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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meig'h

Chapter 19 – “Out In The Open”

The stallion had wept over the dead body of his present-day mate, knowing in his heart that it was final this time. They had been left to their own devices for some time now so it was plausible that both iterations of Victoria would die with no intervention from *On High*. This was the way they were being paid back for their service to the Celestial Order.

Torvald got up from the floor by the couch and went back to what was his mate from the future, sitting down on the bed beside her prone body.

“Tor? Is that you?” she asked, reaching out and turning her head in what she thought to be the general direction of the stallion, since she was now without sight. She was going to say more but the femme feline was wracked by a coughing fit.

“I'm here with you, Victoria.” he replied, taking her ice-cold paw in his. “How are you feeling?”

“Been better.” she replied in a weak voice. “I . . . I don't think I'll survive this.” she added hesitantly. “I still feel deathly cold all over.”

“I'll put some covers over you.” he put forth, tucking the comforter from the bed around his dying mate.

“I want my . . . my white high necked blouse.” the tigress stated. “That, my dark blue jacket and my ankle length matching dark blue skirt.”

“Now?” Torvald asked.

“Not . . . not now. When . . .” Victoria stopped to endure a coughing fit. “When you bury me.” she explained.

“Let's not talk about that.” he begged. “We aren't going there. You will survive this.”

“You . . . you know in your heart that I won't make it.” the striped femme indicated to her husband. “We had . . . we had a good time together.” Victoria was wracked again by a coughing fit that brought up some blood. “I think my immortality is . . . is slipping away. I'm not getting any warmer. I'm dying, Tor. Face it, I'm not long for this world.”

Torvald was going to rebut his mate's opinion of her condition when the other presumed-dead tigress gasped loudly and sat up.

The Angelbreaker, who was sitting on the end of the couch, grumbling loudly about her bad choice in weaponry while picking remnants of the closet door out of her mane and tail, was startled by the femme warrior's apparent reanimation.

“Victoria?” Aslaug queried as she sat down her francisca with the damaged edge, stunned to see the present-day femme feline return from the dead.

The pajama-clad tigress looked at the filly with mostly vacant eyes, as if the lights were on but nobody was home. “Are you talking to me?” she asked, clearly stunned. “Is that my name? Victoria?” she added.

“Yes, Victoria, that is your name.” the filly replied. “How do you feel?”

“I feel odd, like I'm tingling all over. Um, where am I?” she asked, looking around at her surroundings. “And furthermore, do I know all of you?” she questioned.

“Tor, what's happening?” the blind femme asked, tugging at the stallion's pajama sleeve.

“Uh, your other iteration just came back from the dead.” he replied.

“Guh . . . good.” the femme on the bed said softly. “At least one of us will survive this. Tor, I'm so cold, I can barely move. I feel like I'm getting colder by the minute.”

The pajama-clad femme got up from the couch and came over to sit on the bed opposite the stallion, putting the other iteration of herself between them. She stroked the stricken femme's forehead, looking at her intently.

“Should I know her?” the present-day femme asked of her husband. She looked up at him questioningly as she asked, “I feel like I should know her. Is she ill? Her forehead feels like ice.”

“She is another iteration of you from the future, I would guess.” Tor replied, not sure of another way of putting it. “And yes, she is ill. She is probably dying.”

“Is there something we could do for her?” the recently revived femme asked.

“There is something *I* can do for her.” Aslaug said in a conspiratorial tone. “There will be Hel to pay, but I'll take that chance.”

The Valkyrie pushed Torvald out of her way, scooped up the dying femme in her arms and in a blink of an eye, they were gone.

“Where did they go?” the addled femme asked, looking around the room in amazement.

Tor just shook his head. “If they went where I think they went, we will hear the backlash from here.”

###

Torvald had helped his present-day wife to get dressed and he took that opportunity to carefully check her over for injuries. The only obvious physical damage to her was a slight electrical burn on her left paw's palm pad that was in an almost-perfect star shape. That and being loaded with static electricity, to the point where every time he touched her, he got a mild shock. It was clear, however, that her brain was scrambled. She had no idea who she was or any recollection of her family or friends. The tigress barely remembered her own monicker.

“I'm sorry, I forgot your name again.” she said to the stallion as they sat down on the couch. “And the wolf that went down to get us some food; is he related to us?”

“I'm Torvald Arend Svensen, your husband.” he replied firmly. “The canid is Donnie Azevada, someone that came to us for help.”

“I'm not sure that I could help him.” she offered up. “I'm not sure of what help I could be, since I don't recall who I am. I will try to remember your name, though. Torvald is a very rugged sounding name.”

The berserker was going to try to jog his mate's memory again when they were joined by Wilhelmine.

“Uncle Torvald, I just couldn't stay away. I needed to see if I could . . .” She stopped talking when she observed her adoptive aunt, sitting on the couch, very much alive. “Uncle Torvald . . . what's going on here?” the femme magic-slinger asked carefully.

Victoria looked the sorceress over carefully. “Do I know you? And come to think of it, how did you get in here without coming through the door?”

“I'm Wilhelmine Marie Delancey, an extended family member.” she replied. “My brother James and I lived with you and your husband for a while.” Willi swallowed, then continued. “If what I sense is true, you may not understand it when I tell you that I'm a sorceress.”

“You mean, like a witch?” the striped one questioned.

“Witch is a somewhat derogatory term.” the femme equine mix explained. “We prefer sorcerer or sorceress. Um, not to change the subject, but what do you remember? Just relax and tell us what you recall from the last few days.”

“I don't recall much.” the feline femme replied. “I was somewhere that seemed very nice and serene, talking with a male feline, maybe a white tiger. Then I was on this couch, gasping for breath.” She thought for a moment, then asked, “That other femme that looked like me . . . is she going to be okay?”

“I don't know.” Tor replied. “Aslaug took her to see Eyr, if I have my guess right. I guess I should have known that you would have come here regardless to help out,” he added, looking up at the femme equine.

“You know I would have tried to help her.” Willi put forth.

“I know you would have.” he agreed. “Well, let's see if we can jog Victoria's memories.”

Wilhelmine sat down with Tor and Vicki, assisting in trying to help the tigress to remember.

###

Aslaug had taken the future iteration of Victoria to be healed by Eyr, only to be turned away by a legion of Einherjar standing guard in front of the healer's domicile. One of the front line, a gray stallion named Lundvarr Leifsson, had given her a message from the huge femme of indeterminate origin.

That message had been directions to a world in a reality that the filly hadn't been to before. She had found the home easily, sort of a dome-shaped affair out in the countryside, miles from any city. Following the directions that the front door would be unlocked, she carried the ailing tigress inside, just as the message had indicated to do. There was one more thing the Valkyrie needed to do, and that was to call out for the femme they were to meet in a certain way.

“Andrea the healer! I call out to you in ritual form! I am Aslaug Larsdatter, a Valkyrie in service to Odin!” she said loudly. “I bring to you Victoria Svensen, an inactive Agent Of Light, in service to the Abrahamic god! She is desperately in need of your talents! Eyr said to tell you that she sent us!”

“I heard you come in, already!” a soft femme voice with a mid-western drawl responded from upstairs. “Be down in a moment! I wasn't dressed when y'all arrived! Place her on the examining table, will you?” the voice asked.

A light came on in a side alcove off of the main area and in that space was a very modern doctor's examination table. In fact, the area around the table seemed to be set up like a contemporary doctor's office. The filly placed the stricken tigress on the table, then took up a spot by her head.

The healer must have been in a room right over their heads, since the filly could hear the femme walking around. Some doors opened, then closed, then the footsteps seemed to indicate the unknown being was coming down to meet them. Aslaug was truly shocked by the femme's appearance when she arrived.

She was a lapin, about shoulder-tall to the Valkyrie, wearing pale lavender scrubs and white clogs. What was the shocking part about her appearance turned out to be the cotton-candy pink color of her fur. Andrea stopped, put her paws on her hips, then smirked.

“Does it every time,” she commented, reaching out to touch the tigress and check her pulse. “Before you ask, I managed to piss off this little shit of a sorcerer in a bar one night, some years ago. I used to be a Timber Wolf so he saw great humor in making a predator species into a prey species.” She looked up at the filly and added, “The pink color was just the frosting on the cake.”

“It doesn't look that bad.” the Angelbreaker commented off-paw, just to be polite.

“The color won't dye, no matter what I've tried.” Andrea offered up while she listened to the femme feline's lungs and heart. “So, what happened to her?” she asked while she took her stethoscope out of her long, floppy ears and checked the feline's pupils for response.

“She came from some time in the future to stop a lindorm from abducting her present iteration.” the filly related. “The overgrown lizard fell on her when she shot it with a Lindorm Slayer arrow. Her husband

seems to think she has a major head injury.”

“Lindorm? Erm, you mean dragon, right?” the doctor queried.

“My furs called them lindorms. Dragon or drac are some other names for those blasted beasts. Totally worthless creatures, if you ask me.” the filly replied. She stopped, thought about it, then corrected herself. “There is one dragon though, actually a half-drac, half-human, that is a very decent scalie. His name is Teric.”

“Thank you for the clarification, Aslaug. You had me confused there for a moment because it's been a while for me, having to deal with Agents. As far as her head injury goes, I will concur with her husband.” the femme lapin put forth. “One pupil is larger than the other and they're not very responsive.” She then turned the tigress' head to look at her. “Victoria, can you see anything at all?” she asked.

“I might have . . . seen you shining some light in my left eye.” she whispered. “I'm very cold, too deathly cold, in fact.”

Andrea nodded. “Okay, first I need to remove your clothes, then I'll put a blanket over you.”

The tigress lost her clothing to a very sharp pair of bandage shears, then the healer put an electric blanket over her and set it at 'Medium'. She then surprised Aslaug by rolling a machine from the corner that was a portable x-ray machine, put to use to get a look at the tigress' cranium. The pink femme then looked over the resulting film very carefully using a light box.

“This is all very modern,” the filly commented, feeling just a bit uncomfortable by the situation. This was one hundred and eighty degrees from Eyr's style of healing.

“I used to have a private practice in Lawrence, Kansas, down south of here.” Andrea offered up in return. “Well, Victoria is pretty banged up but I don't see her dying anytime soon.”

Aslaug looked stunned. “So, she will make it?”

Andrea nodded. “Yeah, I think so. It might take a while for her to fully recover, but I think she will be just fine.”

“What's . . . what's wrong with me?” the tigress asked.

“First, do you feel warmer?” the pink one asked.

“Yes, a little bit, I suppose.” Victoria replied.

“That's good.” Andrea put forth. “You have a very bad concussion along with a fractured skull. I would say that the concussion is responsible for your blindness, which should be temporary in nature. Also, both eye sockets have small fractures around the bottoms of the orbits, near your nasal passages. You also have a fracture of your upper jaw and a slight hair-line fracture of your lower jaw, near your right mandibular process.”

She waited until the tigress had absorbed that, then continued. “I'm going out on a limb here but I think I'm right. You're cold because you were forcibly crossing time and space the hard way. I would guess you've had no training in how to control that ability, so without knowing it, you almost sucked the life force out

of yourself by accident. Once you completed the crossing, it took a while for things to balance out. Were you getting colder by the minute?"

"Yeah, I was." the femme feline agreed.

"Well, you would have continued to get colder, to the point that you might have been frozen solid if I hadn't started to warm you back up." Andrea put forth.

"Gah!" the tigress spat out. "So, I did this to myself?"

"Not the injuries, but certainly the coldness." the lapin femme replied. "So, still feeling warmer?"

"Yes, I am. Thank you." the feline replied.

"I suspect that you're an immortal, am I right?" Andrea asked.

"Yes."

"Okay, that helps." the pink femme stated. "I'm going to splint your broken right forearm, so it's in alignment when you warm up and your self-healing mechanism kicks back in. Your paws still feel very cold to me." Andrea commented as she checked her patient over. She thought for a moment, then asked, "Are you hurting anywhere else?"

"My chest. The dragon fell on me, muzzle to . . ." The tigress coughed a bit, then continued. "Fell on me muzzle to muzzle. It hurts to breathe."

"That's to be expected." the lapin offered up. "He probably weighed ten times your weight." she explained while the doctor put a temporary splint on her chest. "Now, are you feeling warmer?"

"Some, yes." Victoria replied. "What would have . . . have happened if I didn't get help?"

"You would have taken days or weeks maybe, to warm up and start moving around again. In the meantime, your family could have thought that you were dead and buried you or worse, cremated your body."

"Oh, Good Lord, I almost effed up permanently!" the tigress spat out.

"Well, I have to ask. You're not a sorceress, are you?"

"No, not that I know." Victoria offered up.

"You need to speak with a high-level sorceress and get some dampening bands made for you. Something to stop you from using your power in an uncontrolled manner like you just did." the doctor put forth. "Either that, or have a sorceress teach you to control that ability."

"Agreed."

"Now, I want you to stay here with me overnight, just to make sure you're not suffering any other injuries and that you do warm up properly." Andrea put a digital thermometer in the tigress' ear and took her temperature. "Seventy-nine point three degrees. You're still too cold." The lapin turned the blanket up

another notch, just to speed up the process of warming up.

The Valkyrie had been trying to ignore her rumbling stomach but it was now nigh impossible. This seemed like a good time to get a quick bite to eat so she spoke up. “Well, Victoria seems to be on the mend, so I’ll just . . .” The lapin quickly derailed her train of thought.

“You’ll be staying right here, helping to watch over your friend, until the tigress is ready to be moved.”

The filly frowned at being admonished. “I was only going to say, maybe I could go get some breakfast, now that Victoria seems stable. I wasn’t going to be gone long.” Aslaug countered.

“I’ll tell you what, I’m a little peckish, too so why don’t you watch over her while I go fix us something to eat.” Andrea put forth. “Just holler up if she seems like she’s getting cold again.”

Once the doctor had left to prepare them some food, Aslaug rolled a stool over to the table and sat down on it, since this looked like it was going to take a while. She took the tigress’ left paw in hers and held it, noting it felt just like an ice cube, it was that cold.

“Thank you,” the tigress whispered, giving the filly’s paw a squeeze.

“Forget it, it was nothing.” the Valkyrie replied.

“I will not forget this, not ever.” Victoria retorted. “You saved my life. I owe you one.”

Aslaug bowed her head and said a silent prayer for the tigress, actually glad that Victoria couldn’t see the anger in her face, knowing that the tigress would only tell her to calm down. The Valkyrie looked at the femme feline resting on the table and thought about how Victoria was one of a steadily shrinking circle of *friends*. Not just a casual acquaintance, but a *true friend*. One that you could trust your very existence to. Aslaug had known that since the very beginning of her time around the Svensens.

The Valkyrie sat there and thought back to the time Victoria had curled her mane and tail, dressed her up and put some makeup on her. She knew it was all for naught but the tigress seemed to enjoy the whole thing. Aslaug looked down at her blouse, the one Victoria had bought for her at that motorcycle shop and shook her head. The bullet holes in it had really upset the femme feline. The filly remembered how it had made Victoria smile when she had relented and allowed the feline to buy her the blouse and a pair of jeans.

While the filly held Victoria’s left paw, the tigress spoke up to get her attention. “Aslaug, the palm of my paw you’re holding hurts. Could you look at it for me?”

“Sure.” the filly agreed. A quick look turned up what looked like a burn on her palm pad, in an almost-perfect star shape. “You have what looks to be a burn on your paw.” the equine minor deity informed the tigress.

“I thought so.” the femme feline agreed. “I think that’s where my other iteration of myself and I touched paws.”

“I’ll get the doctor to bandage it for you.” Aslaug offered up.

“No, not right now, maybe later. Just hold my paw.” the femme warrior replied. “I need your touch to comfort me. I need to know that you’re there.”

“Okay, I'll do that.” the Valkyrie agreed.

Aslaug wiped her tears of anger on her sleeve and took a few deep breaths to try to pull herself together. Sitting there, gritting her teeth, she had to fight the urge to do something . . . evil to that accursed lindorm. She wished that there was a way to bring that damned wyrm back to life, just so she could pull his scales from his body, one at a time, slowly, with red-hot pliers. That was the very least that he deserved.

###

Vishnu and Templar Prime looked down at the two scenes unfolding before them, feeling a bit of accomplishment in the matter. There were some surprises that the two deities were not prepared for.

“I would have never thought the Angelbreaker would shed a tear for the tigress.” Vishnu put forth.

“Nor would I.” Templar retorted. “Although, I really think those tears are tears of anger. If I remember right, Aslaug doesn't like dragons at all.” The steel-clad deity thought for a moment, then continued. “I particularly like the way you put the younger tigress' soul back in her body. Nice touch. Too bad her memories are scrambled.”

“I thought you did that, the putting the soul back part.” Vishnu put forth, giving his contemporary a strange look.

“It was not me.” the armored one stated.

“She did it herself.” Odin told them as he made his appearance. “Her ability, that she really has no control over, put her soul back into her body. That was the only way she could see to kick her god's tail end. Oh, by the way, I'm not mad at either of you. It just meant I didn't need to interfere. The god of Abraham gets so upset when I stick my muzzle into his business.”

“Now there are two of them. Isn't that a problem?” Vishnu put on the table.

“I don't see it as a problem.” Odin mused.

“I mean, how will she pass herself off as two? Victoria Svensen One and Victoria Svensen Two?” the steel-clad one posed.

“No, there is a way.” the one-eyed wolf stated. “They will realize the way, once the younger tigress regains her memories. If there is one thing that can be said about Victoria Svensen, it's that she's very resourceful. Now that there are two of her, that may go doubly so.”

###

Torvald held his wife tightly while she tried to recompose herself. The tigress had went through her purse in hopes that it would spark some memory for her. She had examined the items carefully, wondering why she would have that particular thing in her possession and it was the final straw when she looked at her small photo album, only to fail to recognize anyone besides Torvald and Willi Marie.

“My mind is shot!” she sobbed out between outright crying fits. “I have absolutely no clue as to who I am!” she said loudly, working to calm her nerves and stop the crying jag she had been on.

“Look, you need to calm down.” the stallion told the tigress. “We will get Hess to help unscramble your mind, Sweetheart.”

“You . . . you called me . . . Sweetheart . . .” the feline said between sobs. “You do that . . . when . . . you think . . . I'm upset . . .” she added.

“I do?” Tor questioned.

“Well, yeah, You gave me that 'Sweetheart' line when we were stuck in that clear . . .” A very shocked look crossed her face as she looked up at her hubby. “I remember that little incident! I've gotten my memories back!!” she blurted out.

“Thank the gods,” Torvald said softly, giving his wife a big hug and a wet, sloppy kiss afterward.

“Oh no, don't thank them.” Victoria shot back as she pulled away from the stallion. She broke free of his hug, went over and kicked the dragon soundly. “Yeouch!!” she shouted, holding onto the foot she had just kicked the dragon with, hopping back over to the bed to sit back down beside her husband and massage her toes.

“What was that all about?” he questioned.

“Oooh, I have my memories back alright, and I also have my future self's memories, too!” she spat out. “That damned drac came here and kit-napped the two of us along with Willi and Richard, and took us back to Halsthund, right at the moment we were to leave there. I found out later on that my boss, *His Assholyness* tried to tie our bodies and souls to that time and place! That was to be our reward!!”

“Oh . . . No . . .” the stallion said reverently.

“No, there's more!” the tigress added. “Some fur made us think we had never left there! We were made to think we belonged there!! And then I kept remembering that we had left there, but a suggestion had been put in my mind by someone who's now on my shit list, making me lose my memories and think I was going crazy!! I actually tried to kill you during the first one of those episodes!!”

“Now that's just damned wrong on a bunch of different levels . . .” Tor put forth in a murderous tone.

“Every time I would have an episode, you would have to put a wire muzzle on me and gloves that prevented me from taking the muzzle off or using my claws!! After the last episode, Hess helped me to find out the truth that some fur tried to keep blocked in my mind! I went to Delmar Noone, the armorer and he gave me the bow and arrows to kill that dragon with. Then I got pissed off and accidentally transported myself here, intent on killing the drac before he could kit-nap us!!”

Tor was pissed now. “By Tyr, if I ever find out who was behind all of this . . .” Victoria interrupted her hubby.

“No, here's the sad part.” she began, actually having to wipe at her eyes, “Because we thought we were stuck there, we decided to have three kits, a beautiful femme and two handsome males. Now that I, I mean my other self, came back and killed the drac, they will never exist.”

"I'm so sorry," the berserker told his wife as he hugged the saddened femme.

"No, I knew what I was doing. *The Almighty Arsehole* intercepted me and asked me if this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to stop this madness. I needed to." the tigress told her mate. "My god will never let us procreate in this reality, even if Eyr removes our kits' immortality at birth. It's sad, but I knew what I was doing. At least I still have the memory of them. He couldn't take that away from me."

"At least you have the memories." Willi put forth.

"I have my memories, but you missed out altogether. You gave birth to your kits in Halstlund." Victoria told the femme sorceress. "They were so wonderful. Then . . . then you and Brianna did a bit of coordinated magic while touching Richard, jump-starting his abilities. He doesn't know it right now, but he is a minor mage."

"Oh My!" Willi blurted out. "Geez, I don't know how to tell him that little piece of information."

"You'll figure it out." the tigress put forth. "You know what? Not to change the subject, but I think I might have broken several of my toes when I kicked that damned drac." she added.

"Let me see." the sorceress asked. "Does this hurt?" she asked, moving each toe carefully. Eventually, she found two that hurt to even touch them. "Well, just a little bit of magic, here," she stated while she used her abilities to heal the tigress, "And they should be as good as new."

"Much better," the tigress commented after standing and walking around the room. Victoria stopped, looked into the hallway with a puzzled look and motioned for her hubby to join her. "Where did that drac go to?" she asked.

"I dunno." the stallion replied. "He's not here, that for sure." Just the blood-covered arrow and bow were in the hall, right where they were left.

The tigress yawned, and sat back down on the couch. She was tired, but in an odd way. For some reason, she thought she could feel some fur holding her left paw, even though she could see that it was empty.

"Sweetheart, are you okay now?" Torvald asked.

"I think so." she replied. "Um, did Donnie go out for some food?" she asked.

"He did. It's a couple of blocks to that Leonard's[©] restaurant, and he might have had to wait for the food when he gets there. I called it in right before he left." the stallion related.

"Maybe I'll take a nap until he returns." the femme feline put forth. "I feel very tired and I have a slight headache, too. You know, for some reason, my muzzle hurts on the right side, where my jaw meets my skull."

"Go ahead and take a nap," Willi suggested. "We'll wake you when the food gets here."

Victoria laid down in the bed and allowed her hubby to tuck her in. She closed her eyes and snuggled into the pillow, feeling very sleepy. For some reason, she thought she could hear Aslaug talking to her and she was replying back. Victoria thought maybe that was just an after-effect of her injuries. She was sure that her other iteration would be alright, if she had her guess right. That, and having to dismiss some odd

notion of a femme telling Aslaug that her fur was pink and it was the frosting on the cake.