mouthful of feed, she gave her partner a scowl.

“You know our boss would never send us on a mission that didn't have dire consequences if we failed,” the female pointed out to her equine partner. “I think he does it just to make it hard on us.”

“Yeah, you're right. It just seems like this time we're messing with something we should leave to others to take care of, in my honest opinion.” The mare got another mouthful of feed and began chewing it, giving thought to the scope of their mission, a rough one. Locate and neutralize four marks before they can kill their targets that need to leave this planet. At least there was one down, so far.

“You remember what the boss said at the briefing, right?” Hilda asked rather cautiously. “If we fail, we just as well stay here because *He* will have it all, everything. There will be nothing to go back to.”

“Don't remind me, Hil,” the mare retorted. “That thought just makes me sick.” She thought for a second or two and looked at her partner again. “It would have been nice if this feed tasted like normal food, even though I know I can't have meat or anything fatty in this form without getting sick.” Hilda wandered over, getting a few of the pellets and tasting them herself.

“Yeah, I see your point. It tastes just like ... hmm ... what the hell does that stuff taste like?” She took a few more pellets, trying to put her finger on the flavor in her mouth.

“I dunno, Hil, I'm not sure what it was supposed to taste like.” The mare looked at the pellets, still pondering this deal. “It kinda reminds me of my lawn, after my husband mows it. What I do know is I would really like some fruit or vegetables, like some fresh carrots for breakfast. This stuff just isn't doing it for me.”

Conrad was standing by the trashcan in the garage, brushing the accumulation of grass and mud out of his cleats, making sure to take care of this before the gunk dried and became hard to remove. His wife, who had just drove up and parked her well cared for 2010 Volvo V50 wagon in the garage, put her arms around him, hugging him from behind.

“Sweetie, didn't the organization tell all of you they were going to put AstroTurf[®] on the practice field?” she asked, taking the brush and shoe from his paws, turning him to face her. She kissed him, giving him another hug afterwards.

“Yeah, they promised us that but the lawyers are holding on to that money in case the city of Santa Clara wins the court case involving us moving up here to Sacramento.” he replied. “We had the agreement looked at a dozen different ways but their lawyers still think we violated the deal by moving up here.” He gave her a kiss on the bridge of her nose as he cuddled with her, enjoying the moment of quiet with his new wife.

“Maybe we should close the garage door?” she suggested, scratching him under the chin, making him purr quietly in response. He looked at her again, smiling at her warmly.

“I think we better sit down and look at the books from the Fresno store so we can figure out what's going on down there.” he suggested. “Oh, I almost forgot, Hrist was at the field today. She came to tell me Willi Marie is somewhere near my Dad. Gary spotted Hrist there and he still wants me to hook him up with her, by the way.” That made the mountain lioness chuckle. Gary had no clue what he would be getting himself into.

“Yeah, that's some good news.” she commented. “I hope after your mom is back home, they'll get out of the business for good.” She knew that was what most of the family wanted anyway, before one of them was permanently lost.

“You know, I think they will quit this time.” he retorted back. “I've never known dad to feel so strongly about something but ever since mom went missing, he hasn't taken a single mission that required him to leave this planet.” He had to stop for a second to think before he continued. “The only thing he's really done since mom went missing was stopping that one fur that was burning mosques by a demon's request.” She nodded, remembering the newspaper articles about the fires and the arsonist's mysterious

apprehension, chained up to the bicycle rack outside the Fremont, California Police Departments' headquarters with a note pinned to his clothes. There were only a few furs that knew the true story.

"I dunno, Conrad. Sometimes I think I might have demons running the family auto parts stores," the femme said, picking up her husband's other cleat and brushing it out for him. "I keep thinking I made a mistake in taking over the family business. I'm having a hard time keeping tabs on all nine stores at once." The tiger nodded, understanding where she was coming from.

"Well, once I get my Master's in Theology, I'll help out more with the business," he said to her, opening the door to the kitchen so they could go inside. "In the meantime, I'll help out as much as I have time for. Maybe you should consider hiring Gytha to help you. She does have a Bachelors in business management." he pointed out. She nodded, since this was about the tenth time he had mentioned this to her.

"Yeah, you're probably right." she said, sighing softly. "I guess I'll call her this weekend and see if she's interested in a job. That'll give me time to figure out how much I can afford to pay her." That made Conrad smile, since Gytha had been asking if Cathy needed help. His sister had been out of work since the automotive fuel cell conversion company she worked for went belly up when investors got tired of waiting for profits to begin rolling in and pulled the plug, literally.

"I'm sure she'll be happy to work for you, regardless of wages. Her and Richard need the income right now." Cathy nodded, knowing her husband was right.

The two femme canids stood in the clearing, looking at one another in total surprise. The taller one slowly pointed her finger at the shorter one while an angry look slowly spread across her muzzle.

"We have no powers here, you idiot!" she spat out, kicking a rock in frustration. "We're stuck here on this forlorn rock with no way off! I think I'll empty your mind for revenge, you sorry excuse for a ..."
The other femme was backing up from her, trying to stay out of her grip.

"Now hold on just a minute, Hess. Maybe I can summon a minion to transport us back," she suggested, giving it a lot of thought. "Besides, I still need to locate and kill the tigress before *He* finds out her stallion has found her alive."

"*That* is your problem, bitch! Do not get me involved with ..."

"Hess, this is your problem, too. You were the one that promised me she would not remember a thing." the smaller canid pointed out. "*He* will recognize your work, at any rate." The taller one was looking around her, taking in the surroundings.

"We should go that way, where the smoke from home fires rise." she suggested. "We must find some food and see if any fur knows of the femme. I fear we will have a very hard time finding the tigress, since this is not a barren, lifeless planet, you idiot," Hess said sourly, giving the smaller femme a hard stare as she turned and headed for civilization.

"Hess, hold on just a minute," she beckoned, waiting until the taller one had stopped and turned to look at her again. "I put her here because I felt sorry for her. I knew she would maybe have a slim chance in

surviving here, but she wouldn't know her past.” That made Hess look down at the ground, feeling just a little embarrassed herself.

“Nevaeh, I did not empty her mind like I said I did, either. I only blocked her memories, preventing her from remembering things from the time before we snatched her away from that uppity lion's realm. I too felt sorry for her.” That made Mistress Selin chuckle.

“Well, it looks like we're both to blame, huh?” she said, knowing her life was still on the line but she would share a noose if they failed.

“We better find her and eliminate her as quickly as we can,” Hess suggested, turning to head towards civilization once more. The smaller canid shrugged her shoulders and followed on behind.

“Miss D'nan? Miss D'nan, it is morning,” her squire whispered, trying to wake her without waking her mate. “Miss D'nan, please wake up,” he begged very quietly, keeping his eyes on the gigantic stallion whose arms she was wrapped up in. His forearms were bigger than Morri's thighs and this in itself was scaring him, making the squire pray he did not wake the sleeping giant for fear of retribution from him. The flame-haired man became nervous when the huge stallion stirred, yawning widely.

“Victoria, are you ready to get up?” her husband asked quietly, leaning down to give her a kiss on top of her head. “Your squire beckons you to wake up this morning.”

“Mmmm,” she purred, snuggling closer to her beloved stallion. “No, I am not ready to leave your arms but I fear Morri will pester me relentlessly until I do so,” she replied, a slight smile crossing her muzzle.

“I suppose we should get out of bed and have some breakfast,” Torvald stated, opening one eye and looking at her squire with a smile on his muzzle. “Morri, you should be commended for being brave enough to try to wake your employer so early in the morning while she sleeps in my arms.” The squire bowed and then dismissed himself, letting the Immortal Couple get out of bed by themselves.

After the servant had left them, Victoria got up, stretching her body out to its fullest. Torvald was surprised to see how twenty plus years on this world had toned her body to a lithe, rock hard figure. Her figure was like the Valkyrie's in a way, her muscles moving fluidly under her fur, not bulky but very tough and wiry from a hard, working life. She picked up her leggings where she had shed them last night, looking at them strangely.

“You look lost,” her husband noted, trying to figure out what was not right with his mate this morning.

“Not that I can't do it myself, but Morri usually helps dress me, my stallion.” she said with a furrowed brow. “Something in the back of my mind tells me that it isn't that way back home.”

Torvald motioned for her to come over to him, now that he was sitting up on the ground. He held her leggings for her while she slipped them on, fastening them in back above her tail and tying them for her afterwards. After she put her tunic on, he helped with her hair, which he noted had never been this long before, then assisted her with her vest, sleeves, vambraces and armor. She sat down on a log while he helped her to put her boots on, smiling at her as he helped his mate to stand again. Looking up at him,

she made a comment.

“I had forgotten just how tall you are, my stallion,” she said, hugging him around the waist. “I am so glad that you have found me. I only wish that I did not need to return to the castle for I do not wish to face Sir Varn.” She let go of him and looked towards the fire, where the others were looking at the table full of food that had appeared in their midst. The tall filly looked at them and shrugged her shoulders with an embarrassed look on her face.

“I am sorry but it appears I can perform magic without any real effort here,” she stated, pointing to her handiwork before them. “Morri offered me some dried meat for breakfast and I said it was a shame we couldn't have a home-cooked meal instead.” The long table, with benches on each side, was covered with just about every type of breakfast fare found at a Leonard's[©] restaurant. The canid warrior walked over to his commander, appearing very frightened by this sudden appearance of food.

“Miss D'nan, is Wilhelmine a kind sorceress?” he asked, shaking with fear. “She conjured up something last night called a sleeping bag and now this ...” He indicated the table, flush with food. “It scares me to no end to think we have an evil sorceress in our midst.”

“Sir Marc, do not worry. Wilhelmine is a gentle soul, a kind sorceress. She will not harm you.” the tigress told him in hopes of settling his mind. He nodded slightly in reply, apparently still upset by the matter. Torvald guided him to the table, making him sit down next to Willi Marie, introducing them to one another. The tigress looked over to see her son and Joe, both looking somewhat worse for wear this morning, headed for the table themselves.

“If I had thought about it, I would have had Willi to conjure some air mattresses for Joe and myself last night.” Axel said, then yawned widely. “I think I was sleeping with a rock or something in the middle of my back, cutting into me all night long.” That made Joe chuckle a bit.

“Axel, did I ever tell you about the time Aslaug fell off of a wounded dragon onto some razor sharp, jagged rocks?” Joe started, only to get cut off by the elder equine.

“Joe, don't tell that story until our breakfast settles, please?” he asked, looking at his canid friend with a pleading look. “I don't want all of us to be queasy this morning.”

“Oh, OK Tor, I'll hold off until we're on the road.” Joe smirked just a bit, knowing Axel would have enjoyed the story at any rate. The Immortal Couple were sitting next to each other at the table, still trying to get accustomed to each other's presence again. They got up and switched sides, since Torvald is left-handed, as they would say on this planet. This way their arms wouldn't be bumping into one another's while they ate.

“I had also forgotten you were a lefty, my stallion,” she commented, giving him a kiss on the neck. “This breakfast looks so delicious, I have no idea where to start.” Torvald put some scrambled eggs and pancakes on her plate, followed by some bacon and sausage. He guessed the silver pot was tea so he poured her some, finishing by putting some syrup on her pancakes for her.

“That should get you started,” he commented, piling up a plate of food for himself. He looked over to see his mate was now crying softly, holding her fork with a piece of pancake on it. “Victoria, what's wrong?” he asked, now aware of her being upset.

"I'm sorry but this is just so ... delicious," she replied. "I cannot remember tasting food so good since I have been on this world." That made Willi Marie smile a wistful smile, knowing that was a compliment but the context that it was given in made her sad, to know Victoria had been here all these years and they could have gotten her back home at any time if they had only known where she was.

"How much farther is it to the castle?" Joe asked as he enjoyed the meal provided Wilhelmine.

"We should make Whitehall tonight, then the castle tomorrow night, provided we are all on horseback," the tigress replied, looking over at Willi Marie. "Perchance if our sorceress can produce a few horses or a wagon, we will be traveling fast enough to do so." The palomino-colored filly nodded, sure she could do that much. About that time, Joe spoke up.

"Tor, in case you were wondering, I'm not going back until all of you go." He gave the tall stallion a serious look as he reminded him, "I won't leave any of you behind. It's all or nothing, my amigos." Torvald nodded, agreeing with him completely. The troupe then began to eat in earnest, enjoying the fare provided.

The flame-haired female put her binoculars back in her saddlebag, making sure the flap was fastened securely. She shook her head, looking at the ground.

"Hilda, something's wrong, I can tell," the mare inquired, knowing something was up. Her partner nodded, getting back into the saddle.

"They have others with them that shouldn't be here," she related to the mare, knowing this just made their mission harder.

"Dammit!" Glenda spat out, agreeing in principle with her partner. "OK, let's not panic just yet. Just like last time, we'll just have to be extra careful, that's all. It's not like we haven't dealt with this before."

"Yeah, you're right. We'll just have to be extra careful."