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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 01 – “Impossible Act”

Madelyn looked over at her hubby and wondered just how in the world that he was holding himself together so well. They were on their way to his parent's home, or at least what was left of it. Back at the shop, he had calmly listened to Willi Marie tell them what had happened regarding his mother and father, right before a stern male voice was heard telling her to drop the phone. That was the last that they had heard from her.

Axel was driving the speed limit, being careful to avoid the bad drivers that used the freeway as their personal playground to wreak destruction. He had barely said a dozen words since locking up the store, even refusing to make a comment when a delivery truck driver crossed three lanes of traffic to make an exit, causing the stallion to have to brake hard to avoid the insane fur's vehicle.

“Axel, say something, please?” she begged, concerned he was going to have a nervous breakdown.

He looked at his mate and smiled a crooked smile. “What's left to say? It's finally happened.” he stated calmly before looking back at the road.

“Hon! They're immortal! How could anything bad happen to them?” she brought up.

“Maddie, Mom and Dad have always said that it was just a matter of time before a Dark Agent, packing more power than they shared, would take them out.” He waited for a second, then continued. “Well, that day has come.”

“It can't happen,” the femme zebra stated firmly. “I will not believe for a moment that they are dead until some evidence to that matter is found.”

“Willi said it was an incredible explosion. The barn is gone and their home is wrecked pretty badly.” Axel put forth.

“I don't care, Hon. They just can't be gone!” She stated, trying to hold back her emotions.

It was clear that Madelyn was distraught; she had known the Svensens for some time and they had always treated her just like family, even before she had married Axel. She had always thought that Torvald and Victoria knew Axel would marry her, since it didn't surprise them one bit when they announced their engagement. Now his parents were gone.

“Could you try again to get in touch with some of the family?” the stallion asked, wiping his eyes on a tissue. “We need for one of the others to be present for our “Power Of Attorney” to be binding. We also need to secure the property before the looters get at it tonight. There's so many heirlooms that we need to try to salvage. You know, things like Mom and Dad's armor, his Dane axe and Fransiscas, the photo albums, his books . . .” He finally pulled over to the side of the road and broke down.

“This couldn't have happened!” he spat out between sobs, putting his head down on the steering wheel. “They were retired, dammit! They were out of the business, according to that damned uppity lion!” he shouted at no fur in particular while he punched the dashboard out of frustration.

“Axel, let me drive? Please?” his mate begged.

“Okay, maybe you had better drive,” he agreed, his head still resting against the steering wheel. The young stallion pulled himself together, got out of the car and walked around to the passenger side. Once his mate had slid across to the driver's side of his Holden Maloo, he got back in and closed the door.

“Axel, are you okay?” she asked, touching her paw to his cheek.

“No, I'm not okay, Maddie. I'm just trying to keep from totally falling apart.” he admitted. “I need to keep it together as best as I can so when one of my siblings shows up, we can deal with this in a rational manner.”

This day had turned into a nightmare for Axel; the inevitable had happened and his parents were gone. Now all that was left to do was to pick up the pieces that remained. This was going to be hard to do, since the homestead would need to be sold off and to maximize the profit, the home would have to be rebuilt. There was also no telling how much his parents owed on the property and their credit cards. That had never been shared with the kits.

He knew Gytha had a small portable safe that carried notarized copies of all the important documents but she had the combination to his parent's bedroom safe. If it was still there, he could get them out somehow and start the process. This was going to be a living hell for his brother, their two sisters, Valerie, Wally and his Grandparents.

###

Willi Marie looked up at the law-fur standing over her, pointing a paw-gun at her head. She had dropped the cellphone at his direction and she was patiently awaiting further orders.

“Okay, Miss, you can get up from there, keeping your paws above your head,” he directed, backing up a bit. She noted the safety was off on his weapon.

“I will not fight you, officer.” she offered up. “You have to understand, I was trying to help out my adoptive family.” she added. The rottweiler had already made comments that led her to believe that he thought her to be the one that planted the explosives and bound her adoptive aunt in that gruesome

manner.

“Helping or not, you were directly involved.” he stated. “Now, turn around and put your paws on that retaining wall and keep them there.” he instructed, waiting until she had complied before patting her down.

“I'm not armed, if that's what you're worried about,” she offered up. This was a struggle for her to suppress the temptation to just 'pop' out. There was no telling that they would do to her, considering she already had a recorded run-in with the FBI.

“Give me your right paw,” the police-fur asked, taking it and pulling it into the small of her back. A paw-cuff was fastened around her wrist quickly, followed shortly by the other wrist. The canid double-locked the cuffs, then turned her around.

Willi grimaced, then spoke up; “I don't like to have my paws cuffed behind me. I have a bad rotator cuff that is still healing up from a previous injury so it hurts to have my arms pulled back like this,” Willi stated, bringing her arms around in front of her, the cuffs still locked but one was dangling empty from her wrist. “If you would please, I will allow you to cuff my paws in front of me.” she added.

“How did you do that?” the canid asked, reaching for his weapon again. He did not notice a slight twitch of her paw, right before he drew an almost-overripe Dole® banana from his holster. “What the . . .!?” he blurted out, giving the yellow fruit close scrutiny.

“Please put that away,” Willi asked, giving the law-fur a crooked smile. “We can play this game all day long,” she added, pulling the remaining paw-cuff 'through' her wrist and giving it to the officer.

“Okay, you're scaring me, lady,” he stated, putting away his piece of fruit. “Now, you tell me how you're doing this . . . this magic?” he demanded, checking the cuffs to see if they had been tampered with.

“You have already been told by my now-missing Uncle Torvald; I am a sorceress. I am more powerful than you could ever imagine.” she offered up, knowing she was frightening the law-fur. “Now, what happens here, stays between the two of us, do you understand?”

“Y . . . yes, Ma'am,” he replied, hesitantly, actually backing up a step or two away from her.

“Okay, now that we have that settled, I need to see what has happened,” Willi offered up, turning to head back to the now-missing barn.

“Miss, I wouldn't go up there until the bomb squad clears the area,” the canid stated.

The femme equine stopped, turned and looked at him with a serious demeanor; “I have IED experience from the my time in the military, officer. Probably more than your precious bomb squad.” It was clear she was getting rather upset with his negativity.

Willi walked up the hill to the area where the barn once stood, scanning the area for signs of explosives remnants. Once she arrived at ground zero, the carnage shocked the femme sorceress. It was not so much that the surrounding trees were flattened for a good eighth of a mile, it was the fact that there was a crater, more than twice the size of the now-vaporized barn, possibly as much as twenty feet deep near the middle. In the middle of the hole stood a pillar of earth, undisturbed on top, in approximately the same location where Torvald and Victoria were last observed standing in the barn.

“What . . . The . . . Hell?!?” the police-fur blurted out, blinking his eyes a few times to make sure that he was seeing this properly. “That is just flat impossible!” he added.

“No, it is not impossible,” she retorted, using her mind to reach out and 'hear' the echo of the first few moments of the explosion. She could see in her mind three furs, standing close together, in the barn right on top of that pillar of earth. She then watched as the building slowly vaporized, making it impossible to 'see' what happened to the three bodies.

“You tell me how that is possible?” the canid asked rather sharply.

“Shaped charge,” she retorted, kneeling to make a sketch in the dirt. “If you use something to back up a charge, it will force the energy to be directed in the other direction.” she informed the canid, making an impromptu drawing in the earth. “I think that all of the energy was focused inward, creating a 'Null Point', where the four points of energy canceled one another out.”

“Then where are your aunt and uncle?” the officer asked, still not buying this explanation.

“Maybe they were high enough in the energy column to have been vaporized? I really don't know what happened to them.” she answered truthfully.

That's when the gravity of the situation hit her and she finally broke down in tears.

###

Madelyn turned up the drive to Axel's parent's home, only to be greeted by a SWAT team member, motioning for her to stop. As luck would have it, she recognized the feline as a fur that had been to the Svensen's old home numerous times. He was a close friend of the family, Barry Bisch.

“I'm sorry, you'll have to turn . . . Madelyn? Axel?” the silver tabby questioned.

“Hi Barry. Hey, can we get up to the house? Our adopted cousin called and told my hubby what had happened.” the femme equine replied.

“Um, Yeah but you'll have to park down here. The motor court is full of police, emergency and fire vehicles.” The officer looked at the ground, then back at the young stallion. “Gah, I'm sorry, Axel. Your Mom and Dad were very good furs.”

“Barry, Gytha is on her way here. Would you send her up too? We need to decide what to do about things.” Axel put forth.

“Yeah, I can do that. Listen, Axel, Lieutenant LaCourt is in charge up there. Please check in with him?”

“Sure, we'll do that, Barry.”

###

Madelyn parked their car as close to the house as she could, then they set off towards the scene of the incident. The two equines were tense because they did not know exactly what they would find. As they topped the crest of the drive, the house came into view.

The front of the home appeared to be intact with the exception of the double front doors being off the hinges and all of the windows being broken out, curtains or blinds hanging out through the openings. Axel almost went inside but the 'Caution' tape across the doorway stopped him. His mom's mini-van was in the driveway and it didn't seem harmed, nor did his father's '49 Ford under the carport. The garage right behind the carport was a different story; there was a squad car sitting upside-down on the partially flattened structure. They looked at one another, then continued on around to the back of the home.

The back of the house was severely damaged with most of the back walls knocked down or damaged in some way or another. The back portion of the roof was either blown away or sagging, depending on how the walls and roof met one another. There seemed to be quite a bit of damage to the kitchen and family room, too. Hopefully, the Svensen's homeowners insurance would cover this because it was a foregone thought that his parent's 'Employers from *On High*' wouldn't involve themselves in this matter.

Madelyn was preparing to make an observation about the situation when Valerie walked up to them with fire in her eyes, grabbed Axel's wrist very firmly and made a very terse demand;

"Axel, you come with me right now and explain to these block-headed law-furs that Willi Marie wouldn't do such a thing to your parents as to blow them up!"

"Um, Aunt Valerie?" the equine replied, stunned by her demeanor. If her eyes had been glowing white, she would have almost been his mother's doppelgänger. She towed him across the yard to the remains of the patio, where the femme palomino equine sat under the heavy scrutiny of Lieutenant Kenneth LaCourt.

The brindle colored canid looked up to see Valerie and her nephew headed his way so the law-fur attempted to derail her diatribe before she could build up a head of steam.

"Valerie, I have already told you . . ." She 'politely' interrupted the mastiff.

"No, you listen to us! Willi Marie would not have done such a heinous thing to my sister and brother-in-law! Axel, here will corroborate this!" the tigress spat out.

The brindle canid looked at Axel, notepad in paw. "You want to back that up?" he asked.

"I will back that up, Lieutenant." he agreed. "Willi is just like family. If anything, she was trying to save them. I know that in my heart."

"I see . . ." the law-fur mused. He then turned to the sorceress. "Wilhelmine, would you please tell them exactly what you just told me?" he requested.

"I will do that," she replied, retelling the whole gruesome affair, from the phone call from Torvald right down to the explosion that obviously didn't have a sixty second delay. "And that is my story. I didn't do it, it was obviously done by some fur that had an axe to grind with them."

That seemed to get the Lieutenant's attention. "Who would have had a beef with Torvald and Victoria?"

Axel knew this was coming so he asked for a favor; "Lieutenant LaCourt, could we talk somewhere more private? This has to be totally off the record."

"Okay, we can do that only because I knew your father well. I trust that he has raised some very law-abiding kits. Let's all go over there," he suggested, pointing to the other side of the yard. Once they were

away from the other furs, Willi put a shield around them to further block any fur from eavesdropping.

“Listen, Mom and Dad had other employers,” Axel explained. “They were troubleshooters for the Gods, making sure things weren't tipped towards the side of evil. The fur that did this, worked for the Malefic Council.”

“Now hold on just a minute!” the law-fur blurted out. “This is just . . .” Valerie interrupted him.

“You knew my brother-in-law very well, Lieutenant Kenneth Aldrin LaCourt. You shared a squad car with him when you were just a rookie and you were his Best Male at his wedding, if I remember right.” she pointed out.

“That is true. I have to say though, this crazy idea that they were troubleshooters *is* pretty far-fetched, to tell you the truth.”

“Did my brother-in-law ever tell you something that wasn't true?” the tigress asked.

“No, he did not. Torvald was a very straight-up fur. You could trust him with your life explicitly.” the canid replied.

“Lieutenant, now we're asking you to trust us,” Axel put forth. “My parents were killed by a Dark Agent, one that probably doesn't even live on this world. We will seek justice, but your furs can't help out. This will have to be done by sources other than mortal, earth-bound furs.”

Kenneth looked at the ground, then back at the tall equine. “Axel, do you know what you're asking? For me to have my furs back off of this investigation? Axel, Valerie, I can't let this go. Torvald was a police-fur's police-fur. He was everything a law-fur could hope to . . .” The tall male interrupted that line of thought.

“That's not exactly what I'm asking you to do,” the flaxen chestnut equine interjected. “I'm asking you not to bring down scrutiny on Wilhelmine. She works for a group that will help us to bring my parents' killer to justice.”

“And just who does she work for?” the brindle male asked.

“I work for the Consortium,” Willi stated. “They comprise most of the known world's sorcerers and sorceresses. They also take a very dim view of the Malefic Council.”

“Consortium? You expect me to believe that your a . . .” Lieutenant LaCourt looked around to confirm the fact that they were no longer in the Svensen's back yard, but somewhere else altogether, under a pale lavender sky.

“This is the Consortium's homeworld,” the palomino hued femme offered up. “Over there is my office building and right this way is are two furs that I wish for you to meet.”

Willi took the canid by the elbow and gently guided him towards a single story office building that wouldn't have looked out of place on her adoptive family's homeworld. The four of them went inside, then down a hallway to an office. Knocking twice, Willi opened the door and bid them entrance.

Once inside, the law-fur looked around at the spartan office, wondering where this was going to. They

were momentarily joined by Mala O'Kendranal and Bethany Carmel.

“Hello, Wilhelmine,” the striped sorceress stated warmly, giving her a hug. “Um, what's the reason for today's visit?” she requested.

“Something really bad has happened,” the femme equine replied, recounting the entire incident, from shocking start to gruesome finish. That information made Mala feel sick, forcing her to have to sit down and get her stomach back under control. “This is Lieutenant, LaCourt, Bethany. He's in charge of the investigation, but we were trying to explain to him how we would be better equipped to do the work,” Willi put forth, indicating the law-fur with them.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. LaCourt. I'm Bethany Carmel and this is Mala O'Kendranal.” the ruddy orange with black stripes femme put forth.

“Um, hello . . . I, um . . .” Kenneth was slightly tongue-tied at the moment. He did step forward and examined Bethany's ears, noting they were covered on the back with tiny iridescent black feathers. “I've never seen a tiger with ears like this,” he commented, obviously confused.

“I'm not a felid,” she retorted, smiling at his confusion. “I'm a Kurani. Somewhat similar makeup, different planet.”

“Well . . . okay, I stand corrected.” he replied. “I'm still having a hard time with all of this,” the detective stated.

“I guess you would,” Bethany agreed. “Let's go have a bite to eat at this bistro I know of. I'll try my best to fill you in on what you need to know.”

They all left Mrs. Carmel's office, headed for a bit of food. The canid was still totally confused by all of this. He knew Torvald had other irons in the fire besides his day job with the police department. Could this have been the reason he took a lot of vacation as of late? Hopefully, this femme kurani could fill him in.

###

Brett slowed down and looked for a place to park, noting the drive up to the motor court was now full of furs, equipment and vehicles. What bothered him particularly were the television news vans parked at the curb, news furs milling about.

“Dana, don't say a word to any furson that remotely looks like a news-fur,” he directed, parking his Ranger behind what appeared to be Joe Latrans' Suburban. Getting out and going around to the passenger side, he was beaten to the punch by the graying coyote.

“I'll stay with you and Brett,” he suggested, helping Dana to stand. It was clear that the femme feline mix was in shock.

“Oh, um, thank you, Joe,” she replied, giving him a crooked smile. “I'm glad you came. I . . . I didn't know what we would find,” she offered up, letting the two males literally lead her across the street.

“I couldn't stay away if I wanted to,” the canid put forth. “Gah, I'm just not sure of anything at this point.”

“Mr. Latrans, Is something bothering you?” the male tiger asked.

“Yeah, you could say that.” he replied. “there's a lot of bad mojo flying around right now.”

“How . . . how did you hear about my parents?” Dana asked.

“I think I was the first one Wilhelmine contacted. She said it was a Dark Agent that took out your parents.” Joe replied.

“I hope it's not what we think, Joe. I've prayed all the way over here that they aren't dead,” she offered up. “Um, have you seen Gytha or Axel?”

“Axel's truck is here but I haven't seen him,” Joe responded.

“It was just a matter of time,” Dana commented. “Mom and Dad kept saying that it was just a matter of time before a Dark Agent took them out.”

“I'm not sure they are really gone,” the canid offered up. “I think I might have felt something if they were killed. Sort of like that time I felt you mother transport herself to . . .” Joe stopped talking when a microphone was thrust into their midst and a gray femme poodle started to flap her jaws.

“I'm Margaret Burton, Channel Thirteen Action News. Are any of you furs related to the Svensens?” she asked, smiling that fake news-reporter smile. Her camera-fur, a large male Holstein, was busy finding that perfect angle to start shooting.

“You're not welcome in this conversation,” Brett pointed out curtly.

“I'm just looking for facts.” she countered. “I understand from listening up the hill there, the Svensens were building a car-bomb to take out the downtown Los Angeles police station when it detonated prematurely.” That false information really irritated the femme feline mix, to the point that she spoke out, despite her husband's instructions.

“You have got that **so** wrong . . .” Dana began, only to be interrupted by the reporter.

“There was another fur with them, a Wilma Delano, I think. I understand that she was the mastermind.” the news-fur continued. “It seems there was aunt Valaina Conners that might have been involved along with a police Lieutenant that might have been in on the plot. They've all disappeared, from what I've heard.”

Joe was having a hard time keeping his temper in check and it had finally went from a fast simmer to a boil.

“If you two don't get out of here right now,” the coyote hissed, putting his paw over the camera lens, “I can't be responsible for what will happen. Your information is faulty, lady. You don't have a single fact straight and if you so much as think about airing your faulty facts, we will see to it that you and your station are sued into oblivion!”

The camera-fur put his camera down and spoke softly;

“Listen, don't be hard on her, she's new and she's just trying to get a story.” the bull put forth. “We heard

that the chief suspect, a femme equine whose name was Wilma or something like that, disappeared along with a Lieutenant LaCourt and a couple of family members. If you ask me, there's something weird going on up there."

"I can't comment on that," Joe retorted. "I suggest you wait until we have more information to give you. Right now, all we could say is they're missing."

"I understand," the bovine replied. "Margie, here will give all of you her contact information. If you have something that you might want to share, please call her."

####

Dana looked down at the card in her paw, then back at the retreating news-furs. This was just like a nightmare that she couldn't wake up from. She did wonder, though if her parents were somehow still alive. She knew that she had to go see the site of the explosion for herself, just to be sure that this had really happened.

Once they headed to the house, Joe ran a gauntlet for them, fending off news-furs seeking a scoop from one of them. It really irritated her to hear the furs asking what seemed to her to be very personal questions concerning her parents. Near the top of the driveway, Madelyn intercepted the small group and she ever so graciously assisted the coyote in keeping the news-leeches off of them. They made their way around to the patio, where the femme feline stopped and looked around.

"It was just a few days ago," she commented, wiping her eyes with a tissue. "We were right here. Mom, Dad, Nancy and myself. Nancy even held Sabrina . . ." Dana had to suppress a sob. "I can't accept the notion that my parents are gone." she added.

"We're hoping . . ." Madelyn started before something garnered her attention. It was Willi, Axel, Valerie and the Lieutenant, headed their way. It seemed like they had materialized from out of nowhere. Once they had made their way to the patio, Willi took Dana off to the side.

"I will tell you what I told your brother and aunt," the femme equine began, "I think that they might still be alive. I'm not sure about it but I think that some fur might have pulled them from the explosion."

"I knew in my heart, this might be the case," Dana replied.

"We will work on finding them," Willi assured her. "I feel like I'm right about this."

####

Cathy found Conrad sitting on the family room couch, looking gobsmacked. She walked up to him and tapped him on the shoulder, wondering what was up with her hubby.

"Conrad, what's wrong?" she asked, sitting down by him. The femme cougar gave her mate a hug which he did not return. This bothered her. "Conrad? Conrad??"

"It has happened," he stated in a monotone, still staring at the cellphone in his paw.

"Conrad, what's happened?" she asked, turning his head so he had to look at her. "Conrad, tell me what's up!" she demanded.

“Mom and Dad . . .” He didn't finish the sentence, rather he slowly closed his mouth and just looked at Cathy, obviously in shock.

“What about your parents? What's happened?” she begged, taking the phone from his paw and searching for the last call received. It was from Gytha. “Conrad, tell me what Gytha had to say!!”

“Dead.” was his short reply. He was still looking through his mate, scaring her to no end.

“James Conrad Svensen, are you telling me that your parents are dead?” she questioned. He just nodded ever so slightly in reply. Cathy patted his cheek firmly to get him to snap out of his catatonia and when that didn't elicit a response, she slapped him rather hard. He still didn't react to her stimulus.

Dreading the thought that her hubby was having a nervous breakdown, she used his phone to call 911. While she held the line with the emergency operator, she used her cell phone to call Gytha.