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“A Loss Of Rights”

By Kellan Meigh

Epilogue

Victoria and Gytha were tending to little Sabrina while Dana took care of her personal needs. The little femme was just the sweetest little thing, all bubbly and attentive. It was becoming clear that her hair was going to be just a bit lighter in shade than her pale blond fur. Their reverie was interrupted by the new mom asking for some assistance.

“Um, Mom, could you help me out, please?” Dana asked from the archway to the family room. She was holding the support belt that was prescribed to help her heal from her C-Section. “I can pull this thing off by myself but I can't quite put it back on yet. It's just too painful when I try.”

“Sure, I can help you,” the tigress replied as she got up from the couch. “I'm sure Gytha will spoil Sabrina rotten by the time we return.”

Mom and Daughter went to her master bedroom so Dana could put the support belt on and have her mother look at her incision site. She stripped down then stood still so Victoria could look at her abdomen.

“That looks like you're healing up real good, Hon. That angry red look has finally went away.” she told her daughter. She held the support belt while Dana stepped into it, then pulled it up for her after she helped to get Dana's tail out of the way. The new mom still grimaced when the belt put pressure against her lower abdomen.

“Gah, that really hurts!” Dana spat out, holding her belly while she bit her lower lip. “Mom, it's been a week and it still feels like everything's in the wrong place down there.”

“Turn around and face me,” Victoria instructed her while she sat down on the edge of the bed. “I need to tighten the booster bands a little for you.”

“Sure Mom,” Dana replied, standing still and gritting her teeth while her mom undid the booster elastics and stretched them two inches before reattaching them.

“Actually Hon, you should feel better with this belt cinched up like this.” the tigress suggested.

“Well, maybe, just a bit,” Dana replied, twisting side to side just a bit to help settle that belt on her body. She then sat down next to her mom, leaning against her and hugging her. “Brett and I have been run ragged since Sabrina came along. I just don't see how you did it.”

“Having a little one isn't easy.” she replied to her daughter. “At least you have Brett to help you. I was on my own when John Parks left me six months after Conrad was born. It will get better.”

Victoria helped Dana to put on her underwear then her sweatpants, since it still hurt the young feline mix to bend over. She then helped her out to the family room and assisted Dana to sit down in her rocker. While Gytha brought Sabrina over to her mother, Dana unbuttoned her blouse and undid her maternity bra so she could nurse her little one.

“She is so big for being a newborn,” Gytha commented, sitting down on the hearth by Dana's rocker so she could talk with her sister while Victoria pulled up an ottoman to sit on.

“You know, she was bigger than any of ... you ... kits ... were ...” Victoria's voice trailed off as she remembered the circumstances. “Gah, I keep forgetting I didn't actually give birth to either one of you. We were told by Denise Berger that your mortal forms were modeled after an extrapolation of your father's and my genetic makeup. If that's so, I would guess the information on the birth certificates would be about right.”

Even though Victoria loved her three youngest offspring every bit as much as Conrad, she shook her head in disgust, thinking about just how much she would have liked to have *'talked'* with Pamela Benelli for a few minutes.

Alone ...

In a dark alley ...

She then brought up some numbers to share with them.

“Let's see, If I remember right, Dana was thirteen pounds even and twenty-five inches while Gytha was fourteen pounds, one ounce and twenty-seven inches. Um, Axel was almost as big as Gytha so if I had actually carried the two, I would have looked positively enormous. I wouldn't be at all surprised if Sabrina ends up over seven feet tall when she's fully grown.” That made Dana cringe and voice her thoughts.

“Oh don't say that, Mom! Do you know just how hard it is for me to find off-the-rack clothes?” Dana blurted out. “I had to order all my maternity clothes from a place in Columbus, Ohio, this place called Double Z Big and Tall Maternity Wear!”

“I had to make almost all of mine,” Gytha brought up, since she was just an inch and a half shy of seven feet tall herself.

“And you did a wonderful job, too,” her mother complimented. “With all of you tall kits, I feel so short at times.” she mused.

"I know Brett feels the same way," Dana proffered up. "He hates it when I put on heels to go out and I end up being almost a half foot taller than him." She took a picture of them that was taken at a recent banquet from the end table and gave it to her mother. Victoria could see the young couple was dressed impeccably but Dana was quite a bit taller than her hubby. "I was wearing my four inch stiletto heels in that picture so that made me almost seven inches taller than him. Brett kept trying to get me to sit down all evening so no fur would notice our height difference."

"You're such a stinker!" Victoria stated, smiling at her daughters. They were both a pair of fun-loving furs that loved their husbands deeply.

Victoria was driving back to her house, musing about the situation. Sabrina was destined to be a very tall fur. How tall, she didn't know but she would bet on seven feet plus if she had a guess. Conrad had been just a shade over nineteen inches and eight pounds, three ounces and she just couldn't imagine giving birth to her other three, especially her twins Gytha and Axel. Even though she had some memories of that happening, she couldn't be sure if it was an actual memory or an implanted one. That would have required her to have a C-Section just like Dana had to have.

She was thinking about just how wonderful but complicated her life had become. She was a Warrior for the Gods, a wife, mother and grandmother along with being a salesfur for Century Real Estate. Now she knew why Torvald complained about it so often. This life was just too hectic.

She pulled up in her driveway and parked her van, looking at the keys she had in her paw after she shut the engine off. She had held onto one key from the last mission, that one with a stylized 'D' for the head that belonged to her 'other' minivan. She smirked, thinking about what the Dodge dealer would have done if she had drove her Desoto minivan from that other parallel world in for servicing. Would anything he had in his parts department even have fit it?

She picked up her mail on the way to the door, shuffling through it momentarily to see her monthly commission check had come. Her boss had held onto a few commissions she had coming until she returned home from her furnapping. She nodded to herself, thinking about going to the bank before going back over to see Dana this afternoon. Gytha had volunteered to stay with her while the tigress took care of some business. They had been seeing after her because she had been feeling tired and weak after her delivery.

Dana had wanted to see the old picture albums of Conrad so Victoria went to the study to get them from the shelf. What she found were about four times as many albums than she thought should have been up there. Taking one down, she found what must have been Gytha's photos when she was a little one. There was a picture of them together, momma holding the little newborn femme equine/feline mix in her arms. There was something about that picture, though. Getting Torvald's big magnifying glass out of the top center drawer of his desk, she examined that photo closer. Between the top of her pants and the bottom of her crop top she appeared to have on a support belt, very similar to the one Dana had been prescribed.

"What the ...?" she said quietly, furrowing her brow at the situation. Knowing she was the only one home presently, she locked the front door's deadbolt, then slipped out of her pants and underwear. Getting a small mirror that Torvald used to trim his beard with from their bathroom, she looked at her

lower abdomen closely. It actually looked like she had a thick C-Section scar! She scowled, then looked at the ceiling and made her request.

“Denise! Denise Berger, I need to talk with you right now!!” she practically shouted, trying to stand still and not get angry at the situation afterward. Momentarily the skunkette shimmered into her bedroom, holding her bikini top and bottom to her private bits with her paws.

“Um, erm ... okay ...” Victoria said slowly, smirking at the sight in front of her. The skunkette was trying to re-tie her bikini top and not doing too good of a job at it, either.

“Sorry, Victoria. I was sunbathing on the French Riviera when you called.” she explained.

“I'm guessing you were laying muzzle-down on a towel?” the tigress offered up, still smiling at the situation.

“Yeah, I was. The sun felt soooo good on my backside,” Denise replied, finally getting her bikini tied back together. “So, what can I do for you today?” she asked.

“You know, when Pamela did all that backstory stuff, just how far *did* she go? The reason I ask is this; it looks like I have C-Section scars when I know I gave birth to Conrad naturally.” Victoria replied.

Denise took a very close look at Victoria's urging, parting the fur to see there appeared to be multiple scars. She felt them, just to see if it was an optical illusion but it wasn't. The skunkette got up and thought about it, shaking her head. That's when Victoria gave her the photo album to look at.

“Oh, you have got to be kidding me,” Denise stated, turning the pages to see Gytha's life with the Immortal Couple laid out in the images. There was that picture of Gytha on her second birthday, putting cake frosting in Torvald's mane. Her twin brother was in the background, smearing frosting on his muzzle. Further on towards the back, there was a big photo of her and Brett at her Junior Prom. That was before they split up, Gytha eventually marrying Roger and Dana marrying the tiger. She gave the album back to Victoria and thought for a moment before she spoke.

“Um, I'm not sure what to make of this. You know, the Elders did attempt to make this a full-on complete experience so you would all feel like family. I'm not positive they would go this far. though.” she mused. She looked up at the tigress, nodding to herself. “I'll go get some answers for you.” she stated right as she shimmered out of sight.

Torvald was sorting through his paperwork, making sure all the loose ends of today's work were tied up. There were a few young furs that still needed additional counseling so he would make follow-up appointments for those furs. Several more he placed in his 'Closed' basket and one more he would paw carry down to the Sheriff's satellite office in the building for rearrest, that fur failing to show or call in. He started to take a sip of his decaf coffee when some motion by the door caught his eye.

“What the hell is this?” Ron Orcutt, his boss asked while he threw a familiar folder on the huge equine's desk. The otter seemed rather perturbed, too.

“Uh, that's my retirement papers, if I have my guess right,” Tor replied, setting his coffee cup back

down. Ron slid into a seat opposite the stallion, making himself comfortable.

“Tor, we've been through a lot here together. You're one of my best counselors, even if you do seem to take a lot of time off here lately. I want you to reconsider this.” his boss put forth.

“Ron, I've been over this with you before. I can't just keep talking to these kits. They need some example to follow. That's why I'm going to open an At-Risk Teen rehabilitation ranch in the foothills. Victoria has already researched it and we can get the necessary permits. I'm sorry.” Tor rebutted.

“What is it, Tor? Is it your case load? I can have you work part time for a while so you can have more time with your wife, now that you've found her.” the otter suggested.

Ron, it's nothing like that,” he said, picking up his coffee to take a sip and put a break to the train of thought. He sat the cup down and sighed before he continued. “I'm just feeling like we aren't accomplishing much. Look here, another young fur headed for Juvenile Hall.” Tor tossed that case to his boss. “I really think he would have done better at a rehab facility like I want to start. There's only two others in the whole L.A. basin.”

“Listen, work for me part time for another eighteen months. That will max out your retirement and give you time to think about this.” Ron put out for Tor's consideration.

“What's your ulterior motive, Ron? You have one, I'll bet.” Tor said quietly.

“Okay, here's the deal.” Ron replied, gulping hard for no apparent reason except possibly being caught with his paw in the cookie jar. “If you retire in sixty days, I'll end up with Rogers from Internet Crime division. If you wait for eighteen months, Mary Stroup from Homicide will have her degree in Theology and she will be the logical choice to replace you. She has your drive that Rogers just doesn't have.” he admitted.

“How many hours a week are we talking here?” Tor queried, taking another sip of his brew. “Several full days or five half days?” That response made Ron smile for once.

“Um, you know, I was thinking two days a week. That's enough to get you to full retirement.” he replied.

“So, you sat down with a calculator and figured this out before you came to see me?” The stallion laid out on the desk, more of a statement than a question. He was watching his boss squirm under his light interrogation.

“I can't deny it. I did.” the otter said in embarrassment.

“Let me talk to Victoria and see what she says. I'm pretty sure she was going to quit her job and work at the ranch with me,” Torvald pointed out. Ron nodded, getting back to his feet in a hurry.

“Tor, keep the retirement paperwork for now. I'll get the proper forms to request part time work for you and we'll talk tomorrow.” His boss quickly left the room before Tor could object.

Torvald couldn't believe he had just had this conversation. His boss was trying to get him to stay just to get the fur he wanted as a replacement. What was so special about this fur that was superior to Rogers.

He had worked with Rogers a few times to sting furs selling stolen Photovoltaic cells on Gregslist. He seemed to have some drive so what was Ron so concerned about? He decided to look into this.

Going down to Homicide, Tor found Mary Stroup with no problems. The tall solid red chestnut equine femme was sitting at her desk, staring at a computer screen, deep in thought.

“Detective Stroup?” he asked, just to make sure.

“Ah, Torvald Svensen. What brings you here?” she asked as she looked up from her computer, smiling at him ever so slightly. He returned the smile, then replied.

“Um, I came down here to see what Ron sees in you as my replacement,” he admitted, sitting down in her side chair by her desk.

“So, Detective, I understand your wife was found a few days ago. You must be very happy about that.” she offered up.

“I am very happy but you're trying to change the subject.” he countered. “Ron seems to think highly of you. Why would he do that?” Tor asked point-blank.

“Okay, you caught me.” she said, trying not to smile. “I just want to get away from Homicide and do something useful with my time. In Homicide, we only investigate who did the murder, not stopping a fur from murdering. You stop those furs that might turn into murderers.” she told him.

That may be so,” Tor agreed, making himself comfortable. “It's very hard work, to understand the juvenile mind. There's also the times when you have to go find your young fur when they slip away from you.” she smiled, nodding ever so slightly as she spoke her mind.

“Yeah, it sounds like just enough excitement to keep me on my hooves. I think I would like to have your job.”

On the Consortium's homeworld, in a small, spartan office, Willi Marie stood in front of a table that had various clear orbs sitting on it. Each one had a small card lying in front of it, explaining its particular indicating ability. With her was her parents, her brother James, Tasha and Mala. Sitting opposite her was the proctor, a fur that appeared at first glance to be a tigress but was in fact a kurani. It was her ears, with the tiny iridescent black feathers instead of fur on the back of them that gave her away. The proctor smiled and addressed them warmly.

“I am Bethany Carmel, the individual entrusted by the Consortium with rating a magic-holder's powers.” she explained. “I have been asked by Iva Marie and Tasha to rate Wilhelmine Marie and her brother James William's abilities. These two fine furs come from a long line of highly rated sorcerers and sorceresses.” She then motioned for Willi Marie to step forward. “If you please, I would like to have you start with an elemental orb. This orb will tell how well you control the elements.”

“I will do my best,” Willi replied, taking that ball and setting it in a holder in front of her. She placed her paws over the orb while still standing and willed her energy into it. In a split second it turned inky black. That got Bethany's attention.

"I see ..." the kurani said to herself, making a note on a form she had handy. "Now I would like you to try the elemental orb that has a dampening ward around it." she instructed.

"I can see the ward clearly," Willi commented as she put that ball on a stand. It took her but a second or two at the most to defeat the ward, turning that orb black too.

"You are turning out to be a very powerful sorceress, Wilhelmine. I now wish to have you attempt the ward orb. It had been loaded with over one hundred various protection wards." Bethany watched as Willi took the orb, sat it in a stand and turned it to examine the wards carefully.

"I am not sure but this might be the way to do it," Willi said softly to herself, putting her paws in just the right places. She quickly used her powers to punch through and dissolve the wards, leaving room to power up the orb to a very deep black.

The harder tests were changing and manipulating the elements, making water turn to stone, forcing a fire orb to float motionless and eventually forcing a rock to turn into a plant. Even though it took immense concentration, she did accomplish that feat. Numerous other tests were run, including a test that had the young mare send them to her home and back. That particular test was so simple for Willi, since she had done that one several times already.

"Very good, nicely done," Bethany stated after they reappeared in her testing quarters, making another note on her paper. "This is the last test. Please extend your arms to me," she requested, bringing forth a measuring tape to obtain the sizes of her wrists. The proctor then went to a cabinet and opened it, stepping back to search the drawers with her mind. After finding the items she wanted, she slid a drawer open and removed two platinum colored bands.

"Are those dampening bands?" the femme equine asked while Bethany put them on her wrists. They fit snug, tight enough that they did not slide around on her arms.

"These are very special dampening bands, my dear. What I want you to do is to remove them without touching them." the kurani told her.

"Remove them? How?" Willi questioned. "If they are dampening bands, I should be unable to remove them."

"Well, maybe you could shake them off or will them to open by themselves. The gist of this test is to determine your true level of ability. You have one earth hour to accomplish the task in." the proctor stated before she took up her seat again. "Here is a sample band so you may work the lock to see how it opens." she added, giving Willi a third band to examine. The blond femme had gotten a little nervous about this last test so she stood up straight, closed her eyes and took a deep breath so she could concentrate. That's when she heard the sound of both bands dropping off of her wrists and landing on the table in a musical jingle of metal.

"I don't believe it!" the proctor blurted out. "I watched you show no sign of even trying!" she pointed out, making some more notes about the situation.

"Sometimes when I get nervous, things happen." Willi offered up with a pensive smile.

“I will have you take that test again, Wilhelmine.” Bethany stated. “I will have you sit and quiet your mind for a moment and then I will have your mother put the bands on you to further calm you.”

The proctor brought a softly padded chair over to the young mare, instructing her to sit down and get comfortable. After she sensed that Wilhelmine's mind was quieted, she gave the bands to the elder femme equine who carefully slipped them onto her daughter's wrists.

“Are you ready?” Bethany asked quietly after kneeling beside her. Will nodded that she was, taking a deep breath in anticipation. “Please remove the bands.” she instructed.

Willi brought them up in front of her, examining the bands with her eyes and mind. She then closed her eyes, concentrated for just a moment then smiled as she felt the bands fall away from her wrists and land in her lap. What the others observed was the appearance that the bands fell 'through' her wrists somehow. They were still latched closed when Willi Marie gave them back to Bethany.

“It is true, then,” Bethany muttered to herself as she went back to the table and wrote some more notes on the sheet.

“What's true?” Willi asked, seeming very confused by that statement. Bethany turned to her and said in a very serious voice,

“Wilhelmine, you are obviously a Grand Mistress.”

Wilhelmine and her family were enjoying a light meal on the Consortium's homeworld at a little French bistro near Bethany's office. It had taken a lot longer than Bethany had expected to determine James' abilities, since he didn't use them on a daily basis. He snickered again, thinking about what he had done to the dampening bands.

“You're still laughing about that, aren't you?” Willi asked, noting the gleam in his eyes. He could not remove the bands but one of them was now glass and the other had become bright purple plastic.

“Well, I don't sling my magic around like you do!” he said in his own defense. “I rarely perform any type of magic, maybe not more than once a week. Even at that, it's always something little, like making my coffee hot again when it cools off or removing the cheese from a burger when I order it without cheese and they put it on anyway.” The parents, however seemed very pleased with the results of the tests.

“Son, you should apply for a formal training program since you could get a scholarship,” Erich suggested to his offspring. “I know Wilhelmine has little ones on the way so I understand her hesitation. You, however should take up training, even if it might be part-time in nature. A class six sorcerer should not waste their abilities.” James looked up at his father, giving thought to this idea.

“You know, I wouldn't even have any significant powers if Willi Marie hadn't jump-started mine.” he brought up. “She was showing me how she could make my back lawn look green so she touched me when she put a greening spell on my yard. I swear, the surge that went through me almost knocked me out.”

“That's how your uncle Kurtis Schmidt got his powers going,” Iva Marie told her brood. “I think my brother was scared by the idea of having magical abilities at first but he finally accepted it. He's still never come here to be rated, though.”

The Immortal Couple were walking through the living room of a ranch house that was nestled in the Portola Hills. The view out the front bay windows was spectacular, looking westward towards a beautiful sunset.

“This is a very nice choice,” Torvald commented, sizing up the living room to see if their furniture would fit. “Hon, how much was this place again?” he asked.

“It's a short sale by the family of the late owners. They were killed in a plane crash so the family is liquidating their assets. It's going for about tenth of what it was worth eight years ago, right at two hundred thousand.” she replied. They went to the master bedroom, finding it quite to their likings.

“This bathroom has enough room for a big jacuzzi tub,” he commented, measuring the room in a crude way with his arms.

“It has a bunkhouse that will easily sleep twenty and the stables will hold twelve horses,” she told her hubby while she led him to the family room. “These windows open up to a corral that would let the horses stabled in four of the nearest stables to come right up to the windows.” she pointed out.

“Hmm, and how many acres is this place again? I forgot what you said on the way up the driveway.” he asked.

“How about eight hundred and twenty-two acres? Is that enough for you?” she retorted. “Well, do we buy it or not?” she queried.

“I think this would be just fine but what do we do about our house? Sell it?” he asked.

“Well, Valerie and Barbara want to do a lease-to-own deal with us,” the tigress told her stallion. They had wandered back out the front door and had sat down on the porch swing, the stallion giving it a nudge to cause it to swing gently back and forth. Torvald looked around at the expansive front property, pleased with what he observed.

“Okay, we'll do it.” the huge fur told his mate. “You're still going to work from here for a while and I'll retire in sixty days. I talked with the chief this afternoon and he assured me Detective Stroup would get my position. He was only yanking Ron's chain but I'm supposed to keep it a secret until I officially leave the force.” He smiled as he added, “The chief really wants to see if I can stay on the force and have my work here sanctioned by the department.”

“It's a done deal, then. I'll start the paperwork in the morning.” the tigress said as she leaned against her hubby, purring ever so softly. “No more off-world missions, no more dealing with demons, minions and denizens of the underworld.” she mused.

“I agree.” he chimed in. “Just you, me and a few troubled teens to counsel.”

He sat there for a few minutes, taking in the panorama. Musing about things, he remembered what Victoria had told him earlier in the week.

“Um, Victoria, did Denise ever get some answers about those C-Section scars for you?” he asked.

“Yeah, she did.” the tigress replied. “It was in the backstory so I do have scars. Gah, how I would like to get that mongoose alone for just a few minutes,” she said in a level voice.

“I say you should just forget about it. We're done with that stuff now.” he suggested, noting how her mood was affected by thinking about it.

“Okay, I'll try. Maybe once we're back to being a normal couple, my attitude towards what we used to do will improve.” she suggested, snuggling up against the berserker tighter.

“I hope so, Hon. I really think we'll be happy now.” he put forth, settling in to watch the beautiful sunset in front of them. “An end to one chapter of our lives, a beginning to another chapter.”