

The Characters Torvald 'Tor' Svensen, Conrad (Parks) Svensen , Victoria Connell-Svensen (Sands), Valerie Connell, Barbara Caine, Elizabeth Caine-Sands, Luigi Tagglionne, Ivar Johnsen, Denise Berger, Sheriff Tom Huxley, Lawrence Cerruti, Pastor John and Lisa Aranow, Alexander, Maurine and Corrine Merriweather, Mitch Bolton, Theodore, Catherine, Walter and Laura Chevarez, Rocky Robbins, Reverend Stan Marchese, Roger Woodall, Melvin Platt, Algernon Forrest, Asbeel Wildehond Lycaon, Catarina Dunkel, Pastor Seamus Maclachlan, Doc James Bischer, Karl Jenson, Robert Sands, Matthew, Jonathan, Anna, Nicholas and Thomas Sands, Wilhelmine Andersdatter, Axel Torvaldson, Gytha Torvaldsdatter, Dana Torvaldsdatter , John Parks, Candace Ewing Parks, Frode Gunnarson, Wilhelmine Marie Kurzweil, James William Kurzweil, Milton Heydeck, Ralph Carapina, Coach Rebecca MacNaughton, Steven Nanomantube, Coffee 2 Go and Computer Shack are the property of Ray Stankewitz and may not be used without permission

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'The Price Of Worship'

By R C Stankewitz

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Chapter 7

"Into The Breech"

Torvald had been up since before sunup, sitting around the cottage with nothing to do. He had trimmed his beard as best as possible with a pair of scissors and even took the time to wash up a bit even though he had done so just the night before.

"Sweetheart? Where are you?" the tigress called out to her stallion from the back of the cottage.

"I am in the parlor, Victoria" he replied as he stood and stretched his arms. Torvald was tired but he knew he wouldn't have slept any longer if he had stayed in the bed. He found it hard to entertain himself without a television to watch or a radio to listen to so he had just wandered around the house to occupy his time.

Victoria came into the room to see that her stallion had dressed in his Sunday go-to-meeting clothes. "You look nice this morning" she commented as she gave him a big hug, a kiss then straightened his tie for him.

"I am antsy about going to this church" the huge fur stated as he followed his mate back into the bedroom. "Zagam's influence is there and that bothers me."

"We've done this before" she stated as she began to get dressed. "We'll just walk in and act as if nothing's wrong. Nobody will be the wiser." She looked over at the huge fur to see that he was still acting sort of funny. "What's wrong, dear?" she asked her mate.

"I could not hide a broadsword or Dane axe under my suit coat" he proffered up. "So I bought this from the store" he added as he drew his coat open on the right side to show a Colt Single Action Army revolver in .45 Colt caliber in a left-pawed cross draw shoulder holster of his own design.

“Well, I suppose that it's my turn to confess now” she replied to him. Victoria took her purse and opened it, drawing out a rather large derringer in .44-40 caliber. “Denise brought it to me and made me practice with it just a little.” The tigress deftly hit the button on the side, flipping the barrels up and extracting the rounds expertly. She held them up for Torvald's inspection then dropped them back in and flipped the barrels down into battery again. The huge fur just raised his eyebrows at that display. She then showed her mate the dozen spare cartridges that were secured inside her purse in a mini-holster of sorts.

“I think we need to get ready and go to church” the equine stated. “Let's go forth into the breach.”

###

Asbeel had been sitting around in his hotel room, mulling over the events of the last few days. Every time he thought of the power that built up between the tigress and the stallion it gave him the willies. That kind of power was rare to know about and even rarer to walk away from after experiencing it. A dark agent usually experienced that power when the furs possessing it were killing them.

He got up from his chair and walked across the room to look out over the town's Main street. He observed through the window the furs milling about, noting that most of them were heading in the direction of the Bible Reform church that was a few blocks over. A funny thought crossed his mind just about that time; maybe he would go to church this morning. After all, this was not a -holy- house of worship. There was no chance that Christopher would try and stop him from entering.

He put his boots and coat on, checking his tie in the mirror before he left his room. On the way downstairs it dawned on him that Zagam himself might be there. He thought of a cover story should the demon find him attending church and become curious about his being there. Satisfied that the evil presence would buy his cover that he was stalking the immortal couple, he went out the doors to the hotel and headed towards his destination.

As he strolled along, he spotted the sheriff coming in his direction in a hurry. Tom Huxley put his paw on his revolver as he confronted Asbeel.

“Would you mind going with me over to the jail house?” the law-fur asked the fallen angel. “I just want to have a quick word with you.”

“As you wish” Asbeel replied as he walked with the sheriff to his office. Once inside, Tom closed the blinds and locked the front door. He turned and looked at the dark agent for some time before he finally spoke his mind.

“You're not what you appear to be” he said cautiously. “I think you're a fallen angel if I have my guess right.”

“I am a Third Sphere fallen angel” the canid replied. “Look in the first book of Enoch, Chapter 69, verse 5. I'll quote that passage for you:

“And the second was named Asbeel: he imparted to the holy sons of God evil counsel, and led them astray so that they defiled their bodies with the daughters of furs.”

“So you see, I am a fallen angel, but I presently mean no fur harm.” Mr. Lycaon sat down next to the sheriff's desk and motioned for him to sit. “I have known you were a mage since I arrived and I was wondering when we would have this conversation.”

“You're acting pretty calm about all of this” the collie pointed out as he sat across from the strange-looking canid. “Aren't you afraid that I might try to kill you myself?”

“I don't think you will” Asbeel said as he pulled out a cigar and lit it. “I think you would rather I just left town and forgot about my reasons for being here.”

“I think you're getting smart with me” the collie said as he started to reach under his desk for his backup gun in the holster tacked to the bottom of the desk's center drawer.

“Are you looking for this?” Asbeel asked as he held up the 4 5/8" barreled Colt Peacemaker. “I think this would be rather ineffective against the likes of me, at any rate” he added, laying the piece of the desk. “Just don't make a move for it. I would cut your paw off with my dagger before you could reach it.”

“What are you doing here, anyway?” Tom asked as he looked at the firearm on the desk, still unsure how the canid had done that little trick. The desk had a solid front to it so the sheriff was puzzled how he had reached it.

“I had a mission here that I have decided not to complete” he replied to the sheriff's question, crossing his legs up on the corner of the sheriff's desk. “I am now waiting for an agent to kill me so I may become a white angel again.”

“Now hold on here for a minute!” the sheriff blurted out. “You -want- to be killed?”

“Yes, and it had to be done by an agent of the gods” he replied. Asbeel was smiling at the sheriff as he blew smoke rings in the air.

“I think I would rather you left town” the collie said cautiously. “I'm not buying your story for one minute! It sounds fishy as all hell to me!” A cross look was coming to the collie's muzzle as he looked at the fallen angel.

“Read my mind” the canid suggested, sitting up and leaning forward in his chair. “I know you can read minds and you may willingly probe my thoughts.”

The sheriff accepted the invitation, rolling up his sleeves and clearing his mind. As he concentrated on Asbeel's thoughts, the darkness of certain things he saw there really shook him. After a few moments, the sheriff opened his eyes to stare at the dark angel.

“OK, I guess I have to believe you” Mr. Huxley stated. “You seem to be on the up and up with your statements.”

After the canid had left the sheriff's office, the collie sat there for some time, thinking about what the fallen angel had said. He had however confirmed what the sheriff had thought all along about the General store's new managers; the blond stallion and the

tigress were indeed agents. He would have to keep an eye on them from now on. There was no telling what they were up to in his town.

###

Torvald and Victoria had seen the strange-looking canid enter the sheriff's office with the law-fur as they made their way to the church. The tigress had pointed this oddity out to her mate.

"That -is- strange" the huge fur commented. "I wonder if the sheriff knows what Asbeel is?" Torvald wondered out loud.

"I just hope it's a friendly meeting" she said as they walked along their way. "If it's not, then there will be one serious ruckus in the jail house very shortly."

"I agree" the stallion retorted, giving his wife a hug. "I hope there's no trouble brewing for the sheriff's sake."

###

Asbeel had left the jail house and he was almost to the front door of the Bible Reform church when Algernon pulled him off to the side rather roughly.

"What in Zagam's name are you doing here?" he demanded tersely as he held onto the fallen angel's arm tightly. It was clear that the black wolf wasn't happy with Asbeel's presence at all.

"I am stalking the immortals" the canid replied, shaking himself loose from Mr. Forrest's grip. "I would suggest you not bring attention to me or risk feeling the business end of my weapon up close and personal" he added, straightening out his clothes.

"You were supposed to kill them!" Algernon said tersely as he stared at the dark agent. "Why are they still alive?"

"I haven't found the proper time or place to take care of them" he said somewhat flippantly. "You may try if you think you can do better" he suggested as he straightened his coat sleeve that was somewhat rumpled.

"That is your job to..." The fallen angel cut off the wolf's train of thought as a few more of the town's furs walked up the steps to the church.

"You mind your own business" the canid spat out at the dark wolf after the furs had went inside. "Don't make me finish at least one part of my mission right here and now. That is the part where I strike you dead by Zagam's personal request."

Asbeel turned and walked into the house of false worship, leaving Algernon standing there alone. "Did he say he was going to kill me?" the dark wolf thought to himself. He was shaking his head over the thought that his life and service were worth so little to Zagam that he would have him killed. Pulling himself back together, he entered the church just in time for services to start.

###

The weasel was sitting in a hotel room, waiting for his contact to arrive. The denizens of Hades had passed along a message concerning this meeting, stating that it was very important for him to attend a possible job interview. After what seemed an interminable wait, he was subsequently joined by a dark figure, more of a fur-shaped black cloud than anything else.

“Thammuz, how good of you to meet with me on such short notice” the cloud shape said malevolently. “I have a job for you.”

“It will cost you many souls” the weasel said to the dark cloud. “I do not work for free.”

“You will be rewarded greatly for this one job” Zagam stated. “You just need to kill a pair of immortals and Asbeel.”

“Asbeel!?!” the fallen angel spat out. “I will not kill one of our own!”

“He is no longer one of us” the cloud shape pointed out. “He wishes to become a white angel again.”

“That will not happen” the weasel said confidently to the demon. “The rules forbid such things. You may never return to the fold once you have left.”

“The God who feels he is in charge -up there- has changed the rules” Zagam stated sourly. “A fallen angel can have a white agent kill them willingly and return to heaven.”

“That still will not happen” Thammuz said. “I will kill him myself, destroying his soul completely. He will not become an angel for WhiteChrist's father as long as I am a powerful dark agent in the employ of Lucifer.”

The fallen angel watched as Zagam just dissolved into thin air. “Asbeel, I'm coming for you and I will not fail” he said quietly as he began to sharpen his broadsword.

###

Torvald and Victoria had sat through the services as best as they could. The buck preacher Reverend Marchese had no fire and certainly no true conviction that they could feel during his sermon about the sins of mortal furs. The tigress was particularly annoyed by his misquoting of the passages that she knew by heart. The immortal pair had noticed that there was a lingering darkness that pervaded the house of worship that had caused many furs to feel uneasy as they sat to the end of the sermon.

What had bothered them the most was the inordinately large sums of money being placed on the offering plates. The stallion had given \$20 to the offering just so they wouldn't look out of place. That was a large sum for the average working fur of the town, maybe two or three day's wages for some. Torvald and Victoria were relieved when the sermon was over and they had made their way out the front doors to leave this house of ill boding.

Asbeel was already outside the building and he nodded to the immortal couple as they left the church, causing the stallion to motion him over.

“What were you doing here?” he asked quietly as to not raise suspicion from the other furs standing around talking.

“I was confirming what I had suspected” the canid replied quietly. “This is -not- a holy place of worship.”

“We knew that already. Christopher told me that information himself” the berserker stated. “Zagam has a heavy influence over this congregation.” the huge fur waited a few moments while Alexander and Maurine Merriweather walked by, greeting them to be polite. The mayor returned the greeting and the two mongooses went along their way. “We have decided to help you but I need to build a furnace to melt your sword afterwards.”

“You don't need to do that” the canid stated. “Lay it on the ground and strike it with your broadsword while you're under the influence of the white power. That will destroy it for good. I hate to say this, but I saw an agent do that to a sword while a dark agent was still holding it. The weapon literally disintegrated into thin air. The dark agent didn't fare much better, I'm afraid.”

“That solves that problem. Meet us at our cottage behind the General store in a few minutes” Victoria said to him. “We'll take care of your needs for you.”

“Thank you so much” the canid said quietly. “I will never be able to properly repay you for this.”

As the furs parted company, a weasel that had been watching them from not far away smiled an evil smile as he was able to overhear everything that had been said. He checked his broadsword once more as he muttered “I have you now, you traitorous canid. You and your agent's hours on this planet are numbered and counting down.”

###

Most furs would have not thought anything wrong with the sights of Main street on this particular Sunday afternoon. They would have observed the stallion and his tigress casually walking back to their cottage after church followed shortly by that odd-looking canid with the strange brown and black markings and the somewhat oversized ears. They were followed a just a little bit later by a sharply dressed weasel carrying what looked to be a very large sword in a scabbard on his belt.

The sheriff hadn't attended services in the town's one remaining church this morning which was totally out of character for him. He had taken more than a few drinks after reading the dark angel's mind and he certainly didn't want to be seen in public intoxicated. As he sat in his office making an attempt at sobering up, the sounds from the other furs' thoughts that he heard in his mind were driving him insane. Every time he drank, it would either tune out the other minds for him or he would not be able to tune them out for the life of him. Today happened to be a 'not' day.

He sensed the mayor and his wife walk by and then a few other furs, including the blond filly from the restaurant. The fallen mage felt the immortal couple walk by followed by that dark agent. What really bothered him was the extreme darkness of another of the underworld's agents walking by. That darkness caused him to cringe from the mental images that he was presented with. He knew this wasn't good at all so he strapped on his gun holster, put his Colt revolver in it and slammed down some strong coffee before going outside to see what was up with this latest agent of the underworld.

###

Torvald had changed into his dungarees and a work shirt while the tigress had put on some simple chore clothes to take care of the situation. Asbeel had decided that they should do the job outside to prevent the blood that would be spilled from ruining their furnishings. The trio assembled outside the cottage in the grassy area between it and the store.

"I have wrapped the sword's handle with some leather to protect your paw" the canid said as he held out his weapon for the stallion to hold. Torvald took it in his paw only to drop it quickly as a sizzling sound was heard.

"That hurt!" the berserker said as he examined the burnt skin on the palm of his paw. "I'm not sure this is going to work, Asbeel" he said as he shook his paw from the pain.

"Why don't you just get ready" the fallen angel stated, picking up his sword again. "I will hold the tip of it to my chest and all you have to do is quickly push it through me."

OK, if you are really ready to do this" the stallion said as they got ready for the deed to be done. Asbeel held the tip of his weapon to his chest, making sure it was over his heart and between his ribs. Torvald gripped the canid's left shoulder while the tigress did the same to his right. Victoria gripped Torvald's wrist with her other paw to help push the sword through and looked at her mate, nodding that she was ready. Once the tigress had touched her mate, their eyes began to glow with that familiar white power.

"Are you ready?" the huge fur asked the canid. He almost hoped that Asbeel would back out of this deal any second. It felt -so- wrong to take a life like this, even if the fur had wanted him to do it for a higher cause.

"I am ready" the canid said in a shaky, wavering voice. It was no secret that the fallen angel was terrified to go through with it but he knew in his heart this had to be done. He then said solemnly to the immortals at barely a whisper "If this doesn't work, then at least I will no longer be a dark agent."

With that said, he closed his eyes right before Torvald and his tigress shoved the blade clear through the fallen angel, all the way to the hilt. Asbeel's eyes flew open wide, then flickered as a smile crept across his muzzle. The immortal pair were the only reason that he was still standing as they were holding his shoulders and that sword that was clear through him.

"Pull it out" the fallen angel asked of the immortal pair in a whisper. "You -must- pull the sword out." Torvald complied with his request and Asbeel fell backwards onto the

grass, a peaceful look coming to his muzzle as he lay there. Before the huge fur could drop the sword that was burning the hell out of his paw and kneel to see about him, Uriel appeared next to the fallen canid.

“Asbeel, old buddy, how do you feel?” he asked, putting a paw to the wound in his fallen friend's chest. “Does it hurt much?” he asked, concerned for his friend.

“It ... it does not hurt as bad as I though it would” the canid replied, opening his eyes to look at his former mentor. “I've willingly done my part, will the boss let me return home now?” he asked as he coughed up some dark blood and grimaced in pain. Uriel looked up towards the celestial home with tears running down his muzzle and said loudly,

“Boss, you heard Asbeel's request to return. Show you are merciful and allow him to return to the fold.” After a moment's wait, a low, resonant voice rang out around them.

“Asbeel Lycaon, you may return to us”

was the response from on high. The immortal pair knelt next to the soon to be white angel and held hands as his clothing began to turn white. They watched as the wound began to close and heal itself, finally showing no sign that any injury had occurred.

“It is time for us to go home” the archangel said as he stood and helped the canid white angel to stand back up. “We have a lot of time to make up for” he added as the pair stood and shimmered out of sight.

###

The sheriff was walking as fast as he could, trying to keep up with the dark agent he was following. This wasn't easy for him due to his current state of intoxication, making it hard to track his prey. A few times he was sure he had lost him only to reacquire his target's distance and direction.

He was gaining on the dark agent when a non-physical elemental force almost knocked him down. It had a feeling like a ripple had went through the very fabric of time and space itself. Something had changed in the favor of good or evil and he could feel it. The collie knew he had better run, disregarding his current physical state to find out what had just happened.

###

While the immortal pair had their attention focused on the two angels, a malevolent fur had crept up on them and picked up Asbeel's sword. He removed the leather from the handle and felt it for balance, smiling a wicked smile. As he crept towards the huge fur and his tigress while they stood back up, the weasel stepped on a twig, tipping off his presence to the others.

“Who are you?” the stallion shouted as he spun and faced the dark agent, quickly pushing Victoria behind him to protect her. His eyes' white glow was increasing in intensity as he faced the dark agent in front of him.

“I am your destroyer” the weasel said in an ominous tone. “I am Thammuz, agent to Lucifer himself. I have come to kill you and your tigress for the demon king Zagam.”

“You will not destroy us!” the stallion shouted as he pulled his broadsword out of its scabbard on his back. “Leave now or face annihilation!!” he shouted as his eyes began to shine like two beacons of white light. While the berserker was staring down the weasel, his tigress made a break towards the porch for her sword and staff.

This proved to be a big mistake on Victoria's part as her ankle-length skirt hindered her running speed greatly. The dark agent waved his paw at the tigress, sending her flying through the air towards the porch steps. The unfortunate feline femme landed roughly in a heap and laid quite motionless, having been rendered unconscious by her fall to the ground. Having seen his mate injured by this dark agent, the huge berserker went off into a killing rage, swinging his sword at the agent and forcing him to take a step backwards.

“You have just signed your death warrant, minion!” the stallion shouted, his eyes shining brightly with total white energy. He took a few more steps towards the evil one, drawing back his sword to strike at Thammuz again only to be frozen in his tracks like a statue.

“You have underestimated my abilities, you impudent white agent” the weasel said as he calmly walked right up to the huge fur. “I will receive great satisfaction from this, cutting you apart like a Sunday ham.” Thammuz took out his dagger from his belt and drew it across the stallion's chest diagonally, cutting open his shirt and causing a slight wound in his flesh that began to bleed.

“You see, you cannot move at all you foolish agent of WhiteChrist. You may only feel my blade painfully cutting your flesh away from your bones.” He laughed as he cut down the berserker's arms, laying open the flesh just deep enough to bleed and cause pain. Torvald had a look of sheer agony on his muzzle, unable to scream out in pain from the injuries that his immortal form could not heal. The look in the stallion's eyes said it all; he was completely terrified. The dark agent was laughing an insidious laugh while he was preparing to literally flay open the huge fur in front of him while he was still alive.

“YOU WILL DIE BY MY PAWS FOR YOUR ACTIONS, YOU BASTARD FROM HELL!!” Victoria shouted out as she drove her broadsword savagely through the dark agent, giving it a hard twist as the hilt hit his body. She was quite the worse for wear but she wasn't about to let the dark one take her mate away from her. Her eyes were still shining white with power as she quickly pulled her weapon out and rammed it into his body again and again, twisting the sword hard each time for good measure. **“I'M GOING TO CARVE YOU UP LIKE A THANKGIVING GOOSE, YOU SON OF A BITCH!!”** she screamed as she drove her sword in one more time at an upward angle, piercing his heart.

Thammuz convulsed uncontrollably from the sword of a celestial agent slicing through his heart, the blood beginning to trickle out of his mouth from massive internal injuries inflicted by the tigress in her killing rage. The stricken dark agent was trying to say something to the berserker but nothing would come out of his mouth besides his life's blood. The tigress' sword had done its job, leaving the weasel with fatal wounds to his body that he would not possibly survive. The dark agent had a look of pure terror on his face as he felt the life forces starting to drain out of him.

There was a look of great confusion on the berserker's muzzle because the dark agent was somehow still standing after all he had been through. Torvald had no idea what was keeping the weasel upright except possibly the pain from his mate's sword being driven repeatedly through his body. The stricken agent began to slump over and with this the giant equine found he was beginning to be able to move again. Suddenly the weasel stood up straight with a look of sheer determination on his muzzle.

“Victoria! Look Out!!” Torvald shouted out to alert his mate as the dark agent used the remaining life in him to swing his dagger in desperation one last time at the giant fur in front of him. He succeeded in laying open a huge, gaping wound across the berserker's abdomen, the blood beginning to flow freely from the deep laceration by the weasel's weapon.

Seeing the terrible injury inflicted to her husband by the dying dark agent, Victoria angrily skewered the weasel through the heart one more time for good measure, shaking the weapon vigorously in his body with all of her strength to make sure he would die in horrible pain as she screamed out a primal sound of anguish for her mate.

###

The sheriff had found the spare key that Mr. Johnsen kept by the front door to the General store to unlock it, still somewhat inebriated and slightly confused over how the dark agent had just opened the locked door and he could not. He made his way quietly through the store to peer out the back door which was standing open ever so slightly.

He could see the dark agent facing the stallion with a broadsword stuck through him from behind that was being shaken by the holder. Observing the injuries to the stallion, it was shocking for the sheriff to see an agent so badly wounded by an evil operative and still be standing. From his vantage point, the holder of that sword driven through the weasel was not visible to the collie. The white power that was being radiated by the immortal couple was overwhelming his sensory abilities completely, blotting out all other metaphysical and temporal inputs to his mind and effectively making his extra senses useless to him.

The collie quickly raised his right paw and built a large energy orb in it, a mass of magical power at his beck and call. Visualizing a banishing spell as best as his still-intoxicated and power-flooded mind could manage, he threw the energy ball at the weasel, causing the dark agent to explode in a brilliant flash of light, returning him to the malevolent place that he had originated from.

As the collie pulled the door open further, he saw the stallion reach out for his tigress and scream her name just as both of them faded out of view. He stood there for a moment, taking in what he had just done. He was fairly positive that he had just

destroyed a pair of the Lord's agents. He knew the archangels would now come looking for him, destined to return the favor to him in spades. It was a known fact among mages that the celestial host did not take kindly to mages that carelessly kill his operatives. As he stood there shaking in fear, he soiled his drawers heavily.

“Sheriff, are you OK?” the voice called out from behind him. Deputy Bolton came up to stand beside his boss and survey the scene. There was a bloody broadsword lying in the grass near a large puddle of blood. The strange part was that there were no dead or dying bodies in sight.

Mitch walked past his boss and went over to the sword, picking it up. He was quickly rewarded by a very nasty surprise. “Yeouch!” the cougar shouted as his paw was scorched heavily by the weapon of a dark agent. “Why in the hell did that sword burn my paw?”

“Mitch, step away from that thing” the collie directed as he went to stand near the sword. “You didn't see me do this” the sheriff admonished as he created an energy orb and threw it at the weapon, destroying it.

“Well I'll be damned” the feline said as his boss walked by him.

“No, I'm the one that's damned” sheriff Huxley corrected him. “I need to go clean up a bit before the archangels come for my hide” he added as he headed back towards his office. He began to return to the front of the store but quickly stopped and faced the cougar with a look of death on his muzzle. “You're not to tell a soul what you saw here today” he admonished his deputy. “I never want to hear about today's goings on again or I'll use an energy orb on you, too!”

###

Corrine was enjoying the good weather as she walked over to the sheriff's office with Tom's lunch. He preferred to take his mid-day meal a little on the late side, stating that he didn't eat supper until late in the evening.

She pushed the front door open by backing into it and turned to see her canid friend slumped over his desk, the whiskey bottle lying empty on the floor by his feet.

“Tom? Tom!” she yelled at him to bring him back to the world of the conscious as she sat the tray on the corner of the desk. “Tom, damn you! Why did you get drunk again!?” she commented to no fur in particular as she sat him up in his chair and tried to pour some coffee down him.

“Wha...Erk!” he said as the coffee finally made its way down his throat. “What are you (hic) trying to do to me?” he asked as he tried in vain to become coherent. “Oh, Corrie! I got drunk (hic) again, didn't (urp) I?” he slurred out, his breath reeking from the alcohol he had consumed.

“Damn you Tom!” she spat out at him. “You're going to kill yourself someday, drinking like that.” She then got busy and forced him to lay down on a cot in the back room where he could safely sleep off his drunkenness.