

The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' & Victoria Angela (nee Connell) Svensen, John Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' (nee Hunter) Svensen, Brett, Dana Lynn (nee Svensen) and Sabrina Angela Kaschnikov, Roger Baine, Gytha Louise (nee Svensen) Roger Baine Jr. & Heather Louise Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn (nee Barrett) Svensen, Bradley Torvald 'Brad' & Janet Lee (nee Mondragon) Svensen, Trenton, Nancy Jeanne (nee Svensen), Trenton Junior 'TJ' and Chelsea Corbin, Ronald Arend 'Ron' & Brenda Mae (nee Cartwright) Svensen, Lawrence James 'LJ' & Alicia Leanna (nee Svensen) Hood, Valerie Connell, Walter Lee Sr. & Harriet (nee Bishop) Connell, Walter Lee Jr., Michelle Annette 'Misha' (nee Kazinski), Walter Lee III, Joseph Franklin 'Joe' and Sarah Noel Connell, Robert James & Elizabeth Ann (nee Caine) Sands, Barbara Caine, Edward and Mary (nee Leese) Caine, Richard Tisdale & Wilhelmine Marie 'Willi Marie' (nee Kurzweil) Delancey, James William & Nancy (nee Roland) Kurzweil, Erich Martin & Iranova Marie 'Ira Marie' (nee Schmidt) Kurzweil, Anna Marie (nee Sorenson) Schmidt, Jason & Natasha 'Tasha' (nee Porter) Cummeron, Lieutenant Kenneth Aldrin LaCourt, Robert, Jennifer 'Jenna' (nee Ten Bears) & Amanda Longbow, Gerald 'Jerry' Ten Bears, Duncan & Lorna (nee Gibbs) McNichol, Doctor Bruce Peyton, Tina Wood, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito®, Leonard's Restaurant®, Hunter Auto Parts®, Right Way Groceries™ and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meigh and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission. Any resemblance to any fur or person, either living or dead is purely coincidental. Aslaug "The Angelbreaker" Larsdatter and Varghöss are the copyrighted properties of Joan Jacobsen, 2005-2010 Her writings may be found at a wonderful place called "Aslaug's Axe Shed" and the URL is as follows; <http://www.aslaug.eu> Please have a look and enjoy her writings. The characters of Joe and Annie Latrans are copyright The Silver Coyote 2003 - 2010, and are used here with permission. Stories containing Joe and Annie Latrans along with The Silver Coyote's writings may be found at <http://thesilvercoyote.net/> Tell them Kellan sent ya. ;-) Note This is a shameless plug for Aslaug and The Silver Coyote! What are friends for, anyway? Camille 'Cami' Carter is from the 'Trisha' series by Kellan Meigh but is not canon to that series. Theresa Rose Westmore is from "A Change Of Profession" by Kellan Meigh but is not canon to that story. All other characters property of Kellan Meigh unless otherwise noted.*

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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 11 – “Meetings and Partings”

The tigress unplugged her paws-free headset and sat the phone down on the charging cradle, still shaking her head from the news that had been delivered to her. A fur, claiming to be her son Axel, told her that he was not the fur that had lost his life in the incident that would be on the evening news. Victoria had questioned him thoroughly, and although the male that said he was her offspring spoke with a heavy Scottish burr, he knew the answers to all of the questions put forth.

What bothered the femme feline was the fact that Jenna had not told her of this issue before actually going ahead with her plans. It upset the Svensen matriarch but maybe there was a reason for the silence. She was pondering this when another call came in from a cell number that identified itself as being registered to Jennifer Longbow.

“Hello?” the tigress stated.

“Mom? It's me, Gytha.” the femme with a heavy German accent offered up. “Listen, if you see my name mentioned on the evening news, I didn't die.” she added.

“Um, what supposedly happened to you?” Victoria asked.

“A golem-thing, posing as me, was car-jacked outside the grocery store by my house and subsequently killed a few blocks away in my station wagon, Mom.”

“So, where are you right now?” the elder Svensen asked.

“I'm in the Motel 5 near Axel and Madelyn's shop.”

“Um, you know, your brother is in that same motel, according to the male that called me just a few minutes ago.”

“Is he a Shetland stallion?” Gytha inquired. “I saw a Shetland male looking down the street toward

Svensen's Music. It looked to me like some kind of a bus accident happened down that way.”

“Gytha, he's a Shetland, from what he told me and he's there in that motel.” Victoria confirmed. “So, what is your current form?”

“I seem to be some sort of a Bavarian Forest Feline.” Gytha offered up in reply. “And I'm not very tall, either. I seem to be less than five foot-five.”

“At least you're alive.” Mom Svensen offered up. “We'll just have to ride this out, at least until Jenna has convinced Zagam that you kits are all dead.”

“Yeah, I guess . . . Mom, can I call you back? I think I just spotted Dana.” the femme with the German accent stated.

“Okay, I'll be here.”

“Bye, Mom!”

“Bye!”

###

Dana looked up to observe a femme feline on the second floor breezeway watching her walk across the parking lot of the Motel 5 and for some reason, she thought she knew that fur. Looking down at Sabrina, the little one still looked like her daughter to her, even if she was a Golden Jackal now.

“*Dana! Is that you?*” the feline offered up in Old Danish from the second floor railing.

“Gytha?!?” the former femme feline mix retorted. Dana watched as the femme smiled, then started to head her way. That was fine, until some movement out of the corner of her left eye made her notice the small Shetland Stallion headed her way. She reached into her purse-holster and was ready to draw down on this male when he made his announcement.

“*Dana! It's me, Axel!*” he offered up in Old Danish, smiling as he met up with her.

“Um, Axel? Are you all right?” she inquired.

“I'm fine.” he replied. “I guess that must be our sister,” he added, indicating the femme feline headed their way.

“I don't know why, but I thought I knew her, even before she spoke up.” Dana put forth.

“I know, kinda weird, huh?” Axel commented.

“Are you two talking about me?” Gytha asked, once she had joined them.

“We were,” Dana admitted, arranging the blanket surrounding little Sabrina. “I commented about how I was sure I knew who you were and Axel agreed.”

“I thought I knew both of you, too. You make a very pretty golden jackal.” Gytha offered up. “Um,

maybe we should go get something to eat or see what we have in our rooms?”

“I have a set of car keys,” Axel offered up, pushing the 'Lock' button on the remote. An almost-new Holden Calais Six-litre SportWagon parked in his room space responded by chirping and flashing its lights. “Anyone for lunch?”

“Maybe we should wait until Conrad shows up?” Dana put forth.

“You're right, maybe we should wait.” Gytha agreed.

“Okay, we'll wait.” the male sibling agreed. “In the meantime, let's call Mom and let her know what's going on.”

###

Conrad looked at himself in the mirror, posing, making faces and touching his muzzle. The honey badger in the mirror was him, he knew but it still seemed odd to not observe a tiger staring back at him. Pulling an undershirt on, he then put on a generic gray sweatshirt and turned to face the otteress.

“Quillam will not feel a thing,” she assured him. “I'm sorry about the Holden Monaro, though. I'm hoping you weren't too attached to it.”

“It's just a car.” Conrad put forth, realizing his continued good health was priceless.

“So, where will my hubby be?” Cathy asked. The lioness was concerned about her mate's well being.

“He will be near his sisters and brother.” Jenna offered up. “If you would like, I can provide him with a cellphone so he can keep in touch.”

“That would be nice.” Cathy replied.

“Okay, I need to send Conrad to his hiding place before Quillam has his accident.” the sorceress put forth, making the tiger cum honey badger disappear from sight. The otteress then turned to Cathy. “You're going to go see your parents for a few days.”

Before Jenna gestured to send her to her birth home, the world around the lioness, without warning, went white, then a moment later, turned pitch black . . .

###

Willi Marie was busy preparing a noon meal for her family, some home-made chili-mac and fresh vegetables. She kept thinking about the situation at Rancho Svensen; the Svensen's damaged home was under reconstruction, her adoptive aunt and uncle were still healing up and to top things off, three furs had been thrust into the mix, just to stir things up. She wondered if it would ever end.

The femme sorceress was distracted from her work by a fur in tactical entry gear trying to reach her front door unnoticed, crouching down as he tried to slip past the kitchen window that looked out over their front yard. Willi suspected this was the FBI again but as she turned to go answer the door, she noticed a fur slip past the sliding patio door and take cover behind one of their large planters on the deck. Now she knew something was up.

Putting a shield around herself, she tried to locate her family with her powers. For some reason, this was being blocked by some fur, preventing her from doing so. That was about the time a gray male canid in a business suit materialized in front of her and several more busted down the front door, making a very unannounced entry into her home.

“Freeze!” the canid that was obviously a sorcerer shouted, hitting her with a spell that staggered her backwards but didn't quite have the power to pierce her shield. Before Willi could counter, the canid froze in his tracks, along with the other agents that had entered without permission. The front door then flew back into place, appearing as if it had never been damaged in the first place.

The agent on the deck stood and took a run at the patio door to assist his stricken associates, only to be repulsed by some sort of a force-field. He even assaulted it with the butt of his rifle a few times, just to see if it was real or not. That was about the time that a disturbance was heard inside the hall closet, followed by a femme palomino-colored equine opening the door from within and stepping out into the hallway. The femme in question was dressed in business casual, a knee-length navy blue skirt, white blouse with a light blue blazer over it.

“I'll have to work on my entries,” the newcomer mused, straightening her clothes out a bit.

“Who are you!” Wilhelmine shouted, preparing to do battle with the femme in front of her.

“Oh, settle down,” the new femme countered with a dismissing wave, looking around at her paw-work. “You don't recognize me, Granddaughter?” she asked.

“Grandma Schmidt?!?” Willi blurted out after the realization hit her that she was looking at a slightly older version of her mother.

“This one,” the elder femme sorceress pointed out, tapping the gray canid on the shoulder, “he spilled the beans about this little CIA operation. When he mentioned you and your mother's names last night while he tried to wine and dine me into his bed, I just played it off, like I didn't know who you two were. I meant to be here a few minutes ahead of him so I could intercept them.”

“Braxton! Braxton, can you hear me? What's going on in there?” a radio blared out. Grandma Schmidt walked over to one of the frozen agents in the living room, took the communication device from his holster and replied.

“This is Anna Marie Schmidt. I have your agents and if you want them back, you'll have to come knock at the door politely.”

“Grandma! Don't antagonize them!” Willi admonished.

“Oh pssst,” she replied, smiling a bit at her granddaughter's expression. “They're right across the street. Here, let's bring them inside where we can talk to them.”

“Grandma, no!” the young sorceress blurted out but it was too late. There was now a dozen or more agents in her living room, all frozen except for one.

“Agent Mark Galloway, how nice to see you again.” the elder sorceress stated calmly.

“Anna Marie Schmidt, you have gone too far this time!” the raccoon blurted out, patting his clothing in search of a weapon of some kind.

“No, I have not gone too far, as you would suggest!” Anna countered. “It's you that's gone too far, agent Galloway. Wilhelmine and Iva Marie have done nothing wrong. I asked around a bit last night and it seems your cousin Mandy Berkshire of the FBI and her hubby Glenn, that inept otter, felt like Wilhelmine had made primates out of them and they wanted to get even by having you haul my daughter and granddaughter in on trumped up charges.”

“Agent Schmidt, are you sure of that?” Agent Galloway asked.

“Agent?!?” Willi stated, looking at her grandmother in shock.

“Yes, I'm an Agent, on loan to these furs. I normally work for the Celestial Police.”

“You work . . .” The younger sorceress was stunned by this turn of events. “So . . . you've probably heard about my adoptive Aunt and Uncle Svensen being prosecuted.”

“The Svensens? You know them?” Anna Marie asked.

“They took care of James and myself after Mom and Dad were screwed on that last mission they were on.”

“I told your mother time and again that working for the Gods was not a safe thing to do.” the elder sorceress put forth. “I heard the Svensens had a run-in with a Dark Agent recently. I trust they survived?”

“They did, but just barely.” Wilhelmine replied.

“. . . And I heard you wished your mother and father back from the dead, too.”

“That I did . . .” Willi admitted.

“Then you're a Grand Mistress.”

“Yes, I've been rated in the top ten percent.” the younger femme sorcerer brought up.

“I see . . .” Anna mused. She then turned to face Agent Galloway. “Mark, you don't know just whom you're messing with here. My daughter Ivanova Marie is a lesser Grand Mistress and my Granddaughter Wilhelmine is a top-level Grand Mistress. Between the two of them, they could obliterate your entire downtown complex from here. You're playing with fire, my associate so I suggest you take your agents and leave, before she hurts all of you.”

“WHAT?!?” the raccoon blurted out. “You have no authorization . . .” Anna Marie interrupted his rant.

“I have the required authorization to call you off.” she stated calmly. “Right from the top, in fact.” she added. “Now here is the fur your cousin's boss wanted in the first place,” she put forth, making Rollie Branschmidt appear in their midst, already paw-cuffed for transporting.

“*What in Allah's name is going on?!? Guards!! Guards!!*” the stag blurted out in Pashto, before looking around at his surroundings. A stunned look crossed his face as he put one and one together and made an astute

observation in English; “I am so screwed . . .”

“Remember me, Rollie?” Anna asked.

“Yes, I do, Mrs. Schmidt. I also recognize your granddaughter Wilhelmine,” he replied, shaking his head. “I would guess that my mage couldn't keep me hidden from your magic well enough.”

“Not at all.” Agent Schmidt replied. “I have had you on my radar for at least twelve hours, once I was aware of a need to capture you.”

“Is it too late to surrender and request political asylum?” the cervine male asked.

“It depends on what you can offer in return.” Agent Galloway responded.

“Then I wish to surrender and ask for asylum.”

###

Wilhelmine and Anna Marie watched Agent Galloway drive off in his departmental-issued black Mercury Marquis Police Pursuit with one very dejected stag in the back seat. Willi then looked over at her grandmother and crossed her arms, patiently waiting for an explanation.

“I can sense you want me to explain myself,” the elder femme queried, looking around nervously. “Alright, I will, but let's go inside where no fur will eavesdrop on our conversation.”

The two of them walked across the street and back into Willi's home, where they observed the canid sorcerer, still frozen in time. Anna made a pair of dampening bands appear in her paws which she slipped onto the unfortunate male's wrists. She then unfroze him.

“Anna!” the canid blurted out once he looked around to observe the two femmes glaring at him. “I know you must have had something to do with . . .” The elder femme equine put her right index finger to his lips, shushing him.

“Johnnie Beltran, you know I couldn't let you mess with my family.” she offered up.

“Hey! Get these goddamned dampening bands off of me!” he shouted after he discovered their unwanted presence stopping his ability to pop out to some safe location.

“You can go and ask Bethany Carmel to remove them for you.” Anna retorted. “You will give her a full account of how you were participating in a CIA action against Consortium members and it had better match my report *word for word* or you'll end up on '*The List*', buddy.”

“Consortium members?” Agent Beltran asked, just to clarify things.

“You heard me.” Anna clarified. “Wilhelmine, Ivanova Marie, My mother Hilda and I are all members in good standing. You know the consequences of a negative action against a member.”

John Beltran nodded, knowing the ramifications clearly. Actions against a Consortium member could find him spending a very long jail sentence on a null-power planet. He only hoped Bethany would go lightly on him.

“I didn't know.” Agent Beltran offered up. “Had I known, I would have never agreed to this.” He knew this might be his 'Get out of jail free' card.

“Offer yourself up for a mind scan, then.” Grandmother Schmidt offered up. “You know the drill; state your facts to The Board, then allow Mala or one of the other members, with the exception of my Granddaughter, to scan your mind. If you're not lying, you will pay your fine and go.”

###

Willi Marie sat down at the kitchen table, still patiently awaiting an explanation of what was going on. Anna was busy putting together some snacks, using this as a stall tactic while she decided just how much to tell her granddaughter.

“Grandma, Why have you been so absent? I haven't seen you since I was fourteen.” Willi asked.

Anna looked up from her tea preparations. “I've been very busy.” she offered as an explanation. It was clear that Willi thought that the explanation was not a full one. “Okay, here's the truth; I've been in jail.”

“Jail?”

“I'm not proud of it, Granddaughter.” the elder femme admitted. “I fracked up hard on a retrieval mission. I lashed out with my magic, killing over one-hundred beings that were just following orders to detain me and my mark. It was a little hard to visit with you and your brother when I was in a jail cell on a null-power planet.”

“Oh . . .” That information seemed to stun Wilhelmine Marie.

“I was released about a month ago by the Celestial Courts, only because my talents were sorely needed. No other fur could be brought up to speed concerning this particular planet's arcane social rules in such a short time frame to do the mission needed. My lawyer suggested that I be cleared of my sentence if I completed the mission to my best ability and lucky for me, he convinced the judge.”

Anna shrugged her shoulders before she continued. “I did the mission, then I was assigned to the CIA as a liason. My talents were not being used to their potential and to tell you the truth, I was just about to resign when Johnnie said your maiden name last night. Now I might just stick around, since I have relatives in the area to visit with.”

“You know my mother and father are here, right?” Willi brought up.

“I know that.” Anna agreed. “I've really missed Iva Marie, too. We used to go shopping together on the Consortium's home world and we used to go camping on Centari Six from time to time. I guess that all stopped when you and your brother were born.”

“Why do you think she stopped doing things with you?” the young sorceress asked.

“I wanted to act mortal,” Iva Marie offered up as she walked into the room from the hallway. “Erich and myself wanted to blend in with the community we lived in. Gallivanting around the universe didn't fit in with being mortal.” she added as she went over and hugged her mother.

“About time you showed up.” the eldest femme commented.

“Actually, I was trying to find Grandmother Sorenson to tell her about Wilhelmine's pregnancy.”

“You're with kit?” Anna asked, looking very surprised.

“Twins, Willi replied. “I've been very sick with this pregnancy, too.”

“They are with magic, then.” Grandmother Schmidt put forth. “So, what level sorcerer is your husband?”

“He is a mortal, Grandma.” Willi explained.

“No, he has to have some ethereal blood in him to pass along.” the elder sorceress retorted. “Your kits would not have enough magic to make you sick if he were just a mere mortal.”

The young sorceress spoke up. “I do know his family tree, though. Richard made a pedigree on a huge scroll, based on his family bibles.” Willi Marie offered up. She went to their bedroom and retrieved the rolled piece of paper, carefully unrolling it on the kitchen table for her grandmother to examine.

“Somewhere, in this Delancey tree is a sorceress.” Anna put forth. She examined the names, dates and places until a very familiar name turned up. “Here she is; Elizabeth Miriam Montcrieff. Born in Surrey, England, 6 November 1847. Her family emigrated to Bar le Duc, France in 1851. Married to Henri Andres DeLancey, old spelling, on 11 April 1876. They had two kits, Henri Gaston and Elaine Annette. Elaine was not a sorceress.”

“You sound like you know her.” Iva Marie offered up.

“I do.” Anna admitted. “She was one of my first charges.” The elder femme then turned and faced Willi Marie. “Elizabeth was a Class 6 sorceress. Her blood, her legacy, has been passed down through five generations of Delancey males, waiting to find another femme with ethereal blood to bring her legacy back to life. Your blood and hers have done so.”

“Mother, are you saying Erich has ethereal blood in him?” Iva asked.

“I would guess that he's a sorcerer but he just hasn't had his abilities jump-started.” Anna pointed out.

“Could you do that?” Willi Marie asked.

“If he is willing.” the eldest femme agreed. “If he is not willing, then it won't work.”

###

The three femmes discussed the family tree at length, finding another sorceress in another branch of Richard's family. Willi kept thinking about something that was bothering her.

“Grandma, I thought powers had to be passed from mother to daughter.” she mused.

“That is the strongest link.” Anna agreed. “If there is not two parents with powers or ethereal blood, then it is passed along dormant in the generations for ten marriages or so. It can die out, though.”

“I had been curious . . .” Willi admitted. She started to bring up something else but she was interrupted by a serious commotion inside the broom closet in the kitchen. There sounded like things were being kicked about and broken, right up until the closet door opened and a femme that looked just like a slightly older version of Wilhelmine Marie squeezed her way out of the too-small closet. The young sorceress went to see about the newcomer that resembled her in a big way.

“Oh My!” the new femme offered up, looking back at the door she had just came through. “It's a miracle I ever fit through there . . .” Her attention then turned to Willi Marie. “Oh my goodness no . . . have I split into two beings again?” she asked. After a quick examination, she commented further. “No, you are not part of me, except . . . except you are directly related to me by blood and you are with kits.”

“I'm Wilhelmine Marie Delancey, formerly a Kurzweil.” she offered up.

“You are Ivanova's daughter, I take it?” the elder femme asked.

“Yes, I am.”

“Then you must know that I am your Great-Grandmother Hilda Sorenson.”

“I have met Mordred Reed.” Willi offered up.

“You have met my father?” Hilda asked.

“He actually thought I was you.” she admitted. “I'm not sure I ever convinced him that was a fact.”

“Well, that sounds like my father.” Hilda mused. “Here, give your Great-Grandmother a hug.” Willi did so, but when she opened her eyes, they were obviously on the Consortium's home world. “Uh-Oh.” Hilda stated. “I did it again. Now listen, do not panic. Just relax, let me find your home again and . . .” The young femme interrupted her elder.

“I know where home is, Grandma Hilda.” she stated, sending them back to her kitchen again.

“You did that nicely, my dear,” the eldest femme commented as she rummaged through her oversized shopping bag she was carrying. Hilda gave her young relative a baguette of bread, a wheel of cheese and a jug of wine to hold while she continued her search. Momentarily she found the items she was looking for. They all watched on as Hilda willingly put a pair of dampening bands on herself.

“Great-Grandma, why did you do that?” Willi just had to question. Why would a sorceress deliberately block her powers?

“I do this out of consideration for others.” Hilda offered up. “At my age, my magic goes wacky real easy. Look what I just did, sending us to the Consortium's home world without even trying! No, I need to slow down and enjoy my twilight years in relative safety to myself and others.”

“I'm starting to have problems with location, too.” Anna offered up. “Wilhelmine, you'll first notice you don't arrive where you really want to at first, then it just gets worse from there. I've been taking a supplement and it seems to help but for how long, I don't know.”

“There's more to this than I thought.” the youngest femme offered up.

Hilda motioned to the table. "Well, sit down and we'll fill you in on what it means to be of the lineage of Mordred Reed."

###

In a dimly lit room, a femme calico feline staggered out of the chalk pentagram drawn on the floor, made her way across the room and collapsed into a director's chair, seeming to be out of breath. She breathed deeply a few times, then wiped her brow.

"I hope that was worth it," she commented to her associate, the canid sitting across the room at his laptop computer. "That took almost all of my skills to pull off, moving her to that planet."

The male didn't look up at her, he just nodded, keeping his eyes on the feed he was watching. His fingers danced over the keys, checking windows that were popping up and disappearing too fast for a normal fur to follow.

"Well?" the femme said in an exasperated tone.

"You have done well," he finally stated matter-of-factly, drawing a last puff on his cigarette before stubbing it out in a convenient ashtray.

"And I bring her back in what, a few weeks?" the unusually marked femme asked.

"When my employer determines the time is right," the male replied while lighting up another smoke.

"What about her safety? I heard you say she was to be protected. She has no food, no proper clothing, no weapons and she doesn't know the language. What are you going to do?"

"Well, okay," the male agreed. "Here, let's give her some clothing, some basic weapons and some provisions." He typed out some commands on his keyboard, causing items to appear near the femme in question.

"The language?"

"There are a paw-full of beings there that speak English. She will be fine. In fact, her credentials will carry her well."

"I don't know," the femme commented. "I still feel like I've made a big mistake."

"Listen, when the time is right, we will return her to her family as a bargaining chip."

"If you say so."

The femme feline sorceress left the room, still feeling uneasy about this situation. She had done as Zagam had asked, moving the femme in question to a world where she wouldn't be located by any of the Amendment Foundation. What did bother her deeply was the idea that the kit-napped fur would be just fine. That world was still an emerging civilization so that meant anything could happen to her.

Shaking her head, she hoped the Amendment Foundation would never link her to this action. That would be her undoing.

Waiting until she was out of range of the canid's senses, she concentrated on the femme she had just transported, just to improve the odds for her. Using most of her remaining strength, the calico femme made some armor, a black powder pistol, a more suitable sword and a dirk appear near the unfortunate femme. She knew it wasn't much, but maybe it would improve the femme catamount's chances. At least until she could be returned to her family or be found by the Amendment Foundation.