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## **“Redemption”**

By Kellan Meig'h

### **Chapter 17 – “A Sirocco Is Coming”**

Morning had come and Anna blinked her eyes to clear them, yawned widely and fought off the urge to stretch out for a moment but for just a moment, finally giving in to the need and unkinking her body to her full length. She then rolled over to face Canton, who was already awake, watching her with a slight smile on his muzzle.

“Good morning, sleepyhead.” the stallion offered up, taking his lover in his arms and kissing her deeply.

“How long have you been watching me?” the femme equine asked, right before she returned his kiss with interest.

“I dunno. I might have been watching for . . . maybe an hour?” he admitted. “I don't recall that you snored quite that loud, though.”

“I snore?” Anna retorted. “You, my dear stallion, sounded just like an industrial wood chipper right around three-fifteen this morning.”

“Well, I knew I snored.” Canton stated. “Um, not to change the subject, but we need to discuss the fact that you're still legally Mrs. Canton Rexall Hill, my wife.”

“WHAT?!?” the femme palomino equine blurted out. “Oh no, Canton. You and I were divorced. I got tired of your drinking and incessant cigar smoking in the house.”

“I beg to differ, my long-lost true love. You failed to sign the final divorce decree. It was never finalized so ergo, you're still my wife.”

“Oh . . . No . . .” She face-pawed herself. “You're right. I never did.” Anna closed her eyes and shook her

head over her lapse in judgment. “So, where does this put us?” she asked.

“Oh, in my bed, naked, cuddling.” Canton quipped with a silly little smile.

She propped herself up on her elbow. “No, that's not what I meant. I mean, where do we stand with each other? You know I was married to . . . no, I guess I was illegally married to Augustus Schmidt for over fifteen years. Poor soul; had a stroke while flying solo in that beat-up Mooney 301 that he cherished almost as much as me.”

“I still love you.” Canton admitted. “To be honest, I never stopped loving you, even after all of this time.” the stallion put forth. “And I think you feel the same way about me or you wouldn't be here in my bed with me, naked as the day you were born.”

“We have a lot of history together.” Anna offered up as a defense.

“And we could build on that history, the good parts.” the male interjected. “I've quit smoking and drinking, for your information. The two things that you despised about me.”

“Does your quitting your favorite vices have anything to do with this scar?” she asked, tracing a rather prominent mark running vertically down his chest with a finger.

“Double bypass and three stents.” he admitted. “I had a nasty pain in my left shoulder that just wouldn't go away. When I went to the doctor, he suspected that I had some kind of heart trouble. I was home three days later after having emergency surgery that very day.”

“This was right after we split up?” she questioned.

“Yeah.” he confirmed, giving his bride a kiss on the forehead. “Actually, I didn't feel well when we verbally had it out in the kitchen, the last night you were here.” Canton put forth. “If you will remember, I was working as a stunt coordinator on the “Bonanza” series at the time and the set doctor caught me favoring my left shoulder. That's how I ended up at my regular doctor's office, a cardiologist's office on the Consortium's homeworld and consequently, the hospital.”

“I thought so.” Anna put her head back down on her pillow. “I knew something was wrong but I just couldn't bring myself to stop and ask. I feel so ashamed of myself right now. My stubbornness almost cost you your life.”

Canton gave Anna a pensive smile. “Look, that's all water under the bridge. It's obvious to me by that last statement, you still love me. Why don't we try for a fresh start and see where we end up, okay?”

“Okay, we can start over and see where this leads us but now I'm miffed at the situation.”

“Miffed?” Canton queried.

“Now I have to go change my driver's license and my work information back to my legal name.”

“Sorry.”

“Don't worry,” Anna said, giving her husband a kiss. “Let's get up and make some breakfast for Willi and Richard.”

“I want to get to know them better.” the stallion offered up. “You do the waffles and I’ll do the eggs and hash browns.”

While Canton put on some sweatpants and a sweatshirt, Anna went to the closet and found one of Canton's thick flannel shirts in black and red check to wear as a house shirt. As an afterthought, she went to the dresser and pulled out what used to be her underwear drawer. She was mildly surprised by finding some new bras and underwear in her size, still wrapped, waiting for her.

The palomino mare put on her undies and waited while Canton opened the door for her. What lay past the portal shocked them both.

“What in the blue blazes is going on here??” the stallion blurted out.

The hallway was freezing cold and the walls were covered in frost. Looking in the general direction of their grand-daughter's room, the frost was visibly thicker in that direction. As they carefully approached the door, Canton materialized an insulated mitt to protect his paw from being flash frozen on the doorknob. Easing the door to Willi and Richard's room open, the arctic-cold breeze that blew out of the room made both the elder Hill equines shiver.

“Anna, stay behind me. Something is so very wrong right now.” Canton offered up as they stepped into the room. He conjured an M14 tanker, racked the bolt to charge it and put the safety to 'Fire', just in case of ambush. Anna decided to err on the side of caution, materializing her favorite 1911 pattern Rock Island semi-auto.

The bedroom had a thick layer of frost on it and the floor was covered in a thin dusting of what looked like snow. The bed covers were in disarray but that wasn't the worst. Willi's nightgown and Richard's pajamas were still in the bed, arranged as if the wearers had been taken from within them during a struggle.

“Some damned, soon-to-be-dead being has expended a shit-load of energy to suck this much warmth from the room.” the stallion observed, the situation at paw obviously pissing him off. “Not many beings could do this, if you ask me. I would bet that Willi was fighting them with all of her magic, forcing their assailant or assailants to use up every ounce of energy to kit-nap them.”

“Canton, look at this,” Anna said cautiously, pointing out the floor at the end of the bed. “I think I know what type of creature did this.”

Looking at the prints in the pseudo-snow, Canton could see clearly what kind of being could have done this. Picking up a silver scale that had no doubt been forcibly removed from its owner by the blood on it, he shook his head in disgust while he offered up his two cents worth.

“Well, I had better call the family together so we can go drac hunting. Somewhere, there is a goddamned silver dragon that has just signed his own death warrant. No damned drac screws around with Canton Rexall Hill and lives to tell about it.”

####

“Wake up, Renee. Come on, wake up so you can eat some breakfast,” the young wolfess heard, feeling a paw poking softly at her shoulder. Rolling over in the bunk as best as she could with her arms bound behind her, she observed Cami staring down at her. “Come on, I need to feed you before the morning's

over with.” she was informed.

“Okay, I'm awake.” the femme canid replied sleepily, trying to sit up with her paws bound. “You really need to untie me, please? I can't move around worth shit like this.”

“That was the idea.” Cami pointed out. “I wanted you to be here when the Svensens return. They have a way of helping you to retire from being an Agent.”

“That's crazy-talk, Cami. Nobody ever retires,” Renee retorted, waiting patiently while the wolverine femme cut loose her bonds. She was pleasantly surprised when Cami marched her over to the Svensen's fifth-wheel trailer where a light breakfast was awaiting her.

Cami sat her charge down, then spoke up. “Listen to me. The Svensens have a few friends, a Valkyrie and a fallen Angel. The two of them might be able to relocate you to a reality where your boss has no jurisdiction. You will be retired then.”

“A Valkyrie? Yeah, right. Good one.” Renee shot back sarcastically.

“You might know of her. The filly goes by Aslaug, otherwise known as the Angelbreaker.”

“No, you're kidding.”

“I kid you not, young femme.” Cami shot back. She picked up a picture in the living room and sat it on the table in front of the young wolfess. It was a picture of Torvald, Victoria, Joe, Annie and Aslaug, all enjoying a barbeque at the lobo's home.

“Oh shit, that *is* The Angelbreaker.” the wolfess said reverently. “You think they might help me to retire?” she asked.

“I would think so.” Cami replied. “You are looking at most of the key players of The Amendment Foundation.”

“The Amendment Foundation?” Renee questioned, “You know, the Underworld is on fire with talk of The Amendment Foundation. Some of those jokers that think they're head honchos are actually trying to derail their efforts. That's kind of what I was up to. They think Rumjal is a part of their group.”

“No, Rumjal is not a part of the Amendment Foundation, I can assure you.” the wolverine femme corrected. “He's gotten himself caught in the cross-fire of some sorceresses that want out of the business. At any rate, the Svensens can decide whether or not to help you out of the business.”

Renee thought about the possibilities while she enjoyed her morning repast. If there was one thing she wanted out of, being a Dark Agent was it. The minions that had come to confront her after her parent's deaths had told her that she was obligated to continue in her mom and dad's stead. Her protests were met with nothing but threats of bodily harm against her extended family. At least this mustilid femme seemed genuine about the offer to retire.

While she ate her meal, the phone in the living room rang. Cami got up from the table and answered it, seeming to be genuinely upset by what she heard from whoever it was on the other end.

###

Cami watched her charge eat while she had some breakfast, knowing from experience that a soldier ate when they could because the next opportunity to fuel the body might be a long ways off. She was giving thought to staying on after the Svensens's home was rebuilt, working as a counselor for their teen half-way house. It was planned to use the rehab program as a diversion to keep furs from noticing the property was actually being used as a safe house.

While the femme wolverine was almost at the wool-gathering stage, the phone ringing broke her out of her musing. Getting up from the table and going into the living area, Cami picked up the pawset and noticed that the display indicated it was the filly's cellphone.

“Good morning Aslaug, this is Cami.” she offered up as she connected the call.

“Cami, are Tor and Victoria there at their home, for some reason?” the equine femme asked.

“Um, no, they were going to be coming home from Sacramento this morning, the last that I heard.”

“Joe hasn't called you, either?” Aslaug further questioned.

“Sorry, Mr. Latrans hasn't called here since he helped the Svensens to go to the airport yesterday.”

Cami heard Aslaug sigh before she spoke up. “Well, I'll gather up the Svensens' things and bring them with us. I have a Dark Agent with me that wants out and I need him to hang out either at the Svensens' home or Joe's until I can move him to a safe reality. That's the good. The bad is that some unknown dragon has snatched Torvald and Victoria, taking them to parts unknown.”

“WHAT?!?” Cami blurted out, not sure that she heard that correctly. “You're telling me, they've been kidnapped?”

“Yeah, it happened while I slept.” Aslaug admitted. “Listen, call Joe and tell him to meet us at the Svensens' property and I'll be there shortly.”

“Aren't you in Sacramento?” the femme soldier questioned.

“Not for long.” the Valkyrie replied. “Varghöss will have us there in minutes.”

“Okay, I'll call Mr. Latrans,” Cami agreed, then said her goodbyes. Sitting down on the couch, she fished through the menu on the pawset to find the coyote's number. She hit the button to dial Joe's home and while she waited for some fur to pick up, she pulled out her cell and sent a text message to Morgan Sleight. She knew they would need all the muscle that they could muster and the badger would be very useful to their cause.

####

The silver dragon squeezed his way out of the elevator car, irritated that he had followed the suggestion of the evening desk clerk to use it in the first place. Looking both ways, he noticed a directory on the wall nearby. Reading the entries, he found the location of the canid he was going to meet.

Stopping at the door to the office in question, he pondered whether to knock or not. Making his decision, he just walked through the door, destroying it. On the other side, behind a desk, sat his quarry.

“Eldon, how nice of you to come see me!” the nondescript canid offered up jovially, standing from his seat behind his computer to offer his paw. The dragon ignored the paw offered and just sat down in the side chair instead, making the piece of furniture groan loudly under his weight.

“I have a good mind to kill you right here and now, you mangy, talking fleabag.” the drac spat out in a malicious way.

“What? What did I do?” the fur behind the desk asked nervously. “I just wanted you to do something more permanent to a few furs for my boss, Zagam. I tried to have Amanda Knox do this work, but she refused for some . . .” Eldon cut the cur off cold.

“You left out a few important pieces of information.” the overgrown lizard hissed in a murderous tone. “You did not tell me that the tigress was an accomplished warrior, you damned fool!” He folded down the upturned collar of his coat and removed his hat. It was now clear that Eldon had been attacked by a feline by the nasty scratches on his face and neck. “And you didn't tell me that equine sorceress was part feline and a Grand Mistress, either! She almost overpowered me until I hit her and that bastard in bed with her with an industrial-strength taser!! My prices just doubled from your ignorance!!”

The canid gulped, knowing this might end badly for him. He quickly checked his accounts, only to see that he was a bit short on funds. He hoped a stall tactic might work until he could get the balance from Zagam.

“Listen, Eldon, I can have your payment here tomorrow.” he offered to the dragon.

“I want my payment now. You know how dragons are about gold.” the reply came in a low, threatening tone.

“Heh heh . . . yeah, I know.” the Agent commented in a slightly scared tone of voice. “Uh, where are you staying? I can have a courier bring your gold to you,” the Dark Agent suggested, trying to reach for a Sonic Disruptor under the center drawer of his desk without being noticed.

“You touch that pop-gun under your desk and you'll be at the hospital shortly, having it removed from a place it shouldn't normally fit.” Eldon gave the unfortunate fur a very malicious smile as he leaned forward, encroaching on the smaller fur's personal space. “Do you have my gold or not? Yes or no?” he asked.

“I um, well, you see . . .”

“You don't have the scratch to pay me with, eh?” the lizard surmised.

“That might be a problem.” the Dark Agent began, preparing an elaborate stall. “I'll need to contact my boss, and that might take a while. Then I'll need to go see him to . . .”

The canid's explanation was cut short, then the next sound in the room was the noise made by the unfortunate fur's severed head hitting the wall.

“Oh well,” the dragon muttered as he left the deceased Dark Agent's office, “I'll have to find this Amanda Knox and ask her a few questions. Hopefully, she can help me find this Zagam so I can beat my gold out of his sorry hide.”

###

Victoria was lying in bed, awake before the sun had risen for the day. The tigress was frustrated because no matter how hard she had tried, she could not remove the welded wire device that encircled her muzzle. It was obvious that she had devised these particular 'safeguards' herself, since although they caused her no discomfort, she was stuck in them until Torvald would wake up to help extricate her.

Putting some extra pillows under her head, she sat up and made herself comfortable so she could patiently await her hubby's awakening. As it was, this might be a while. He seemed to be tired last eve so the stallion might just be sleeping in. The huge fur had not responded to her nudging him, trying gently to wake him.

The tigress fiddled with the lacing on her left glove again, realizing why her husband had tied the laces in a bow, then tied a second bow on top of that. The metal tips in her gloves took away just enough tactile dexterity to prevent her from untying the laces. The tips also prevented her from manipulating the buttons on the flap that covered the buckle for the straps holding the muzzle on. At least the straw in her water glass by the bed allowed her to sip some refreshment and she was able to fasten the toggle closures on her bed jacket that she was currently wearing.

Victoria's thoughts wandered to their kits. The tigress wondered what Valerie Marie, Torvald Junior and Walter Conrad thought about the idea of going back to the Immortal Couple's original home. They were not tied to this world so the trio had spent last summer with Gytha, Dana and their families. When they had returned, it was clear the modern world had not left an impression on them.

Torvald Junior had openly stated that he preferred the simple life in Griffindell, the center of Halstlund, over the insanity that was called Orange County, California any day. It was probably a give that TJ would stay here if the opportunity presented itself. It didn't help that he was smitten by Saria Noone, that pretty gray fox vixen that was the daughter of the castle's gunsmith.

And what of the the young Delancey kits? If an opportunity to return to the modern world presented itself, would Willi and Richard's offspring chose to go with them? Brianna and Richard Junior were not tied to this world either, so they had been to visit with family on their parents' home-world from time to time. They both had expressed the thoughts that the modern world was exciting but they did not feel at home there.

Victoria thoughts wandered to what had transpired after Beoram had been destroyed. Aslaug had been located for them by Bethany Carmel, and the filly failed at transporting them home after numerous attempts to do so. Hrist and Elin had tried and they, too had failed. Denise Berger had made her one and only attempt at returning the Immortal Couple to their proper time and place, only to fail in a spectacular way. She had literally vaporized in a huge flash of light, since she never returned to make a second attempt.

There *was* one place that both the tigress and the stallion could go, and that was Christopher's realm. She had went there once to ask for help, only to find the lion could not assist them in any way. Tor had been there once, too, the day after her visit, just to give *The Son* a piece of his mind.

Uriel had been to visit them a long time ago and the Angel of Death suggested something that made Victoria shudder just to think it, even today. He had told them that the big rumor floating around the Celestial Home suggested that *The Almighty* had cut a long deal with a Demon, maybe even Lucifer himself, agreeing that as long as no harm came to the Immortal Couple, Willi and Richard, he would

sanction it and in fact permanently tie their souls to whatever reality they were stranded in. She knew he was not happy with her marriage to Torvald so maybe this was true.

What the tigress really hoped was this was not the fact, that they were not tied to this existence and some day they would in fact leave here. As much as they had become comfortable with living in Halstlund, a fourteenth-century level society, she really wanted to go home. She missed her family, their friends and all of the trappings of the twenty-first century. Every time she needed something, it was either wait for Bethany to bring it to her or try to find a crafts-fur to make it for her. There was something to be said for modern conveniences. Even the kits had come back from their latest visit with a butt-load of modern clothing, particularly blue jeans.

There was one thing that even bugged Torvald; forget about anything that resembled a modern firearm. What the tigress really wanted was a metallic cartridge firearm, even if it was a single shot bolt action, a rolling block or a falling block action of some kind. Something that would use a cartridge! A firearm that could shoot more than twice a minute and didn't involve a ramrod to load it!!

Delmar Noone, despite being a very competent gunsmith for The Crown, did not completely understand the mechanics of a single-action revolver that her son-in-law Brett Kashnikov had laid out for him. That and the lack of highly refined tool steel. Not to mention the lack of an automated button-rifling machine, or precision mills and lathes that could handle steel.

Torvald rolled over in his sleep to face his mate, draping his right arm over her lap. She watched as he nuzzled against her, then settled down again. At least he wasn't snoring again. Maybe he could be woken up this time.

“Tor? Honey?” she said softly, rubbing his shoulder. “Tor, are you awake?” she asked.

“I'm up.” he replied sleepily. Looking up through bleary eyes, he yawned and hugged his mate around the waist. “Need something?” he asked, right before he yawned widely again.

“Sorry I woke you up but I need you to remove my 'safeguards' for me.” Victoria asked of him.

“Well, it does look like it's getting light outside.” the stallion commented as he stretched out in the bed. “Close to time for me to get up, anyway. I have a basic battleaxe class to teach this morning to the new regular army recruits.”

Torvald sat up in bed, carefully removed her muzzle guard and unfastened her gloves. He then took them and put them back in their box for safe keeping.

“Feeling better this morning?” he asked while he poured her some wine so she could refresh herself.

“Yeah, I think so.” she replied. “I was just thinking about the situation at paw. Why would we be stranded here? I mean, the others could go home but not the four of us. Even our kits can move between realities. I'm sorry but it still makes no sense to me at all.”

“So, what do you want to do today?” Torvald asked, somewhat changing the subject because he just didn't want to get into it this morning. “Are you going to take another day off?”

“I think I'll have Hess check my mind over, then I'm going to West Hall afterward.” she suggested. “That swordsmith over there was supposed to size up and true some sharpening stones for me. Our old ones are

just plain old worn out.” She smiled as she added, “And there's a clothier there that makes leather clothing that aren't too expensive. Willi and I saw some real pretty dark blue leather the last time we were there and he was supposed to make me a casual blouse from it.”

“Are you going to wear that blouse with your Wrangler jeans that your sister brought to you?” the stallion asked.

“I thought I would.” she revealed. “They should look good together.”

“Anything you wear looks good.” the stallion retorted.

“I'm glad you think so.” Victoria commented, right before she kissed her hubby lovingly. “Come on, let's get dressed and grab a bite to eat.”

###

With her morning meal over with and a quick meeting with her guards out of the way, the tigress waited patiently in the south garden for Hess to show up. She really didn't think there was a problem with her thought processes but a quick checkup wouldn't hurt at all.

What seemed to bother the tigress was the fact that she could remember things that happened on their homeworld, during that time she thought she was home just a little bit too clearly. If these things didn't happen, the false memories that were not hers were just a bit too bright in her mind.

Victoria sat down in the informal portion of the garden, an area that she helped to lay out. There was a 'pine' tree that had a bench under it and the bench was in the shade at this time of the morning. She sat down, took out her tanto and its sharpening stone. She proceeded to work on the edge while she waited.

“They told me That I would find you here,” Hess commented as she walked up to the femme feline. “Valerie told me that you had suffered another episode.” The canid of indeterminate origin stopped just outside of Victoria's striking range for her own safety.

“It was a mild one,” the tigress replied, offering her 'psychologist' a seat on the bench while she put her weapon away. “I need you to give me a checkup, since I seem to be able to remember things that supposedly didn't happen just a bit too clearly this morning.”

“I see.” Hess commented. “That is different, to say the least.” She took the seat offered, straddling the bench and waiting for the striped femme to do likewise.

“Okay, take my paws and relax,” the black femme requested, waiting until her patient had done so. “Now, meet me in your mind.”

Victoria met Hess in what was a representation of her memories. It looked like an estate house in England with rich carpeting and paneled walls. The canid looked around for a moment to get her bearings, then she took the tigress' paw and started down the hallway.

“You were here yesterday,” the dark femme commented, observing how fresh things looked. “Actually, I'm not sure why you remember these things. Everything looks fine so far . . .” She stopped talking when an anomaly presented itself.

“Hess, what is that?” the striped one asked, noting a wall that didn't look right. It appeared to have an add-on to it that was covering up something.

“Victoria, I'm not sure what this is. I've never observed anything like this in your mind before.”

“Well, you've been here dozens of times so you should know. Any ideas?” the femme warrior asked.

“Let's see what's behind it.”

Victoria and Hess both went to the edges of this 'anomaly', about twenty feet apart. They found that with a bit of difficulty, they could get their fingers between this camouflage and the real wall behind. After much tugging and pulling, the 'anomaly' fell over, revealing a long hallway with multiple doors and smaller halls on both sides.

The two femmes stepped over the false wall and proceeded down the previously hidden hall carefully. Once at the first door, Hess carefully opened it. The view inside was a ghostly representation of the day the tigress, her hubby and son had finished moving their belongings into Rancho Svensen. They were on the back porch, enjoying sandwiches and chips.

“What the . . .???” Hess spat out, looking at the event in progress. She thought she could taste the food, the memory was that strong. “Victoria, do you remember this??”

“Yes, I do.” she replied carefully. “This was the last moving day, when we finally fully occupied Rancho Svensen.”

“Let's keep going.” the canid suggested.

The feline and canid femmes continued their reconnoiter of the tigress' memories, up until the night after Victoria and Torvald had visited with the golems Quillam and Karyn in the hospital. The memories continued on, finding them in the motel room with Aslaug and Donnie Azevada. They went to sleep that night without any problems, then the next door that was extremely hard to open revealed the truth of the matter.

Once the door was opened, the tigress observed a silver dragon waking her up from her sleep, trying to overpower her. He explained in a non-committal tone that it was not personal but he had been paid dearly to return her to a time and place that she would never escape from in her long, immortal lifetime.

Torvald was already tied up securely so she fought the scaly one with all of her might, in hopes that she could save her hubby from whatever fate lay before them. She put up a valiant fight, injuring the dragon heavily with her claws but he eventually got the upper paw on her. The room for some reason being so cold was assisting him, making it hard for her to fight her attacker while being chilled to the bone. The next memory was of being in Castle Griffin.

“See!!” the tigress spat out. “I told Torvald that we had been kit-napped!!” Victoria looked around herself to see that Hess had collapsed from exhaustion and she was no longer inside her mind.

“Hess!!” Victoria shouted, shaking her shoulders to rouse her. “Hess, can you hear me??”

“I hear you, Victoria.” the canid replied. “Gah, have you ever been mind fucked.” she commented while she cleared her eyes. “Okay, get me up to my feet.” she asked, struggling to stand up.

“Hess, you're too weak . . .” the canid cut her off.

“NO! Get me to Wilhelmine!” the femme mind healer demanded. “I need a ride to go find that damned drac Eldon!”

“When you are strong enough.” Victoria countered. The commotion in the garden had brought several guards to their location, which worked to the femme warrior's advantage. With their help, the tigress moved Hess into a guest room. Once the exhausted femme had been settled in, the tigress put a guard at her door.

“You watch over her,” she demanded of the young badger, Sir D'Targon. “You make sure she gets whatever she needs and when she's decided that she's ready to travel, you find me. Do you understand?”

“Yes, My Captain!” her guard shot back with a snappy salute afterward.

“I will be on the grounds, somewhere. Do not forget to find me.” she added.

Walking off towards the armory with some spring in her step, Victoria now knew what had been the issue. She only hoped that she got first crack at that dragon. She would make him pay dearly for his indiscretions.

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Victoria entered the armory, finding Delmar Noone busy with some new percussion cap rifle project. It was his desire to please the tigress by making her a firearm that could be quickly loaded with a paper charge wrapped around the base of a bullet. At least the gray fox had grasped the notion of a pointed projectile and its superior ballistics.

“My Captain! You seem a bit upset to me. What may I do for you to lighten your mood this fine day?” he inquired, bowing as gracefully as a five foot-four, one hundred eighty-five pound canid could muster.

The tigress shrugged her shoulders. “I was thinking about drawing out a weapon made for drac hunting. There is a dragon that I need to teach a lesson or two.”

“Ah, has the King demanded you seek out Sir Teric?” Delmar asked, seeming a bit concerned.

“Oh no!” the femme warrior blurted out. “No, not Sir Teric. He is an asset to the kingdom. I have another dragon to seek out. A silver drac named Eldon. He has done wicked things to my family and myself, things that I cannot forgive. Ever.”

“I do not remember a drac named Eldon.” Delmar admitted. “However, I have what might be the correct weapons system for your foray, as you would say.”

The femme feline followed the armorer back through the armory to a dusty storeroom beyond. The fox moved a few crates around until he located the one he was after. Victoria assisted him in carrying the container back to the workshop area and patiently waited while the crate was opened.

Delmar removed some rags that had cushioned the contents, then he removed a bow. It was unusual in that it was a compound bow, fairly modern in design.

“This was found in the south, in the ruins of a cabin some fifty years ago. It is very similar to the bow that the sorceress Wilhelmine carries,” he explained. “It is a very effective design but try to explain that to the King's archers. They prefer their longbows made from yew.”

“This is a Hoyt Montega,” Victoria commented, wiping the dust away. “Hmm, just my weight, too. Seventy pounds that lets off to forty-five at full draw.” The thought that Eldon had got away with moving them to this time and preventing them from leaving was making the tigress mad. She quickly strung the bow and tested it, finding the string to still be serviceable.

“My Captain, you need these to go with that bow. That is why I have kept them together.” The fox passed a bundle to the tigress that she unwrapped slowly. Inside were a dozen arrows in like new condition, tipped with broadhead hunting points that were also very modern in design.

“What is so special about these arrows?” she asked, not understanding the implications he had made.

“Dragon Slayers.” the fox replied. “Watch this.” he bid.

Taking one of the arrows from the femme feline, the armorer carefully positioned it against the edge of his anvil. He pulled it along the corner, causing sparks to fly from the edge of the point. When he finished, he held up the point to show it had not been harmed. He then picked up the curl of iron that had been shaved from his anvil and gave it to Victoria.

“So, that drac wouldn't stand a chance?” she asked, running her fingers up and down a shaft, imagining the projectile punching through Eldon's hide neatly.

“If you have a clean shot, he is doomed. His hide cannot stop those arrows.” Delmar explained.

“Oh, if I could just get muzzle-to-muzzle with that sonuvabitch, I would kill his ass for stranding me here!” she said in a malicious tone, obviously getting worked up. “I would injure him just enough that he couldn't run, then I would find a way to use an arrow point to skin him alive for doing this, right before sinking one of these arrows right through his heart!!”

The fox was backing away from his Captain, afraid of her. Her eyes were glowing like white-hot coals and the wind was whipping up in a small tornado around her, something that shouldn't be possible. Before the armorer could get her attention to warn her of what was happening, the tigress and her newly-obtained weapon vanished in a bright flash of light.

Delmar walked up to the spot where Victoria had stood, kneeling and touching the place where her boots had been. The stone was hot to the touch and there was a strong smell in the air of spices. Standing back up, he shook his head and made one fitting comment;

“Oh Shit!”