

*The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' & Victoria Angela (nee Connell) Svensen, James Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' (nee Hunter) Svensen, Brett & Dana Lynn (nee Svensen) Kashnikov, Roger, Gytha Louise (nee Svensen) Roger Jr. & Heather Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn (nee Barrett) Svensen, Valerie Connell, Walter & Harriet (nee Bishop) Connell, Walter Lee Jr., Michelle Annette 'Misha' (nee Kazinski), Walter Lee III, Joseph Franklin 'Joe' and Sarah Noel Connell, Robert James & Elizabeth Ann (nee Caine) Sands, Barbara Caine, Edward and Mary (nee Leese) Caine, Richard & Wilhelmine Marie (nee Kurzweil) Delancey, James William & Nancy (nee Roland) Kurzweil, Jason & Natasha 'Tasha' (nee Porter) Cummerow, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito[®], Leonard's Restaurant[®], Hunter Auto Parts[®], Right Way Groceries[™] and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission. Any resemblance to any fur or person, either living or dead is purely coincidental. (Gah, this is tedious!)*Note* More rambling credits/warnings below! Please read and heed!*

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“A Loss Of Rights”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 29

Wally Connell was making sure the kits were cleaned up for their first of hopefully many visits with his parents. Sarah had already gotten dirty again after being put in clean clothes and Joseph was attempting the same, heading towards the back door.

“Joe! Don’t you dare go outside!” Wally shouted, causing his middle kit to stop in his tracks.

“Dad! I wasn’t gonna get dirty!” Joseph complained, turning around and giving his father that ‘sad eyes’ look.

“Well, your sister already did so I’m not taking chances,” he explained, turning to go see where Walter the 3rd was hiding.

“Here’s your daughter, all clean again,” Michelle said as she gave their youngest to him. “You hold her and keep an eye on Joe while I go find Walter.”

“Misha, did Joe come through here?” Wally asked, looking around at the now-obvious lack of their youngest male.

“I haven’t seen him,” she replied, scouring their oldest son’s room only to find he wasn’t there.

“Daddy, are we really gonna go see our real Gramma an’ Grampa?” Sarah asked, wiggling around in her father’s arms, making it hard for him to hold on to her.

“Will you quit squirming?” he admonished his daughter. “We’re going to go in a few minutes but I still need to find both of your brothers.”

“Walter is hiding in the laundry room,” she proffered up, smiling proudly at her father. She honestly thought it would get her sibling in trouble with Mom and Dad.

“Misha! Look in the laundry hamper!” he shouted down the hall as he stalked his youngest male who was trying to squeeze behind the entertainment center in the corner of the family room.

“Joe! Look Out! Daddy’s gonna get you!” Sarah shouted, hoping to help her favorite brother. Joe began squirming in earnest, trying his best to get behind the heavy piece of furniture.

“Got you!” his Dad shouted as he pulled his son out from behind his failed hiding place by his feet. He was now covered in spider webs, however. “Misha, Joe has managed to get dirty again!”

“I’m not dirty, Dad,” he said in his own defense.

“Get in the bathroom so we can get you cleaned up again,” he told Joe, shaking his head. “Just for once, I wish you three would behave and go somewhere quietly.”

“What is Joe covered in?” his wife asked, marching Water the 3rd to his bedroom to get changed. “Oh good grief! Joseph Franklin!” she exclaimed, finally getting a good look at her little male mischief maker. “Joe! Your father will clean you up this time! I’m busy with your brother!”

“Aw Mom! Do I have to?” he complained, standing still, sort of, while his dad cleaned him up.

Their oldest decided to rationalize his reasons for not wanting to go once they reached his bedroom.

“Mom, why do we have to go? Dad never told us that Gramma an’ Grampa were still around. Why didn’t he tell us a long time ago?” he asked while he was getting dressed.

“Because there was something wrong between them, that’s why.” his mother explained. “We will tell you some day what happened, maybe, but it suffices to say that your father and his parents have made amends so they want to meet you, your brother and your sister.”

“What’s amends?” he asked, confused by that term.

“It means they made up.” she replied. “Now, get that shirt on and let’s go.”

Wally and Michelle finally herded their brood out to the minivan and got them buckled in. Once down the road, Wally brought up a mental checklist.

“Hmm, let’s see ... kits, camera, tripod, photo albums ... did I forget something?”

“Honey, your insulin?” she asked, giving him a pensive smile.

“It’s right here ...” He patted one front pocket, then the other. “Drat! OK, we have to go back,” he commented, turning around at the corner.

“I’ll run in and get your cool pack from the refrigerator,” his wife offered, patting him on the leg. “I knew we would leave something behind. We always do.”

The immortal couple were headed over to Matt Black’s home for a meeting and dinner. The okapi had

quickly arranged for all the major players to be present for this important rendezvous at his home, even at such short notice.

“Joyce, should I serve wine to them?” he asked his wife, looking at the choices in his wine cooler.

“Matt, honey, they’re normal furs just like you and me,” she reminded him. “Deke said to fix something simple for dinner and for us *not* to make a big fuss about it.” She stressed the word ‘not’.

“Sweetie, they are not normal! The power they share between them is just incredible, according to Reverend Roundtree.” He looked at his pale gray pony mate of 20 years, giving her an exasperated smile. “These are very special furs and I don’t want to look like a idiot.”

“Don’t worry so much!” she finally told him. “Maybe the male might want a beer, hon. Don’t worry!”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m panicking when I shouldn’t. Torvald is a very likable fur.”

Torvald stopped at the local Right Way Groceries™ outlet store to get something to take with them to the meeting. He didn’t feel right about it, not taking anything to contribute to the dinner.

“Torvald, I’m going in with you,” Clyde told him, not wanting to have to deal with another shooting he could have prevented. He had been riding with them just to make sure they were safe.

“Well, I’m going in too,” Victoria told the two males, making sure her firearms were secure.

They went inside, headed for the beverages to see what they could find. Victoria wasn’t paying much attention to things, just following her hubby around until a voice startled her. A voice that sounded like her own.

“Excuse me?” the voice asked, causing her to turn and look at another femme tiger. One that looked literally exactly like her.

“Erm, hello?” she said, not sure how to deal with this. She was looking at another iteration of herself in the flesh. The other tigress was just as stunned as she was.

“Um, my name is Victoria Khanna,” she told the immortal tigress as she offered up her paw. “This is just so weird! You look just like me!”

“I’m Victoria Svensen. Nice to meet you,” Torvald’s tigress replied, still sort of shocked by this. Khanna was her great-grandparents surname when they migrated to the U.S. from Mumbai, India. They changed their last name to Connell just to sound more ‘American’ and try to fit in. “Um, do you live here in town?” she asked, wondering why she hadn’t been mistaken for this other iteration of herself.

“No, I live over in Hughson,” she replied. “I’ve lived there ever since my divorce. I just popped over here to get a few things that I can’t find in my local supermarkets.”

Victoria noticed this tigress didn’t wear caps on her claws or teeth, either.

“Were you born around here?” she had to know.

“Well, yeah, I was.” the other tigress replied. “I live just down the street from the house I was born in. My brother Wally owns my parent’s home now.” This news really shocked her; this was her alternate life in the flesh, right in front of her.

“It sounds like your parents aren’t around anymore,” Victoria stated somberly.

“Oh no, honey. They moved back to De Pere, Wisconsin, where my grandparents all live.” she replied.

A young male tiger in his mid-teens came around the corner with a bag of fresh catnip in his paws, headed in their direction. Other than a different haircut, this male looked just like her Conrad. He looked up and stopped cold in his tracks while his jaw slowly dropped open.

“Uh, Mom?” he questioned, looking totally confused by the sight in front of him.

“John, meet Victoria Svensen. Victoria, this is my son, John Conrad Parks, Jr.”

“Mom! You know I prefer to be called Conrad,” he complained, then offered the immortal Victoria his paw. “It’s nice to meet you, Ms. Svensen.”

“It’s nice to meet you too, Conrad.” she replied, making him smile. He even sounded like her son. She did note that he wore caps over his claws and teeth, no doubt due to his birth date being long after the cutoff date.

Meanwhile, Torvald and Clyde had discovered some nice H. C. Andersen pale lager beer so they grabbed several 6-packs of it. They heard what they thought to be Victoria’s voice in the next aisle so they headed that way to meet up with her. Rounding the end of the gondola, the huge fur was totally stunned to see two copies of his tigress and what appeared to be his stepson.

“Uh, Victoria? What’s going on here?” he asked, looking very confused. Clyde didn’t look any sharper.

“Torvald, I want you to meet Victoria Khanna and her son, John Conrad Parks, Jr.” she offered up, trying not to laugh at his appearance. “Victoria, this is my husband, Torvald Svensen. He’s a police fur here in Modesto.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Torvald,” the alternate Victoria told him, shaking his paw gently. The alternate Conrad did the same, then spoke up.

“Excuse me for being rude but in all the excitement, I forgot what it was I was supposed to get for Aunt Valerie.” he stated.

“She wanted some Campbell’s Vegetable Soup,” his mother reminded him, shooing him off towards the correct aisle. That was the warrior feline’s sister’s favorite canned soup, too.

“You know, would you like to come over to visit sometime?” the alternate tigress asked. “It seems we look like twins so maybe we have other things in common, too. It’s not often I see another femme feline around here and certainly not a tigress that shares my given name.”

“You do have a point there,” the immortal feline mused. “Why don’t you give me your phone number and I’ll call you tomorrow and set something up.”

“Let me give you my work numbers then,” the mortal feline suggested. “I work days in real estate so I might not be home until the evening.”

“OK, that would be fine.” the immortal one replied, trying her best not to laugh.

“I would like for my boyfriend to meet you,” Ms. Khanna stated. “He’s a very nice cougar named Robert. I met him on a trip down to Bakersfield to see some friends.”

“That would be interesting,” Victoria mused, thinking this Robert was probably just like Elizabeth's husband. Or the one they shared in a way through an altered reality.

While this was going on, Clyde nudged Torvald off to the side so he could ask a question in private.

“Do you think you can explain this?” he queried, nodding his head towards the two femme tigers.

“I think I might be able to explain this but I would prefer to do it in the car, if you don’t mind.” the blond equine replied quietly.

“OK, I trust your judgment in this matter, Torvald,” Clyde commented, still appearing somewhat confused.

Once they were back in the car and continuing on their way to the meeting, Torvald spoke up.

“Clyde, you know we’re troubleshooters for the gods but I guess you don’t know we’re from a parallel world that’s not too unlike here. That tigress in the grocery store is another iteration of my Victoria. There would be some similarities and some differences between them, too. She didn’t marry an alternate version of me because that iteration of me, if he ever existed at all, has been long-dead on this planet.”

“What do you mean, long dead?” Clyde asked.

“Um, you might have a hard time with this, my friend.” Torvald pointed out. “I’m from Denmark, having been born a *Hedni* in the early 10th century.”

“You’re WHAT?!?” the dark stallion blurted out, turning to look at the immortal warrior in disbelief.

“I was chosen to be a warrior for the gods so I was sent to study under a mage in Seattle, Washington. My studies were derailed by Surt and I’ve ended up living among mortals since 1893. I’ve had to move around a bit to keep from being noticed and unfortunately, it’s getting to be time for me to retire from my day job and move on again. At least the upside to this is I have an immortal mate to share my life with now. I won’t be starting over from scratch this time.”

“So ... you’re how old?” Clyde inquired.

“About 160, give or take a few years.” Torvald replied. That made Clyde just shake his head.

“I dunno, Torvald. That information makes my head hurt.”

“I can assure you, it took me a long time to get used to it, once Tor told me his true story.” Victoria interjected. “Now that I’m immortal, I guess it’s a moot point. We’ll no doubt outlive our children and maybe several more generations after that. It’s a shame because a parent should never have to watch their children grow old and die.”

“I’ve already done that,” the stallion added. “I buried my second wife and our two children. They all died quite young from a form of influenza that swept through our hometown of Schuyler, Virginia. My second wife Maryanne was 41 when she died, our son Thomas was 23 and our daughter Elizabeth was 15 when fever took her. I don’t know what happened to Thomas’ wife Rebecca and their two children, Bradley and Ronald, after Maryanne’s sister Constance Hewett took them in and I later lost contact with them.”

“I don’t envy you two your jobs,” Clyde stated. “I’m not sure I could do what you do. It all seems to come at a very high price.”

“That it does, Clyde,” Torvald retorted. “That it does. Life was so much simpler when I worked for Earl Hamner’s sawmill.”

“Barbara, that doctor called us again,” Valerie told her life partner as she came in the house from the back yard. “He says we’re overdue to have our fractures looked at.”

“Why don’t we just tell him Willi Marie healed us?” the ocelot suggested. She held up the pendant that she had commissioned with the screw and pin that were in her wrist and looked at it, musing about the tall equine mix’ abilities. The hardware had somehow come out when the sorceress had performed her act of healing.

“Like he would believe that?” Valerie mused. “Well, what do we do?” she asked.

“We’ll go see him,” Barbara suggested. “Let him see for himself that we’re healed up.”

“You know what kind of trouble that would cause!” the tigress stated. “No, let’s just ignore the calls until he quits calling.”

“No, he expects to see casts on our arms. We need to meet with him and let him see for himself.” the smaller femme pointed out. “Call him back and make an appointment. That way, we can at least get him off our backs.”

“OK, I’ll call and set up an office visit but I’m warning you, this will be a disaster.”

“By the way, Val, are we going to go look at that 2005 Ford Explorer that was converted to a hybrid? Axel called and told me it was still for sale.” Barbara inquired.

“Um, you know, maybe we will. I just hate that dinky little Plymouth Neon the insurance rented for

us.” the taller one replied. “I hear that Explorer has low mileage and the shop that did the conversion was the same one that did Axel’s station wagon.”

“I’ll call Axel back and tell him that we’re coming that way. Maybe we can go out to dinner with them afterwards.”

Willi Marie was standing at the range, trying her best to cook a special dinner for her hubby. She checked the pot roast again, making sure it had enough liquid in the pot. Tasting the broth, she thought it might have needed a little more salt. She almost conjured up a pawful of the spice before she remembered that last effort at doing so. The pot she tried to add salt to ended up full to the rim.

“Willi, are you alright?” Tasha asked, noting just how ill the tall equine mix looked this afternoon.

“I ... I’m fine,” she replied, trying to dismiss the fact that she really needed to throw up again.

“No, you’re not fine!” the feline femme retorted. “Why don’t you sit down and I’ll finish the meal?”

“Well, OK,” the mare finally agreed. “Tasha, I’ve been sick like this ever since I became with child. I really hope this passes,” she mused, taking a seat at the breakfast bar.

“I’ve seen this before, hon.” the lioness told her. “You’re probably gonna be sick until the little ones are born. Their magic, even though they can’t use it, is conflicting with yours.”

“What do you mean, their magic?”

“Well, if just your little femme was a sorceress, you might not be sick at all. I think I can almost guarantee your little male will be a full sorcerer. He will most likely be just as powerful as his sister.”

“Oh, don’t tell me that!” Willi complained.

“Tell her what?” Tasha’s husband Jason queried as he came into the kitchen.

“Sweetheart, I was telling Wilhelmine that her little ones’ magic is making her sick.”

“I had guessed that was probably the case,” the rottweiler mused. “My sister was real sick when she was pregnant with her twins.”

“At least I hope I’ll get better after my little ones are born,” Willi stated as she reached for the Pepto.

“Willi, you really should lay off that stuff,” Tasha proffered up. “Chamomile tea is better for your system.”

“I’ll give it a try,” the tall, pale one stated. “I think I have some in the cabinet.”

“Wilhelmine, you have your first Review Board meeting this afternoon,” Jason offered up. “I just received the message a few minutes ago.” He gave her a map to show where it was in relation to her doctor’s office. “Here’s some tokens to use the mag-lev bus that runs on this line.” He pointed out the

route on the map so she would know where to get on and off and gave her the small, round coins.

“Oh Great!” the equine femme spat out. “I’m sick and I have to meet furs I’ve never met before!”

“You know, your family room is big enough,” Tasha suggested. “Maybe I can convince them to have the meeting here, since you only need the paperwork to look at.”

Willi Marie gave this much thought; have the meeting here in her home instead of on the Consortium’s home planet. That would be nice, especially if she needed to take care of an upset stomach.

“Let me call them,” the lioness stated, picking up Willi’s home phone. After dialing a very long phone number, she had a quiet conversation with some fur. Nodding slightly, she ended the call. “Yeah, they said it would be OK, since you are pregnant,” Tasha relayed to Willi.

“That would be very nice,” the tall equine mix told the lioness. “Um, could you watch the pot roast? I need to take care of something,” Willi Marie asked, hurrying down the hall towards the bathroom.

“She seems like she’s quite sick with this pregnancy,” Jason mused as he made himself a peanut butter sandwich.

“I hope it gets easier for her,” Tasha mused. “You know, Jason, Honey, someday I would like to have a little kit, too.” She looked at her hubby with pure love in her eyes.

“I know you would,” he replied. “Maybe after you’re done training here, we might take some time off and have a family.”

“That would be real nice,” his wife offered up. “Yeah, I might be done here in another six months or so.”

Wally parked his minivan at the curb in front of his parent’s home, then laid his head against the steering wheel while he composed himself. The last time he had been here, his father had ‘put’ him out with orders never to return. Even though they had made up in the hospital, he still felt very uneasy about this.

He remembered looking up an old friend and practically begging him for a place to stay, once it was obvious that he couldn’t stay at home after being released from jail. Without a place to stay, he would have been put back in prison right away. Now they owned their own home, paid for in full by their business. He had worked hard and long to make their business successful and he had to admit, Michelle had kept things together in the office, watching the flow of funds like a hawk while he worked in the field.

“Wally?” Michelle asked, putting her paw on his leg. This made him jump.

“Oh, uh, yeah,” he replied, pulling himself back together. “I’m sorry, I was just daydreaming,” he told her. That wasn’t entirely true but it would work. No need to make her upset by sharing his thoughts with her.

“Wally, your parents are peeking through the curtains, so maybe we had better go inside?”

“Um, yeah, let’s go inside.” He replied.

“I need to go to the bathroom!” their littlest one blurted out, squirming in her car seat. “I need to go now!”

“Keep your shorts on,” Michelle told her daughter. Just as soon as her feet touched the ground she began doing the ‘Full Bladder’ dance.

After the two males were ‘turned loose’, the parents guided the little ones up to the front door. Wally reached out to knock but his father opened the door first.

“Wally, Michelle, please come in,” he asked, stepping aside for them to enter.

“You look like my daddy, only different colored,” Sarah pointed out as she looked up at her grandfather. “Are you my Grampa?”

“Yes, I am, Sarah Noel,” the elder Connell replied, picking her up to see her better.

“I gotta go to the bathroom, Grampa!” she offered up. Grandmother Connell took the little femme from her husband, much to his relief.

“I’ll take this little one off your paws,” she said as she hugged Sarah. “Gramma will take you to the bathroom,” she told her, smiling at the look on her face.

“OK, Gramma,” the little femme replied, still looking at her grandmother in awe. “You kinda look like daddy, too!”

“Your father should look a little like me, since I’m his mother.” Grandmother Connell suggested.

“Oh Goodie! Wait ‘till I tell daddy he has a mommy!” the little one squealed as they made their way down the hall. “Daddy has a mommy! Daddy has a mommy!” she chanted loudly.

“So, um, Wally, Michelle, please have a seat while I get us something to drink.” the elder Connell told them with a slight uneasy tone to his voice.

The couple sat down and made the young males settle down beside them. He looked around at the living room, thinking that it hadn’t changed much in thirty-five years. Oddly enough, his one trophy from high school still sat on the mantle over the fireplace. That was the one for winning the Varsity Inter-mural football tournament his junior year. He was one of the wide receivers for his team and Frank Hellyer was a linesfur. That thought made him sad momentarily.

“I have a treat for you, Wally,” his father said as he came back out into the living room. “I found some Moxie Cola over at that discount beverage place in Modesto, off the 99 freeway. I remembered just how much you and your sisters loved the stuff.” The tray he had in his paws had non-caffeinated drinks for the children and the afore-mentioned beverage for the adults.

“Oh Wow, I didn’t know anyone still made the stuff,” Wally said as he looked at the bottle to see just

how many carbs it had. “It’s not too bad on sugar, considering I haven’t had lunch.”

“What’s that all about?” his dad asked.

“Dad’s a diabetic,” Water Lee the 3rd proffered up. “We hafta keep an eye on Dad just in case he looks rough.”

“Um, how long have you been a diabetic?” his father asked.

“About ten years, now,” Wally replied. “It’s not too bad at the moment. I keep some insulin with me but I generally only need it in the morning, and sometimes not at all.”

“Well, that’s good to hear. Your grandfather Joseph is a diabetic, too but he takes pills for it.”

“I tried pills, Dad. They didn’t set well with my system, even after six months of trying. I found it was just better to be a proper diabetic, eat right and fight off the candy attacks.”

“You still have your mother’s sweet tooth, eh?”

Real bad,” Wally replied, taking a sip of the drink offered. He smiled, the rich, biting flavor bringing back a multitude of memories from his childhood.

The extended Connell family had finally gotten comfortable on the back patio, watching the kids run around the huge back yard, burning off energy while they visited. The elder tiger got up from his chair, beckoning for Wally to follow him.

“Maybe the kits would like to ride yours and your sister’s old bicycles,” he proffered up, opening the back doors to the garage. He had rigged up a pair of double doors in the rear of the garage when they were all little, so he could put the ski boat in the back yard during the winter.

“Dad, you don’t still have them, do you?” Wally asked in astonishment.

“Yeah, I just couldn’t throw them out, since they meant so much to you kits.” he replied. Dad pulled out Wally’s Schwinn Cherry Krate[®], Victoria’s green Schwinn Sting-Ray[®] and Valerie’s purple Schwinn Pixie[®] from the garage, obviously having been polished and waxed to perfection with loving paws.

“Dad, you restored these,” Wally pointed out. “I remember how beat up mine was when I quit riding it.”

“You caught me,” the elder tiger replied. “It wasn’t easy to get a few of the parts I needed.”

“I know, Dad. I bought a Cherry Krate[®] clone off eAuction a few years back and I’m still looking for a decent chain guard.”

“You’ll have better luck on Gregslist,” his father proffered up. “The prices are just too high on eAuction and I got tired of some fur sniping the item at the last minute.”

Wally sat on his old bike, feeling the old memories come back to him. He remembered the bay colored colt that lived across the street, Ray Stankewitz, that helped him build a ramp out of a piece of plywood and a milk crate. He had jumped it several times then Ray had jumped it, breaking the seat post welds on his Grand Auto® Riviera polo bike. They had both gotten in deep trouble over that.

“Hey Dad! Where’d you find that goofy lookin’ bicycle?” Walter the 3rd asked as the kits surrounded them, giving them a critical eye.

“Hey! This was my bicycle when I was 12, I’ll have you know!” his dad replied.

“These were the ones that every young fur wanted when your father was young,” Grandpa Connell explained.

“Can I ride this one?” Joe asked, pointing at the green one.

“Sure, you most certainly may,” Grandpa replied. Walter took the Krates, Joe hopped on Victoria’s old mount and they had finally coaxed Sarah onto the Pixie. It didn’t take long before they were racing one another around the yard.

“Son, I want to show you something else.” the elder male bid.

He led Wally into the garage, turning on the lights so he could see better. There sat his father’s 1959 Desoto Adventurer convertible, looking like it had just rolled off the showroom floor. Next to it sat the family’s skiboat, an 18 foot long RaysonCraft flatbottom v-drive that was powered by a 1958 Desoto PowerDome V8. It too was completely restored. Both car and boat were painted the same shade of coral pink and white with white interiors.

“Wally, I want you to have the car and the boat.” his father offered up. “I promised you that you could have them when you turned 18. It’s a little late but still, I want you to have them. I know you will enjoy them immensely.”

“I really can’t ...” Wally’s dad cut him off cold.

“No, I have hung on to these old warriors for far too long. It’s your turn to enjoy them with your wife and kits.”

“Dad, I just don’t know what to say ...” The white tiger was at a loss for words.

“Say ‘Thank You and I will take good care of them’ and that will be enough.”

“Thank you, Dad. I ... um ...” Wally had to stifle a sob, having been overcome emotionally. “Michelle and I will teach the little ones to ski, just like you taught us.”

The elder Connell didn’t say anything in reply, he just hugged his son fiercely while tears of joy ran freely down his cheeks.