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*Tell them Kellan sent ya. ;-) Note\* This is a shameless plug for Aslaug and The Silver Coyote! What are friends for, anyway?*

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## **“End Game”**

By Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter 15 – “Prosecution Part Trois”

Victoria had clamped down on the stallion's throat with all of her might, shaking her head violently to rip the flesh open, ensuring the male under her would die. Waiting until she was sure he was dead, no breathing or pulse, the tigress disengaged herself from his dead body and rolled off of him . . .

. . . and promptly fell muzzle-down onto the floor beside the bed.

“What in the heck . . .?” she blurted out, running her paw through the carpet, feeling its plush cut pile surface. This wasn't her bedroom because she had Berber carpet in hers. After a moment, it dawned on her; what had happened was just a bad dream and they were still on the Celestial Court's home world.

Rolling over onto her back, she intended just to stretch out a bit, then get up off the carpet. That's when her posterior screamed out in pain, making her jump up off the floor faster than she had ever done so in her life.

Making her way across the room carefully to the mirror over the dressing table in their suite, she turned her back to the mirror and looked over her shoulder to see if her nightmare had been something else. What she observed was the fact that her backside from the tops of her shoulders to below her behind was nothing but a mass of blood, nasty welts and raw skin. This actually had the appearance that it had been done to her with a whip. And she wondered to herself, why wasn't she healing up? Was she no longer immortal? The sight in the mirror beyond her back, on the bed, shocked her to the point that she let out a blood-curdling shriek of terror.

Torvald was trying to sit up, clutching at his throat with one paw while he steadied himself with the other. His neck was bleeding profusely and it was clear he was having extreme difficulty in breathing. The drool coming from his mouth was slightly red-tinged, too. Victoria knew in her heart that she had done this to her hubby somehow. Trying her best to ignore her own pain, she made her way to Torvald so she could see after him.

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Cami woke from her sleep with a start, shocked awake by Victoria's scream from beyond their closed bedroom door. Dismissing the fact that she had slept 'in the raw', she grabbed her rifle and charged it as she got up off the couch and sparing no effort, ran at the bedroom door.

Using her left shoulder as a battering ram, she splintered the door as she made her way into the room. What lay beyond that door even shocked the former decorated battle soldier. Torvald was bleeding badly from his neck and shoulders, most likely life threatening injuries, and the tigress looked to have been heavily tortured. She was breathing raggedly, as if she were in great pain while she crawled up on the bed to see about her hubby.

The femme wolverine wasted no time in grabbing up the phone in the room and punching '199' on the keypad.

“Front desk, state your emergency,” the disembodied female voice on the other end requested.

“I have two Code Seventies in suite Alpha two-one-seven. I need paramedics up here pronto.” she stated calmly as she assessed the situation. She was getting ready to go for the first-aid kit when Victoria touched her hubby's leg with her paw.

That's when the room around Cami, without warning, suddenly went white . . .

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Gary held the door while Nancy strode into the Inn with all the regal flair she could muster. Bradley followed them in and stood beside his daughter, announcing her presence.

“Her Royal Highness, Princess Nancy Corbin of El Cajon.” he said loudly, scanning the room for the patron's reactions. The Innkeeper took one look in their direction, scowled and began his diatribe.

“Hey You! We do not allow animals . . . in . . . here . . . ?” The balding male's voice trailed off when Nancy removed her helmet and gave it to Gary to hold. “What in God's name?!?” the keep blurted out, staring at the blond femme before him.

“Kind keep, we only wish to partake of some nourishment,” the femme equine stated, giving the male a crooked smile. “I apologize if my appearance shocks you. I am from El Cajon, a place that is a long journey from here. My kind are quite different from your people.” It wasn't the whole truth but it would do for now.

“You are quite different, Your Highness.” the proprietor admitted. “Please, have a seat by the fireplace and I will serve you personally.” he suggested, indicating for them to follow.

The trio followed the innkeeper across the room to a table by the fireplace. He pulled out one chair, the largest, and covered it with a blanket for Nancy. The balding man then put a pillow on it for her comfort. The keep then held the chair for her while she sat down.

“Your Highness, I must ask if normal food will suffice?” the keep asked. “I do not know what your kind would prefer for . . .” Nancy interrupted him.

“Whatever you are serving will be fine with me,” she replied, adjusting her armor now that she was seated.

“Thank you, Your Highness. I will return shortly.” The keep then made a bee-line for the kitchen, shouting for his cook to get busy.

“You seemed to have made an impression,” Gary commented in English, trying not to smile.

“I hope I didn't lay it on too thick,” she retorted, straightening out her kilt's aprons.

The Innkeeper began to bring plate after plate of food for them, everything from soup to a roast of some sort. He capped it off with a jug of some very palatable red wine. Nancy took a particular liking to a particular type of fresh fruit that was served to them.

“This is very good, whatever this fruit is,” she commented, taking another piece of what seemed to be a melon of some sort. It was sweet, juicy and it had a flavor that seemed to have a bit of cinnamon to it.

“That's a field-melon,” Gary pointed out. “Grows like a weed near a water source, won't hardly grow anyplace else.” he added. “Why it's called a field melon when it won't grow in an inland field, I don't know.”

The keep had returned with a dessert pudding of some sort, piping hot from the crude wood-fired oven. He poured Nancy some more wine then ladled up another portion of stew for her.

“Is everything satisfactory?” he inquired, bowing deeply to the femme equine.

Nancy nodded as she responded. “Everything is very good, kind Innkeeper.”

Bradley spoke up, getting the proprietor's attention; “Kind sir, would you send a courier to the Magistrate, informing him that we will arrive in time for evening festivities?” he asked.

“I will do that for you,” the keep replied, sparing no time in getting a young man to head out on a horse towards the city.

“Okay, will we make it in time?” Nancy asked her father in English.

“I think so,” Bradley replied, giving thought to the distance from their location to the city. “We might actually make it before the afternoon is gone.”

“Good,” Nancy said softly. “I want to get this over with just as soon as possible.”

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Cami tried the bars to her cell again, very worried by the fact that her implants could detect no network connections at all. Wherever she was, this was not a planet she had ever been to. She sat down on her bunk again, shaking her head. This was a situation that went beyond any training or hands-on real-life experience that she had been through. Her rifle was still on the bunk, loaded with the safety off but no fur had made an effort to relieve her of it. She was also still quite naked.

She thought she recognized the bear in the robes that kept walking by her cell but she thought the lion in

the camp shirt and hiking shorts was not familiar to her in any way.

Cami knew from what had been said by various furs, Victoria was in a cell near her as was Torvald. The bear seemed to be concerned with the Immortal Couple's health while the lion refused to talk with the bear about the situation besides acting somewhat put out by their presence. That lion also seemed perturbed that she had come with Tor and Vicki, despite the fact that she had not requested this 'transport' to wherever they were.

Finally remembering the ursine's name, she called out to him as he walked by her cell once more.

“Forseti?” she beckoned, waving him over to her cubicle.

“Miss Camille Carter,” he replied in greeting.

“Um, do you think I could have a robe or something?” she asked, trying her best to cover her nakedness.

“Miss Cami, I'm sorry you ended up here,” he offered up, frowning in the direction of the lion. “I will send you back in just a moment, as soon as my counterpart sees the reasoning in my thinking. In the meantime, here is a robe,” he added, taking one from a hook outside her cell and giving it to her through the bars.

“Thank you, Forseti.” Cami quickly put on the robe offered, glad to no longer be naked in public.

“I'm sorry this situation has come to such a head for all of you,” the bear commented. “We seem to be losing a battle that hasn't been fought yet.”

“I don't understand,” Cami put forth, wondering what he was talking about.

“Torvald and his mate were thrust into a bad situation and now he's dying. We're trying to keep him alive but Christopher's furs seem to be struggling with the situation. Never underestimate the powers of the Darkness.” Forseti revealed to the femme wolverine.

“This was not my fault!” the lion blurted out to some fur in the next room. “I did not allow this! Even if you heal him, he still has to stand trial for injuring his mate, one of my Agents!!”

“Excuse me for a moment, Camille,” the bear asked of her, scowling again in the lion's direction. He walked over to the casually dressed fur and began to have a very animated conversation with the feline male, actually more like a shouting match.

“You know that you allowed Torvald and Victoria to be injured by ignoring the murmurings of the Malefic Council!” Forseti put forth quite tersely.

“They were being treated like all the others that defied *My Father's* direction!” the lion retorted. “Torvald procreated! And on a world that was not part of Odin's domain!” he added.

“We've been through this before, Christopher. Do I need to have Aslaug come back and remind you that other Agents of differing religions were allowed to live out their lives together?” the bear asked. “Specifically, Christian and Heathen?”

“Don't you dare bring that up! Odin was behind that!” the lion blurted out. “I do not need Aslaug to

remind me of our decisions.”

“You should just let this go,” Forseti suggested. “Haven't they and their offspring suffered enough?”

“So, you think they have suffered enough?” the lion asked.

“Yes, I think they have.” Forseti replied. “It's bad enough they're being tried by the Celestial Court. Let this pass, allow Eyr to heal them.”

“I'm not exactly comfortable with that suggestion.”

“Allow them to be healed,” Forseti said in a firm voice. “Allow them to retire. Let them spend their lives together. I think they have many good things left to do. Things that might benefit *The Gods*.”

“Like what?”

“They want to involve themselves with troubled teens. Set them on the right path,” the ursine brought up. “These troubled teens would be diverted away from a road to perdition.”

The lion was giving thought to this idea. “You really think they could make a difference?”

“I do.” The bear gazed at the lion with a serious look on his muzzle. “They are good furs, Christopher. Don't disappoint me and allow Torvald to die. Do the right thing.”

Christopher walked over to Eyr, who was waiting patiently to be allowed to do her work.

“Eyr, can you heal Torvald?” the lion asked.

“Yes, I can.” she replied.

“Can you remove his immortality?” Christopher questioned further.

“No, I cannot.” the ancient femme healer replied. “His injuries are too numerous for him to survive. I am very sure that he would die in less than a heartbeat if I removed his immortality.” She gave Christopher a hard stare as she added, “Before you ask, Victoria would live no more than three more years without her immortality, given the injuries she's sustained. They would be hard, pain-ridden years of physical disability, if you must know.”

“Then it is settled. Eyr, do your best to heal the two of them.”

Eyr walked into the cell to the right of Cami's that contained the dying stallion, shouting out orders as soon as she got into the room.

“You, you and you! Out!” she bellowed, making angels scatter from the room in fear. “You! Stay right there! You will make sure that no other being enters this room to disturb me!”

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Torvald looked up when the angels scattered, smiling weakly at the femme that was the cause of the commotion. He knew that he would either be healed or she would assist the Valkyries in taking him to his

final reward. Most likely he would become an Einharjar like Frode Gunnarson.

“Stallion, you are a mess!” the femme healer blurted out once she assessed the situation. “I’m sorry, Torvald. This will hurt, I’m afraid.” she added.

Eyr literally was having to rebuild the berserker, starting with his neck. Whatever Dark being that had done this damage to his body had almost killed him outright. It was suggested by the son of *The Almighty* that Victoria had inflicted this injury but the healer had her reservations. The bite was too deep on his throat and the spread between the incisors was too wide to have been done by the tigress.

Working down his body, she fixed numerous cuts, claw marks and puncture wounds that covered his hide. Eyr repaired his spleen, fixed several deep punctures to his shoulders and reversed the damages done by a fairly bad wound on his thigh. Once finished, she sat down by him to get her breath.

“Eyr? Am I going to be okay?” the stallion asked weakly.

“Yes, you will be just fine,” she replied, looking over at him. “I am afraid that you may never be returned to being mortal again, however. Your body has seen too much damage.”

“I had wondered that myself,” he mused, laying his head back onto his pillow. That’s when the remembrance of that strange dream hit him. “Um, Eyr, how is my wife?”

“I still need to heal her,” the huge femme replied. “Apparently, she was injured at the same time you were. That’s why you both ended up here, Torvald. Christopher thinks you both injured each other. You know how that always triggers an event of this nature, when Agents not of the same pantheon injure one another.”

“I couldn’t have done harm to my mate!” the stallion blurted out. “Tell them I didn’t do it!”

“I know you didn’t harm her,” Eyr replied. “Just stay here and rest, please?” she asked as she left the room to see about the tigress.

The femme healer walked out of the stallion’s room but the sight of Forseti and the lion debating some small issues regarding Torvald and his mate made her frown. There were numerous Agents that worked for Odin and none of them seemed to end up injured like the Immortal Couple. Eyr felt sorrow for the plight of these particular warriors, since they had unerringly devoted themselves to being a tool in *The Almighty’s* arsenal. Why they were being treated so badly, she couldn’t understand.

Turning toward her destination, she shook her head in disgust.

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The tigress gritted her teeth while an angel wiped down her back with something that felt akin to hot roofing tar. It stung badly upon initial application, then drifted towards a nasty antiseptic burn the longer it was on her raw skin. Whatever it was, it had a noxious odor, too.

“All of you! Out!!” a familiar voice shouted, causing the seraphs to scatter. Momentarily, a paw gently touched her head.

“Please be still,” Eyr bid Victoria, looking over her backside with great concern. “You have been

whipped, it seems. I'll do my best to restore your pelt to normal." she added.

"Just get rid of whatever that was that the angels used, will you?" the tigress asked through gritted teeth.

"I'm not sure what it was but I will remove that . . . stuff . . . first." the healer replied.

While Eyr worked on her, the tigress pondered their situation. She knew from what had been said outside her cell, Torvald still lived. She was glad of that because she was very sure she had tried to kill him. Whoever was responsible for this incident had a death warrant on their head, as far as she was concerned. What she really wanted was for all of this insanity to end, to be mortal again, and for she and her hubby to live out their lives in peace.

What still bothered Victoria was the fact that they had been allowed to get into this situation in the first place. She knew in the past, when they were in danger of being thrust into a dire situation, Denise Berger would 'tweak' things around them to stop them from being harmed. This time was different.

She knew in her heart that it was the Malefic Council that was behind all of this. What she wouldn't give to have it out with them and just explain to those idiotic assholes that they were wasting their time. Victoria knew in her heart that she could never be their Agent, not now. She would rather face off with them, possibly being destroyed and sent to oblivion before she would become one of them.

"I think I am done," Eyr stated while she rubbed a soothing oil into Victoria's pelt. Whatever it was, it felt good to her, helping the pain to recede. "I matched up your striping as best as I could, my dear. I just hope I am very close with the pattern."

"Just as long as it's healed up, anything would be better than raw skin," the tigress replied. "Eyr, help me up. I need to see about my hubby." she requested.

Before the healer could help her up from her bed, the tigress found herself standing in a pool of light. Looking up, she observed her mate in a similar situation. For some reason, his coat looked very pale, almost white. His mane and tail were now white as new snow, not the usual platinum. Something was up.

"Victoria, do you know why you're here?" a familiar voice asked. Christopher strode into a larger circle of light.

The tigress nodded. "I was told it was because you thought I had injured my husband." she replied.

The lion confirmed her suspicions. "You are correct." he agreed.

"Torvald, do you know why you're here?" Forseti asked as he stepped into another pool of light.

The stallion shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose it's because you thought I had hurt my wife?"

Forseti nodded ever so slightly. "for the most part, yes. Christopher thought you had injured your mate. I knew better than that. You love her too much to do such a heinous thing to her."

"I have to admit, the dream did seem very real." Torvald offered up. "I could even smell the death in that place we were in."

Christopher cleared his throat to get their attention. "It has been suggested to me that I should drop the

charges against Torvald concerning Victoria's injury and allow the two of you to retire from being active Agents. I will allow this on the terms that the two of you use your resources to turn young furs away from a path to destruction. I will also allow the two of you to remain immortal for now." The lion stopped talking for a moment, presumably to gather his thoughts. "I have been told that both of you would die if we removed your immortality at this point, so you may stay this way for the time being. Be assured Eyr will work on a way to restore your mortality for you."

"So, we're no longer Agents?" the tigress asked.

"You are no longer active Agents. This has happened before and I suppose it will happen again at some point in time." Christopher replied. "As inactive agents, Denise Berger will no longer be assisting you on a regular basis. This does not mean we will ignore requests for assistance from time to time."

Torvald spoke up. "This means we will no longer be doing missions off-world, right?" he asked.

"You are correct," Forseti replied. The tension in the stallion's body visibly fell away with that information.

Victoria was going to ask a question to clarify their status but the world around her, without warning, suddenly went white . . .

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Nancy took a swig of water from a canteen, then gave the water vessel back to her father. They had just a little ways to go by horseback but she wanted to be sure she could speak loudly and clearly once they arrived at their destination. This Magistrate, whoever he was, needed to think she really was royalty of some sort for them to pull this charade off. So far, they had been very successful.

She had been taken at face value up until this point, an equine femme in a human world. At least she had been well-received. Not one soul had remarked about her in a negative sense. That in itself almost made her want to stay here and not return home. She knew when she returned to her own planet, she would have to ask for her immortality to be removed just so she wouldn't have to deal with more of these insane missions. That would mean she would die.

Looking over at her father, Nancy thought about the conversation they had earlier. She knew it hurt her parent to say she preferred death over these missions but he seemed to understand when she explained she could no longer live with the demons in her head. Every day seemed to be a struggle for her to not think about committing suicide somehow.

The car wreck she was involved in didn't quell that need for self-destruction nor did a fall from a fourth-story ledge of a building under construction. That ended up just being plain painful, unable to move for several minutes while her body put itself back together. Just pain and a waste of time was her reward.

Nancy knew she needed to talk with her Grandpa Torvald. He could provide her answers that her father could not.

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The city finally came into view, a sprawling burg of low buildings, punctuated by the taller two and three story structures in its center. There was a low wall that surrounded the community, possibly a point of

defense for them.

The people that inhabited the city stopped when they observed Nancy astride her mount, flanked by her father and the mage. One woman in particular chased her children into her home and shut the door, maybe from fright. Gary gave her direction, guiding her to the Magistrate's offices.

Nancy dismounted with her father's help, then straightened her armor. Making sure her weapons were secured properly, she nodded, letting her Bradley lead the way. The man at the door hesitated, then regained his composure.

"Your Highness! Please come this way!" he offered, bowing to her as he indicated for them to enter the building. Once they entered, he moved ahead of them, opened an interior door, stepped through and announced them; "Her Royal Highness, Princess Nancy!"

"Ah, the mysterious princess," the Magistrate said as he bowed to her. "I am Barris Heath, a Magistrate for the King of these lands," he explained. The official was an ordinary-looking man, just slightly taller than Nancy and maybe a little overweight. His head of black hair was thinning and his beard was neatly trimmed. He smiled and continued his thoughts.

"You must tell me of this land you come from Your Highness, this El Cajon," he said as he guided her over to a sitting area. "I will admit, I have never been north far enough to encounter your kind."

"I have traveled a long ways to arrive here," she admitted, sitting down on a thickly cushioned chair offered to her.

"In such case, would you stay for a meal with me?" Barris asked.

"I would be honored to dine with you, Lord Heath," she replied.

Scanning the room, the femme equine observed the fact that the items they were after were not here. She hoped they were somewhere in his house, since they intended to literally 'grab and run' with the objects once they were located.

"Tell me, Princess Nancy, are all of your people like yourself? You are so . . . exotic, so pleasing to the eye." Mr. Heath offered up.

"I am an *Equus*, Lord Heath," she began; "There are *Felids*, *Mustilidae*, *Ursines*, *Canids* and more. We all have a passing resemblance to the creatures of the forest."

The Magistrate seemed troubled by this idea. "So, what brings you to our realm? Are you here to see the King?"

"I had hoped to meet your King and set up relations between our kingdoms," Nancy replied. "It could be very profitable for both realms."

"I see . . ." Lord Heath was giving thought to a way to profit from this. That, or maybe reap some kind of a trophy from this chance encounter. "Please stay the night, Princess Nancy. Rest here before you continue your trip, Your Highness. It is still more than a day's travel to the King's castle," he offered.

"We would be delighted to accept your offer of lodging," Nancy replied, smiling widely.

The Magistrate bowed to her. “Our meal will be ready in an hour, Your Highness. If you would like, you may retire to my study to rest,” he suggested.

Nancy accepted the offer so they were led to a room that would be a typical gentleman's retreat. There were bookcases lined with books, several overstuffed chairs and a fireplace being stoked by an assistant.

She sat down, made herself comfortable and scanned the room further. In one corner, on a side table, was the items in question. On display were the laptop, phone and GPS that Nick had left behind.

“Dad!” she blurted out, pointing to the items once the assistant had left the room.

Brad smiled. “Oh yeah! I love it when a plan comes together!” he said as he crossed the room. They were very fortunate that the backpack was behind the items so Brad used it to pack them up again. “Okay, let's get the Hel out of here!”

They all headed back towards the front door only to find a small detachment of soldiers waiting for them, arms at the ready. There were pikes, bows and a pair of crude matchlock rifles aimed in their direction. Brad shoved Gary behind himself, to shield him from the onslaught to come.

“Don't think of trying to leave,” the Magistrate stated as he stepped into view. “You will not leave with those trophies and I will not allow Princess Nancy to leave by any means. She will either be my trophy wife or I will have her head mounted on my wall.”

“The Hell you say!” Nancy blurted out, pulling her AMT .45 Auto pistol from its hiding place in a pouch on her waist. She pushed past her father and began firing, the first shot taking out the official with a bullet to the upper torso on the right side of his chest. She 'neutralized' the two riflemen only to be struck by an arrow to the thigh. That's when Gary pulled her into an alcove across from the one her father was taking refuge in.

“Let us go or you're all dead meat!” Brad shouted out as he fired around the corner with his Model 92 Beretta in 9mm. The reply was two rounds from the crude rifles, some arrows and a throwing axe. “Megan! We need HELP!!” he shouted, trying to get their mission assistant's attention.

“Are . . . you . . . o . . . okay?” Gary asked Nancy. She was occupied trying to get the arrow free from her leg.

“This hurts like the devil but I will be . . .” Nancy looked up to see red foam coming from the mage's mouth. There was a crimson stain beginning to spread out on his tunic from the arrow imbedded into him at the waist level. “Gary! You're injured!!”

“Just . . . just a scratch,” he mused, slumping back against the wall. “I . . . I'll be . . . fine . . .” he added, getting his pistol in hand, then dropping it into his lap. “Just . . .” Gary took one more breath and expired.

Something inside the femme equine's head snapped. She took the dead mage's pistol and ran from the alcove toward the soldiers, a weapon in each paw, both of them blazing.

“Die, you sorry effing bastards!!” she screamed, firing with abandon at the retreating detachment. When she ran out of ammo, Nancy took a broadsword from a display on the wall and used it to dispatch the remaining few soldiers. When it was all done, there were seventeen dead bodies at her hooves. She looked

over to see the Magistrate, still alive, cocking a crude flintlock derringer.

“You will die, you damned demoness,” the man stated once he had the pistol cocked. “You are an abomination from the underworld that needs to be eradicated,” he added, carefully aiming the firearm.

The magistrate pulled the trigger and the round impacted her armor, almost centered under her ribcage. She felt the round pierce her hide and cut a hot path of destruction through her body. Nancy dropped to one knee from the excruciating pain.

The femme equine smiled an evil smile while she reached into her waist pouch. She extracted another firearm, her wilderness survival revolver chambered in .500 Magnum. She slowly cocked the action, got a good combat grip on it and looked up at her attacker with a look of death on her muzzle.

“Meet your maker, you asshole!” she said in a malevolent tone as she made good her aim. The sights were set on a spot in the center of his forehead. Just as she dropped the hammer, something blocked her vision and the round didn't fire.

“Yeeouch!!” Megan screamed as the hammer bit the web of her paw between her thumb and forefinger. She used that same paw to gently take the firearm from the femme equine. “Enough, Nancy. He's dead.” she pointed out. Indeed, the Magistrate had expired.

“Megan, get us out of here!” Brad begged, looking at the body of the deceased mage with a sour look on his face. “If you can, get some angel to take Gary's soul to his last rewards?” he added.

“Okay, I'll see what I can do,” the leopard-spotted skunk replied, transporting them and their reacquired items back to the 'White Room' for debriefing.