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“A Loss Of Rights”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 26

“Conrad? Conrad??” Cathy hollered at him frantically. “Conrad, Honey, please wake up!” she begged, kneeling by his still form laying on the floor. She carefully checked his pulse and ascertained he was still breathing. She then gently tapped him on the cheek to rouse him.

“Huh?” he replied, blinking his eyes to clear them. His wife was just a little out of focus at the moment but his vision was getting better. “Uh, what just happened?” He was somewhat confused momentarily by the situation.

“You passed out, that’s what happened,” she replied, checking him over for injuries. “I’m gonna call 911, hon.”

“No, don’t do that,” he asked, now that it dawned on him what had happened . “There’s nothing they can do for me.”

“John Conrad Svensen, you just passed out!” the femme cougar pointed out.

“Well, you tell me if they can do something about this,” he retorted, taking the box cutter and slicing his palm pad deeply. It barely bled before it began healing right before their eyes.

“Oh ... shit ...” the femme cougar said solemnly, wiping the blood away with a convenient rag to see his palm showed no signs of injury.

“Yeah, ‘Oh Shit’ Is right, sweetheart. My worst nightmare has come true.”

Conrad sat up, took his cell phone from his belt holster and began to search for a particular number.

“Who are you calling?”

“I’m going to call Willi Marie. She needs to summon either Coach Aslaug or Hrist to come and take me to see Eyr. She’s got a huge load of explaining to do.”

Willi Marie and Tasha Cumberow were driving toward the rifle range in Willi's minivan when her cell phone began ringing. Giving it to the lioness, she asked her to answer it for her.

"This is Tasha," the lioness stated, getting the phone in a comfortable position to talk.

"Uh, I may have called a wrong number because I thought I just called Willi Marie Delancey," Conrad proffered up.

"Well, this is Tasha, her house guest, Conrad."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot. Could you ask Willi to do something for me?"

"Yeah, I suppose so. We were going to the rifle range so she could unwind."

"Well, could you ask her to summon either Aslaug or Hrist to take me to Asgaard, please?"

"Conrad, are you hurt?"

"Uh, no, not really. Apparently I'm immortal now."

"WHAT?!?" Tasha looked at the phone momentarily, wondering if she heard that last statement right.

"I said, for some stupid reason, Tasha, I'm immortal. I need Eyr to take it back because I don't wish to be like this. I want to be mortal again."

"Yeah ... erm ... hold on for a second, will you?"

Tasha gulped, then looked over at the tall equine that was driving. This was one of those things you didn't want to happen to anyone you knew. The tigress had told her at length about how her and her immortal hubby both wanted to be mortal again in the worst ways.

"Willi, pull into that little shopping center over there, please? I need to ask you to do something for Conrad."

"Sure, no problem," Willi replied, turning into the driveway and stopping her van. "What does Conrad need me to do for him?"

"Well ... he needs you to summon either Aslaug or Hrist to take him to Asgaard."

"WHAT?!? Is he hurt? I can heal him if he needs me to!"

"Um no, he's not hurt, Willi. He's immortal."

"SHIT!" the tall equine filly shouted out, then got a bit sick to her stomach. Getting out of her van, she stood by the front of it to see if she was going to need to lose her lunch or not.

"What should I tell him?" the lioness asked after she got out to see about the filly.

“Um, tell him I’ll summon Hrist. Aslaug would have a stroke if she heard this news.”

“Tell Willi I heard that. Hrist should be able to find me with no problems.” Conrad proffered up.

“OK, I’ll let her know,” Tasha stated, ending the call so she could see about Willi. “Sweetheart, are you alright? You look kind of ... under the weather at the moment,” she commented, seeing that the filly looked sort of green around the edges.

“I’m fine now, I think,” Wilhelmine replied, motioning to get back in the van. As she buckled up again, she confided something to Tasha. “Um, I’ve been getting these queasy spells here lately.”

“You know, you need to see your doctor about that,” the lioness proffered up.

“Yeah, I’ll make an appointment today.” she replied. “OK, here goes. Hrist, I really need to talk with you,” she said not too loudly, waiting a few moments for the huge mare to appear.

“What is it, my sister?” the Valkyrie asked from the back seat. Willi looked up in the mirror to see her wearing a bright red Orange County Choppers[®] crop top and bluejeans, of all things.

“Um, Conrad needs your help, Hrist. He’s discovered he’s immortal and he needs a ride to see Eyr about this situation.”

“Oh, My ...” The spotted mare gave this some thought before she said something. “I’m glad it wasn’t Aslaug you summoned. She would have had a conniption fit from hearing that. I will go assist Conrad immediately.”

With that, the huge femme shimmered out of sight.

“Tasha, I’ve been sick like this ever since we came back from finding Aunt Victoria. I hate to say it but I think I might be pregnant.” Willi finally confided in her mentor.

“Are you sick mostly in the morning?” Tasha pondered the implications of her pregnancy and the infant she would bear. That infant, if she was a femme, was sure to be a bearer of magic. Powerful magic. Just like her mother.

“You know, yeah, it’s mostly in the mornings that I’m feeling under the weather.” Willi mused.

“Well, you had better see your doctor, and if you’re pregnant, you’ll need to see our doctors.”

“I was afraid you would say that.”

Victoria was enjoying the nice weather while she watched her hubby barbecuing the ribs on their back patio. He was being very thorough, making sure the meat was ready to turn before checking the vegetables cooking in a pan on a side burner.

“Torvald, something’s wrong, but I can’t put a finger on what it is,” she stated, finally giving in to that

nagging feeling in the back of her mind.

“You’re sure?”

“Well, I’m almost positive,” she responded, giving him a pensive smile. “This sixth sense, I don’t know how to control it or even if I can control it.”

“Well, just sit down, close your eyes and relax. Maybe it will come to you.” the tall equine suggested.

The tigress nodded, sitting down on the swing seat on the patio. Quieting her mind, she began to see little fragments of things, some clear, some foggy. She made out a facade of a store and the sign ‘Hunter Auto Parts’ on the front. Another glimpse showed the word ‘Stockton’ to her.

This was tiring to her but she hung in there, quieting her mind again. That was when she observed Conrad laying on the floor, eyes closed.

“It’s Conrad! Something’s happened to Conrad!!” she blurted out. “Denise! We need help!! Now!!” she called out.

“How can I help?” the skunkette asked as she shimmered into existence on their patio. She was dressed somewhat unusual for her, like she had been snow skiing. She shook her coat, depositing some snow on the patio floor.

“Something’s happened to Conrad! I need you to take me to him!” the tigress replied excitedly.

“OK, let me change my clothes,” she asked as her clothes changed into ordinary street clothes. Concentrating on Conrad’s location, she took Victoria’s paw in hers and the two of them shimmered out of sight.

Bill Harper was filling his vehicle with gas, enjoying the opportunity to get out of the car and stretch his legs. This had been a long drive and he still had more than a day’s worth of road ahead of him. He kept seeing Ed’s face in his mind, a good fur as far as he was concerned. He lived his life the way he wanted to and he never let anyone get in his way. Maybe that’s why he was dead now.

Paying the attendant, he grabbed a cold-cut sandwich and a soda for his afternoon meal. No need to stop later, at least not until he made Kingfur, Arizona this evening. At least that was his intent. He needed to do this so he could make Modesto tomorrow evening and spend the next day seeking out the fur that killed his cousin. That fur was toast, as far as Bill was concerned. One small explosion that most people would think was a gas leak and that cop along with his family, if he had one, were gone.

HE took a moment to lift the hood, checking the coolant overflow bottle, the belts and the engine oil. He hated to kill his neighbor over this vehicle but this was the only way he could see to get to California. Well, maybe he could figure out some way to help out Ron’s widow when he returned.

Getting back into his car, he made his way back out to the interstate, merging back in with the traffic. Setting the cruise control, he made himself just a little more comfortable in the driver’s seat. “Maybe this won’t take too long”, he thought, trying to unwrap his sandwich while driving. He took a bite of it,

smiling just slightly at the flavors. Not bad for a gas station snack.

Victoria, Cathy, Denise and Hrist looked on from the doorway as Eyr carefully examined Conrad from head to toe. The healer felt his life force, noting that he was in fact immortal now.

“I am so very sorry, Conrad but you are indeed immortal and I am the cause of it,” the femme finally stated, sitting down in a chair by Conrad’s bed. “When I healed you, I forgot you were mortal. I gave you a boost of energy meant to help you heal up and it has caused you to become immortal, albeit only temporarily.”

“Temporarily? How temporary are we talking here?” the tiger asked, rolling over to face the huge fur sitting beside him.

“It might only last 50 years or so,” she estimated, given her knowledge of such things.

“I’m sorry, Eyr but that won’t do. Cathy would be old and gray while I would still look young. No, take this immortality back. I don’t want to have to deal with it.” Conrad spoke up.

“I will have to study this,” she finally stated, somewhat lost in thought. “It might take a while, young Conrad so please be patient. If I took away your immortality completely right now, you would die quite young from your previous wounds you have incurred. I must gauge the removal carefully, possibly in slow steps.”

“Well, OK then. Do what you can for me, as fast as you can,” Conrad almost muttered. It was clear he was not happy with what he heard but it would have to do.

“While we’re here, take a look at your work on my back, would you?” Victoria asked. She pulled up the back of her blouse to show off the two white pawprints in her fur.

“Um, I ... um ... erm ...” Eyr sputtered, motioning to the other bed in the room. “Well, I think I can fix that,” she stated, trying not to laugh.

“So, you think this is funny?” the tigress asked as she laid down and Eyr looked her fur over carefully.

“You have to admit, it is unusual,” the healer replied, putting her fingers over the spots and ‘coloring’ them in carefully, like one would do with a paintbrush.

“How was I to explain these markings to Joe Schmuck off the street if I went swimming in a public pool or something like that?”

“I see your point, Victoria. OK, I’m finished,” Eyr told her, letting her get back up again.

Victoria gave it some thought again before confronting the healer with her thoughts.

“Eyr, don’t get me wrong but I don’t want Conrad to have to go through what I’ve been through. Please figure out a cure for him, will you?”

“Victoria, I will do what it takes to fix this for your son.” the huge healer replied. “All I ask is that all of you please be patient.”

Vincent James was meeting with an out-of-town fur, a newly-promoted member of *The Legion*. They were sitting in a secluded booth at the Leonard’s[©] restaurant on the north side of town, discussing the premature demise of Ed Harper.

“I’m tellin’ ya, it’s just not right,” Vinnie stated, looking at the untouched salad in front of him. “Ed died ‘cause he was probably bein’ stupid, as usual. He shoulda known better than ta go after a cop’s ol’ lady with th’ cop bein’ so damned close by.”

“So, what’re ya sayin, Vin? Ya want us ta go after ‘em an’ even things up?” the chipmunk asked. Ralph Hemmings was the #3 fur in *The Legion* now that Ed Harper was dead. “I can have a few furs come up from Phoenix to fix this, ya know.”

“How soon, Ralph?”

“How about tomorrow morning early? Is that too soon?” the chipmunk replied. “You still have your ‘Processing Plant’, right? No fur has found it?”

“Naw, as far as anyone’s concerned, it’s just an ol’ warehouse used to store antique car parts. The ol’ fur we have runnin’ the place has no clue what we actually use it fer.”

“OK, I’ll call right now an’ have my furs come up here. We’ll fix that effin’ stallion and his striped whore.”

While Ralph made his call, Vinnie thought back to the days when Ed Harper and himself ran with the local gangs, causing mischief but not much more than that. They were just out for a good time, drinking some beer and stealing a car or two.

Now that they were doing the work of the Good Book, he just couldn’t shake the feeling that he was destined to end up just like Ed; dead from trying to do what their interpretations of the scriptures told them was right. ‘The meek shall inherit the earth’, is what the scriptures said and a fur that evolved from a predator species couldn’t possibly be meek. The scriptures also said ‘Prayer should be from your heart to be one of the chosen few’, but if a predator-derived species wasn’t meek, they couldn’t be one of the chosen few, either. Maybe Ed died because he was wrong about this. Maybe they were all wrong.

In any case, It was still up to Vincent James to lead *The Legion* for the time being. He had taken the reins firmly in paw and all the furs in the organization looked to him for direction. He would just have to keep an eye out over his shoulder as he led them to dominance.

“Hey Vin! You spacin’ on me?” the chipmunk asked, trying to get the lapin’s attention. “Hey, don’t do that, buddy. Ya had me worried for a minute that ya mighta’ vapor-locked on me.”

“Yeah, I’m OK, I was just thinkin’, that’s all. What is it, Ralph?”

“My muscle will be here tomorrow morning, real early. I just need an address.”

“Um, yeah, uh, 1040 Magnolia. Tall blond stallion an’ of course his striped bitch whore.”

“OK. Consider it done, then. We’ll get them while they’re sleeping.”

Bill Harper had stopped at the Whiting Brothers gas station in Winslow, Arizona for some fuel and some more sodas. This had been a very long drive and he still had some ways to go before reaching Modesto. So far, he hadn’t been scrutinized by the police and he thought that in itself was a good sign. At least he was making good time. The thought of staying in a bed tonight in Kingfur, Arizona sounded very good to him at the moment. Take care of some business, take a shower and get some sleep. That sounded very good.

Cathy, Conrad, Hrist and Denise had been invited by the tigress to have a late lunch at the Svensen’s temporary home in Modesto. It was fortunate that the Immortal Couple had some burger patties and sausage links in the refrigerator to feed this small mob with. The huge Valkyrie seemed to have enjoyed her meal immensely, polishing off a very heavily loaded plate of food.

“Torvald, may I take this bottle of sauce with me?” Hrist asked, holding up an economy size container of Tabasco[®] sauce. She had put it on everything, including the potato salad.

“Sure, that would be fine with us,” Torvald replied, smiling as the tall filly was trying to put out the fire in her mouth with yet another glass of water. “You know, you should talk with Willi Marie about getting some of her Jalapeño jelly. It’s almost as fiery as that Tabasco[®] sauce.”

“She has jelly this hot?” Hrist blurted out. “My honorary Valkyrie sister, holding out on me ...”

“I’m sure she would give you a jar, if you asked her.”

“You can bet I will ask her!” the spotted filly retorted. “That would be very good for breakfast, when Ellen and Gunhildr cook up those round thin cakes that Willi Marie taught them to make.”

“You mean pancakes?” Conrad asked.

“That is what I meant,” she replied, nodding as she gulped down another glass of water. “Gah, this is really clearing up my stuffy head,” she stated, turning her head politely so she could blow her now-runny nose.

The rest of the group were trying their best to keep from laughing at the huge equine femme’s predicament when Conrad got his mother’s attention.

“Mom, this is going to be your last mission off-planet, isn’t it?” he asked, hoping she had changed her mind about it.

“I really don’t know, sweetheart.” his mother replied. “Your father and I still need to discuss this with

the boss.”

“Your Mother seems to think we need to keep working somehow. Maybe I could retire from the police force and we could open a halfway house for troubled teens.” The huge stallion stated for the record.

“That’s a very good idea,” Hrist stated as she slammed down some milk this time to try to put out the fire in her mouth.

“You know, Hrist, you might want to try some hot coffee or tea to cut the capsaicin oils out of your mouth,” Torvald pointed out. The huge femme poured herself a cup of coffee and chugged it down, still seeming to be in a bit of distress.

“That is better,” she commented, wiping her sweaty forehead with a paper towel. “Mmm, that stuff is good!”

“Mom Svensen, we both want you two to quit while you’re ahead,” Cathy pointed out, giving them a concerned look. “We were sure you were lost for good, then you were found and now you’re right back where it all started! I have to tell you, it’s upsetting the family tremendously. Dana is so afraid you won’t see her first kit born.”

“I won’t miss that, I can guarantee everyone that,” the tigress stated. “I missed Gytha’s little ones being born and it really hurts. No. I will not miss another grandkit being born.”

“We need to get back to Stockton, Hrist.” Conrad proffered up. “Can you put us back where you found us, at that exact moment?”

“I can do that,” the huge filly stated, getting to her hooves. She picked up the bottle of hot sauce, smiled at everyone and shimmered out of sight with Conrad and Cathy in tow.

“I have to be going too,” Denise stated, shimmering out right behind them.

Bill Harper had finally pulled into the Motel 6 in Kingfur, Arizona. It was late, he was tired and the fur behind the counter was being particularly difficult this evening. He Didn’t like the fact that the goat had an Oklahoma driver’s license but his vehicle wore Texas plates so he was asking for more identification.

“Listen, y’all need to understand, I don’t have a credit card! I have a debit card, that’s all.” he tried to explain.

“I’m not real sure I should take it,” the zebra behind the counter stated. He thought about it, finally allowing Bill to rent a room for the night.

Bill brought his things into the room, disguised as luggage. He set about laying down the heavy plastic, protecting the floor of the bathroom. He then stripped down and began to dye himself black.

“This woulda been easier with a femme to do my back,” he mused, using a long handled brush to work the dye into his fur. “I just hope I can get the tub clean when I wash the excess dye out.”

Cathy pulled her Volvo into the garage, still not sure she had understood Jerry Martinez' reasoning. He had quit because she had told the police it was OK to contact him and they trusted him with running the Stockton branch. She was just glad it was a misunderstanding and Jerry had agreed to come back to work.

"So, now I have to keep an eye out for any fur noticing I'm not getting injured," Conrad muttered as they went into the house.

"Look on the bright side, hon, you won't get hurt during season play," she pointed out.

"Well, yeah, I know but I just don't see how Mom and Dad deal with it."

"I saw it in your Mom's eyes, hon. It hurt her to see you have to deal with this." Cathy said as she sat her purse down on the bed. "She wanted Eyr to take back your immortality but if it means you might die young, then I can see why the healer had her reservations."

"I know, Cath. I'm just ... I'm on edge about this," he stated, putting on some lounging pants.

"You remember what your Dad said, right? If you get tackled, just get up and limp a bit, like you're shaking it off."

"Yeah, I remember." Conrad replied. "It's just ... well ... I feel too good, that's all."

"Conrad?"

"Well, you know how my left wrist always hurt after I fractured it that summer before my senior year in high school?"

"I remember that, hon. You couldn't play ball for two months."

"Well, that wrist doesn't hurt a bit right now. No pain."

"So, are you going to go in for physical therapy?"

"I have to, Cath. I have to pretend my knee still hurts just a bit."

"Uh, hon, not to change the subject, but do you think Hrist will put that hot jelly on her pancakes?"

"I'll bet she does. Willi takes her to this sandwich shop near her home and they buy hot sauces with names like "Bowel Blaster" and "Flaming Farts", then try them on everything."

"Is that how she gets her chili so hot?"

Conrad just smiled and nodded.

Victoria was disturbed out of her sleep by something bothering her. She quieted her mind, seeing some fur in dark clothing, kneeling by a door, picking a lock and then slipping inside. She then realized that door was her side door from the kitchen to the back yard.

Sitting up slightly, she could see the shadow under the door of some fur walking by her bedroom so she put her paw over Torvald's mouth and whispered in his ear to let him know what was happening.

"Torvald, there are armed furs in our house," she whispered quietly, relieved when he nodded, acknowledging what she had told him.

They both opened their quick-access safes that sat under their bed-side lamps, getting their pawguns out of them as they rolled off the bed quietly. Victoria had both of her Colt Officer's models in .38 Super in her paws, safeties off. Torvald had a Desert Eagle in .357 Magnum, placing it in his waistband of his sweats. He then retrieved his Armalite AR-12 from under the bed, a 12 ga. semi-auto shotgun based on the classic Stoner AR-15 design. He pulled the bolt back a hair, making sure it was charged before putting the selector switch to 'fire'. The two magazines clipped together side by side plus one up the spout gave him 25 rounds of deadly force to use.

The lead fur in the hallway, a red squirrel, motioned for his entry fur, a muscular gray mouse to take the other side of the doorway. Victoria could 'see' them getting ready to enter so she motioned to her hubby that they were right beside the doorway. Torvald backed up, shouldering the shotgun as he knelt down by the dresser.

All hell erupted when the muscular rodent kicked the bedroom door open. Torvald caught him with a round of 00 Buck to the head, killing him instantly. The next fur, a stout donkey that wasn't prepared for them to fire back was caught by the tigress, four rounds to the torso, high, dropping him on top of the mouse.

"Holy Shit! They're armed! Get the hell out of here!" the squirrel shouted at the remaining thug, a gecko. The lizard nodded, ducking down to cross the doorway. Torvald injured him, catching him with a few pellets to the leg. The gecko fell down in the hallway where Victoria could see him so she hit him with a few more rounds from her Colts, pretty much incapacitating him.

The squirrel ran for the back door but the stallion wasn't satisfied with letting him get away, especially after hearing something hit the table. He stepped over the mess in the bedroom doorway and hallway, finding the bad fur had ran square into the dining room table, stopping his progress cold.

"Freeze! Police! Show me your paws!" he shouted, bringing the shotgun to bear on the hapless crook, turning on the Mag-Lite mounted under the barrel to light up the situation.

"I dropped my gun! I'm unarmed!" the crook yelled back from his spot on the floor, holding his paws up where they could be seen.

"Victoria, call the police!" the stallion shouted, putting the barrel of the shotgun against the squirrel's head while he picked up the crook's gun, a Beretta in 10mm. "You move, I shoot." he explained, noting the crook nodding.

"You can bet I'm not moving." he replied.

“Sweetie, I have their guns corralled,” the tigress shouted through the house, checking the gecko only to find he had expired. “The lizard’s dead, too.”

“Hon, cover the squirrel while I frisk him,” Torvald asked, pulling a knife out of the squirrels’ boot. A cursory check found one more firearm, a revolver hidden in an ankle holster. Torvald then retrieved a set of paw cuffs, getting the would-be assassin under arrest.

“Uh, Victoria, we better put the guns down before my brethren get here,” he suggested, setting his on the table. She did likewise, keeping one in paw to cover the bad guy while Torvald went to the front door, calling the station on the way with his cell phone.

“Modesto PD, are you reporting an emergency?” the fur on the other end asked.

“Yeah, this is Detective Torvald Svensen, badge number 3781. I just had a shooting in my house here at 1040 Magnolia. We have three perps down and one in custody.” He could hear the sirens out front so he asked for them to stand down. “Let the furs at the door know I’m coming out and I’m unarmed. I have a cell phone in my paw.”

“The detective inside says he’s coming to the door,” the external speaker on one squad car announced. “He says he’s unarmed but he has a cell phone in his paw. The cell phone number belongs to the occupant, our detective.”

“Torvald, this is Clyde Moraine. Open the door slowly and step outside.” came the request from outside.

The stallion did as he was asked, slowly opening the door, stepping into view with his paws up a bit, palms forward.

“Torvald, is everything secure in there?” the tall black stallion asked from the street, still holding his weapon at the ready while he used his cruiser as a shield.

“Yeah, we have three dead and one in custody. My wife and I are both OK.”