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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 27 – “The Bringer Of War”

Montgomery Hill rematerialized in the warehouse, feeling more than a bit disoriented from his unwanted trip across time and space. He staggered over to a low crate and sat down on it so he could get his head back on straight, since he was currently feeling a ways out of balance. While he rested, the huge stallion gave thought to what Uriel and Michael had told him. Bartell The Hunter was a needed entity in the war between good and evil in his estimation. Why they would ask him to 'retire' that persona was beyond him. At any rate, he had trusted the Angels' advice and direction in the past so once again, he would do so.

Julie tapped her brother on the shoulder to get his attention. “Monty? Are you all right?”

“Yeah, I'm okay, Julianna. A bit dazed but I think I'm okay.” He gave his little sister a hug and a kiss on the cheek. “It will take more than that to get to ol' Monty Hill.”

“We were worried when you left with Michael and more importantly, without an explanation.”

“They want me to retire Bartell The Hunter.” the elder sibling related to his little sister.

“Oh.” the small femme equine commented. “Why? Do they think you're too violent in that persona?”

“No.” the stallion replied. “I was told, it was necessary for the next phase in my life.” He then looked around the warehouse before he asked his question; “Where is Sytry?”

“Wilhelmine stripped his powers from him, right before you returned. She took him to a place called Halstlund where there is a blacksmith who might be in need of an assistant.”

“Did he complain about that choice?”

“No, I think he was looking forward to being a normal fur.” Julianna shrugged her shoulders as she added, “He seemed relieved to no longer be a Dark Agent.”

“I can see his point about . . .” Monty stopped talking when a portal to the Underworld opened near a wall and a horde of armed minions came rushing through, followed by their leader, Count Caassimolar, Demon of Death and Bloodshed.

“Where is my Second Lieutenant, Prince Sytry?!? What have you done with him???” the black winged canid demanded as he strode right into the center of the pentagram, leveling an accusing crooked finger at each member of the Amendment Foundation and the Coven in turn. There was a terrible stench of death wafting through the air while his band of fighters formed up behind him. Each small fur of indeterminate origin seemed to be armed with some sort of edged weapon or a pike.

“You are not welcome on our world or within our presence!” Canton announced in a voice that seemed a bit theatrical in nature. “Leave or prepare to be destroyed!” he added, lifting up his paws that were already sparking with energy.

“Showtime,” Montgomery said with a hint of disgust. “Looks like it's one last ride for Bartell the Hunter!”

The huge stallion strode past his brother and right into the center of the pentagram where he faced off with the canid demon. Monty reached out and pulled a huge battleaxe from out of nowhere to do his bidding with, giving it a few experimental swings to test its weight.

“Time to die, demon!” the gray one growled, right before he wound up and swung the axe like a bat, severing away the left paw of the canid cleanly. “Turn and run or stand and die!” the elder Hill sibling shouted menacingly as he waded into his adversary. Apparently Count Caassimolar was not expecting that move, failing to step back from the huge gray stallion. That was the beginning of the battle.

###

Aslaug was in the middle of 'schooling' the raccoon about the myriad of reasons to stay out of the Amendment Foundation's affairs when she was distracted by the shouting and screaming in the center of the warehouse. Dropping the Judge on the floor like a bad habit, she was pulling her axe from its place on her back as she turned to run headlong toward the middle of the melee.

The fighting appeared to be centered around Montgomery and a winged black demon-canid that seemed to be a bit unprepared for war. The Hell-hound was missing one paw so his two-pawed Bastard sword put him at a bit of a disadvantage, one that Aslaug felt compelled to exploit. Every fur in the warehouse heard her war cry as she waded right into the thick of things.

The demon had hit Monty with an energy orb, causing him to stagger backwards and that was the opening that the filly had hoped for. She stepped up and let go with her axe, slicing a deep groove across the retreating canid's chest. She was sure that she felt the edge of her weapon dig deeply into some ribs on the way across the demon's torso. Well, she would have to get back to schooling Judge Woodward later, since there were far bigger fish to fry at the moment.

###

“Hey! Julianna!” Zagam shouted, waving the small femme over to him. “Unhook this chain! Please?!” he begged.

“Why should I?” she asked, trying to pay attention to the ebony bull and keep her eyes on the battle that was ramping up at the same time.

“Because, as much as I don't want to admit it, it looks like I'm on your team now.”

“What???” the diminutive femme blurted out as she turned to see if Zagam was serious or not.

“Do you really think I can go back to my old position on the Council?” he questioned. “Not after what happened to Sytry. They would think I had a part in it.”

“You're serious?” she asked.

“Listen, I'm not joking.” the winged bovine put forth. “Let me go and allow me a weapon. You need my help because the shit is gonna hit the fan momentarily.”

Julie was torn over this. “Okay, I'll let you go but if you hurt any one of my family, I will skin you personally with a very dull paring knife.” she stated in a low, malevolent tone. “That paring knife will be so dull, it will not cut warm butter and I will take my ever-loving sweet time in relieving you of your hide while you're still alive.”

That statement from the small femme equine made the bovid cringe. “You won't regret this,” the former demon put forth while he was relieved of his dampening bands. His jailor then materialized a huge broadsword which she gave to Zagam.

“Okay, don't make me regret this,” she instructed the bovine male as she motioned to the battle that was growing in intensity.

“You won't.” the bull retorted. “Just get your brothers together and close that damned portal as soon as possible! If you don't, his minions will overrun us! Now Go!! Do It!!”

Julie watched on as Zagam waded right into the minions, chopping them down like a farmer harvesting wheat. The bovine's massive arm muscles were bulging as he hacked minions in two, appearing to be putting all of his effort into the job at paw. Well, maybe they had gained an ally in Zagam. It was clear to the small equine femme that he was making his way, slowly but steadily, toward the Demon-hound at the center of the melee.

###

Victoria and Virginia found themselves surrounded by at least a dozen minions that were doing their best to take them out of commission permanently. Fighting off their attackers back-to-back, The white tigress was not doing too bad but her ruddy sister was not as lucky. A pike jab to the right thigh had made standing quite difficult for her due to an injured quadriceps muscle. They needed some time, at least

fifteen or twenty minutes for the injury to heal, time they didn't have at the moment.

“Sorry if I'm leaning against you too heavily!” Victoria shouted, taking another swipe at a minion's face that had gotten too close with her claws, right before she drove her K-bar deep into the doomed Agent's chest.

“No problem!” the white tigress retorted. “Listen, maybe I can get us out of this mess.” she suggested.

“Anything would be good at this point!” Vicki shouted.

“Hold on!” Virginia yelled, just as she turned and wrapped her arms around her sister tightly. The world around the ruddy femme went white momentarily, then her sight returned to allow her to see that she was on the mezzanine above the war in progress.

“What the hell?!?” the younger femme blurted out, rubbing her eyes just to make sure of what she observed.

“I did it!” Jenny said reverently, astonished that it had worked at all. “I was afraid that you would get killed by a Dark Agent and that thought made me mad. When the minions began to back away from me, like they were scared, I knew my eyes must be glowing from my power surging. That's when I concentrated on putting us here.”

“I don't believe it worked either!” Vicki retorted while her sister helped her over to a wall to sit back against. “I thought it was just random and I, I mean we, couldn't control it like this!”

Virginia helped her twin to sit down, then sat down beside her to examine her injury. “Listen, I think we were given this power so we could go and help Tor when he was taken to Surt's realm.” the pale tigress suggested.

“Okay, I'll buy that explanation.” Victoria put forth, grimacing when Virginia cut open the leg of her jeans to see how the wound's healing was progressing. “So, want to try that one more time?”

“Where to?”

“Home.” the ruddy femme replied. “Shit is hitting the fan in a big way so we need help from Cami and any other fur that might be there.”

Virginia looked up to see her sister's eyes were glowing brightly, right before Victoria grabbed her paw.

With a blinding flash of white light, they were gone.

####

Morgan sat a plate of Chicken Alfredo in front of Cami, then he did the same for Renee. Taking a third plate for himself from the kitchen counter, he sat down and waited for the two femmes to sample his culinary skills. They both took a small bite and carefully chewed it to savor the flavors.

Cami nodded. “Morgan, I watched yo fix this meal so I know you didn't cut a single corner.”

“And?” he queried.

“I just don't believe that you cooked this!” she blurted out. “I knew you were an outstanding detective, hunter and fighter, but I had no idea you could cook!”

“It was nothing,” Morgan stated in an attempt to brush it off.

“Nothing my eye!” Renee put on the table. “I thought I was a good cook but this kills my Chicken Alfredo, paws down!!”

“Well, you live long enough, you pick up a random skill here and there.” the badger put forth.

Cami consumed a few bites of her meal, then she looked at the male. “Morgan, you said something about retiring yesterday.”

“Yeah, I think I'm done for a while.” he admitted.

“Any ideas as to what you might do?” the femme wolverine questioned.

“I thought I might settle down somewhere and find a part-time job that would be more like a paying hobby. Something safe but interesting.”

“Like what?” Renee asked.

“Well, I spotted a boatyard in Santa Barbara that specialized in wood sailboats.” the male replied. “They were looking for a part-time hired fur and I do like to sail.” Morgan shrugged his shoulders. “It's not like I have ties on my homeworld. Harold and I are the last of our kind, since all of our family and the furs we knew all died in the early seventeenth century.”

“You're how old . . .?” Cami questioned reverently.

“Hmm, I'm a few years older than Harold and he just had a birthday so that makes me four hundred and sixty-one years old, give or take a year.” he admitted. “Our buddy Rumjal started a religious war between two groups with widely differing views on The Bible so Harold and I stepped in to stop it. Well, we didn't do it to suit *His Pompousness, the God of Abraham*, so he made us immortal to teach us a hard lesson about killing others indiscriminately.”

“That is screwed up.” Renee allowed.

Morgan nodded. “If you live long enough, you keep losing those around you that you care for. We took lives so lives were taken from us. After a while, you just don't want to start a relationship because you know eventually they will die and you won't.” It was clear the badger was upset. “I have lost too many loved ones over the years. It's hard on the mind.”

Cami was blown away by that admission. “I would have thought that an immortal would lose all touch with reality after a while. You seem okay to me.”

“It's not that.” Morgan took a bite of his meal, just to give himself a moment to reflect. Did he really want to share his innermost feelings with these two femmes? “You know, I have become somewhat hardened to bloodshed because of immortality. Not much scares me here lately, except an incident that happened not long ago.”

“What was it?” the femme canid asked.

“I'm ashamed to admit what happened.” he put forth. “It was back when I was tailing this Dark Agent fur Ingvar Gamel. The felid was holed up in the Svensen's home and a pair of investigators had found him there. They retrieved me at my request and I was going to take him down, mainly because I was immortal and he couldn't hurt me much.

“Well, my two cohorts stayed with the car down toward the end of the drive and I went in by myself. I thought I heard Ingvar in the living room only to find out what I really heard was Varghöss, eating the feline alive! I didn't know the huge wolf at the time so all I could see in my mind was my feet, hanging out of his maw! I told the wolf he could have Ingvar, as long as he left me alone, then I beat feet out the front door and down the driveway. When I got to the car, I jumped in and as the story goes, I was screaming like a little femme for them to just drive! We then had to stop before we got to Portola Parkway so I could lose my lunch!”

“Now that would be scary!” Renee commented.

“It was,” Morgan admitted, taking a sip of his water. “I really didn't want to go back to see if there was anything left of Ingvar and I was glad to later hear through the grapevine that the only thing left was one paw.”

Before he could continue, there was a huge flash of light as the two striped femme felines appeared in the living room. They looked around, then practically ran into the dining area.

“Cami! Morgan! We need you right now!” Victoria blurted out. “Shit has hit the fan big time and our families are being overrun by Dark Agents!!”

“We're on it!” Morgan replied firmly, getting up from the table in a hurry, crossing the room in just a few long strides and grabbing his duffle bag from the floor by a recliner. Pawing through it, he was setting firearms and ammunition on the coffee table to take to the battle. In the meanwhile, Cami retrieved her fletchette rifle from her room in the forward bedroom of the coach.

Renee seemed confused at the moment. “Hey! What about me? Can I go too?” she asked.

Cami replied quickly. “You stay here and hold down the fort,” she instructed, tossing the young canid an AR-pattern carbine. “Shoot to wound, not to kill. Hold any perp at gun-point until we return!”

Before Renee could question her orders further, the foursome formed up in the living room and with Victoria's eyes glowing brightly, they popped out of sight.

The young femme looked at the rifle, then checked to see that it was charged. Placing the safety to 'Fire', she placed her rifle next to her plate and then she sat down at the table to finish her meal. A soldier should eat when they could, she thought, since a next meal could not be depended upon.

###

Rumjal and Constantine had made a quick second trip back to Zagam's quarters to see what of importance that there might be to retrieve. Finding nothing of interest, other than a few very pissed-off minions, they returned to the warehouse just in time to joint the fray.

“Oh no . . .” the avian blurted out, shaking his head. “Rumjal, we have a problem.”

“Agreed.” the pachyderm put forth. “You go left, I'll go right. We'll converge on that portal and see if we can stem the flow of Dark Agents.”

“I'm in agreement,” the feathered one responded, pulling his sword from out of thin air. Constantine braced himself, then waded right into the battle in progress. Taking a moment to look over his shoulder, he observed the gray one using a quite-oversized warhammer in a golf-swing manner to decimate the unfortunate minions in his way. Over the din, he was sure he could hear Rumjal shouting “Fore!” before each swing.

The newest Amendment Foundation member gave thought to this situation; it was clear that war had been declared but the real question was, would the Malefic Council involve itself now that Caassimolar had entered the battle? The canid was well thought of in the Underworld so it would most likely be one of those 'wait and see' deals. At any rate, Rumjal was pulling ahead of him in their quest to reach that portal so it was time to redouble his efforts. He was glad that his talons were not impeded by his boots, since the floor was becoming slick with demon's blood and traction was of the premium.

###

Aslaug was still attempting to give the canid demon a huge helping of Valkyrie whoop-ass, assisted by a few of the Hill family members that were keeping the minions at bay and allowing her some room to get the job done. It had been a tough fight but she felt the tide might be turning in her favor. The Count was bleeding profusely and the paw that he had regenerated was not as big as his original missing appendage nor did it seem to be as strong. Nonetheless, he was still doing damage to her in spades with his sword. She just felt like she was dishing out more than she was receiving.

“Die, you aberration from Odin's realm!” the blood-soaked Hell-hound shouted, trying to dodge out of the way of Aslaug's axe only to miscalculate his distances. The keenly sharp cutting edge tore cleanly through his right shoulder, nearly separating it from his body.

“You're going to oblivion, Ass-Hole!” the filly countered. “I think you need to keep your buddy Anane company!” she growled out in an ominous tone, right before she buried a Francesca in his chest. “There is no way in Hel that I'm letting you walk away!!” she added, using her axe like a battering ram on his jaw, causing Caassimolar to shatter several teeth from the impact of his jaws being forcefully driven together.

“Damn you, Bitch!” the canid blurted out, wiping at the blood on his lips. “I'll make sure you never see your precious Odin again!” he added as he prepared to swing his sword again. It was Caassimolar's misfortune to fail to keep track of the various combatants in play. He stopped his swing, dropped his weapon and looked down to observe Torvald's broadsword protruding from his chest.

“Aslaug, he's all yours.” the pale blond stallion put forth as he ripped his weapon out of the Count's body at an angle, doing more damage to the demon's body in the process.

“Thank you,” the filly replied, right before she dropped her axe on the canid one more time, taking his head from his shoulders cleanly. “That will teach you to screw with us!” she snarled as she kicked his head back through the portal, much to the surprise of the Berserker.

“No trophy?” he questioned.

“A useful trophy,” the Valkyrie replied, pointing at the headless body left behind. “He had some pretty tough hide on 'em.”

Torvald just nodded and returned to his task of killing minions, trying to stay ahead of the countless Dark Agents pouring through the portal in an attempt to overrun them.

###

Willi Marie had returned from her task of moving Sytry, now known as Sydney Panthera, to his new home in Halstlund. The feline had been more than relieved to be made a mortal and he actually looked forward to his new role as a blacksmith's assistant. The femme equine sorceress rematerialized in the warehouse expecting quiet only to be shocked by the battle in progress.

She watched on as Aslaug kicked a severed head through a portal that had minions literally pouring out through it, almost climbing over one another to enter the building. Monty, Canton, Julie and Amber were trying to close the portal with little success while the others were trying to kill the Dark Agents that had made it through. Her Grandfather's shouting snapped her out of her bout of indecision.

“Wilhelmine! Help us close this portal!” he requested loudly, finding the opening too stable for the foursome to close by themselves.

The Grand Mistress started heading that way, only to be blocked by the femme felines, Cami and Morgan materializing in their midst. Before she could tell them what to do, they split up, the felid femmes taking on the scattered minions while the femme chimera and the immortal pseudo-lawfur began a full-on frontal assault on the furs spilling into the warehouse.

Willi walked up behind the femme wolverine and reached out with her paws and mind to examine the portal to the Underworld. Finding the extents of it, she extended her powers out to touch the left and right limits of the event horizon. Getting a firm ethereal hold on the portal with her powers, she forcibly slammed it shut. It was somewhat uneventful, other than a loud 'Pop!' and the parts of minions dropping to the ground, cut through by the event horizon disappearing.

###

While the members of The Amendment Foundation rounded up the few remaining minions that had surrendered, the ones that hadn't continued to fight and lost their lives, Canton walked up to Zagam, who was leaning on his sword, trying to catch his breath.

“Zagam?”

The bovid looked up at the stallion. "Yes?"

"Um, you okay?"

"Think so." He looked himself over, then nodded. "Yeah, no blood that appears to be mine."

"Good." Canton agreed. "Listen, Julie told what you had said. You're going to side with us?"

"I have to, now." Zagam replied. "After what happened here gets back to the Council, I'm done." He thought for a moment, then added, "Do you need another good warrior that knows his way around the Underworld?"

"Yeah, I think we could use you." the dapple gray stallion replied. He looked up to see the two femme tigers, Torvald and Richard walking towards them. Once they were face to face, Victoria looked right at Zagam.

"Listen, we have a very special job for you. That is, if you want it."

"Well, what is it?" the bull asked.

"Let's talk about it over a good meal somewhere quiet." Virginia put forth.

As the assembled furs prepared to leave for the Hill family complex, they observed Aslaug, busy rolling up a large piece of black hide that was a bit bloody and still covered with its former owner's short coat of fur. The hide in question seemed quite a bit too large for a minion's skin, so that left only one explanation.

Noticing she was being watched, the filly spoke up; "Is there something wrong that I don't know about?"

###

Conrad waited patiently while the ambulance attendants moved him into his dwelling and placed him on the hospital bed in the family room. The tiger was relieved to be home and feeling in better shape now that the lioness had healed him. Doctor Peyton had signed for his care earlier and Conrad was practically purring while his wife signed for his transport. Once the attendants were gone, the moose finished with some final needs of his patient.

"Conrad, I'll get you out of this hip spica now," he stated, using his powers to remove the cast from around the feline without cutting it open. Looking to his right, he nodded in approval at the cast, leaning against the wall. "Now, this cast on your left arm, I'll convert that to a soft short-arm cast for some support for a few days."

"Doc, that's so much better," Conrad commented, stretching his legs out. Along with the feelings of relief, there was a slight twinge in his lower back. "Ouch!" he blurted out.

"Just as I suspected." the huge cervine mused. "You will need a back brace for a bit, at least until the healing is complete."

“Oh well, I can deal with that.” the tiger put forth.

The doctor assisted his patient in standing, which was somewhat painful, then he materialized a very exotic-looking back brace. Bruce opened it up, carefully wrapped it around Conrad's waist, then he began to cinch it up.

“Conrad, I'm going to heat the rigid front and back panels for a better fit.” he informed the tiger. Using his hands, he used his abilities to heat the panels, pressing and forming them to improve the contact to the feline's body. “Stand up straighter,” he asked his patient, still tweaking and adjusting the fit.

“Doc, that feels a lot better like that.” Conrad mused.

“Let me make one more adjustment.” Bruce replied. Taking the two adjustment tabs in front, he pulled them another four inches closer to one another, making the compound braided wire lacing pull the brace in about an inch smaller in circumference. “How is that?” he asked.

“I can still breathe.” Conrad quipped. “Better, I guess.”

“Keep it as tight as you can.” Doctor Peyton instructed his charge. “I'll put some marks on your brace so your wife can tell if it's adjusted right,” he added, using a silver Sharpie[®] to mark the location of the tabs at present. “Tighter is better.”

Cathy wanted some information so she touched the healer on the shoulder. “Will he have to go back to a regular doctor to satisfy the team's requirements?”

Bruce shook his head. “I spoke with Mister Rawlings and he's okay with my taking care of Conrad. Now, at some point, he will have to start going to therapy but for the time being, he will have to stay inside and out of sight. You don't want him to blow his cover.”

“Uh, we might have a problem.” Conrad brought up. “Mister Rawlings wants me to be there for the game, just to give moral support to the team.”

“Well, you'll have to wear the cast for that.” the doctor replied. “Just let me know and I'll put it on you at the last moment and I'll take it off as soon as you return home. By the way, I'll need to be there, to attend to you.” Doctor Peyton then smiled widely.

“That's fine with me.” Conrad agreed, smiling back. “I had better call Mister Rawlings and ask for an extra ticket for you.”

“One last thing.” Bruce added. He put an amulet around the tiger's neck, then he glued what looked like a duplicate charm to the cast. “If someone comes over to visit unexpectedly, have Cathy press the jewel on the cast after you undress and get back in the bed. You press your amulet's jewel and you'll be wearing the cast again. I'll be alerted by your amulet so I'll show up to remove it for you afterward.”

“Thanks.” Conrad offered.

“You're welcome.” Doctor Peyton replied. “Now take it easy until you're well.”

While the doctor went over things with his mate, Conrad gave thought to the situation. He was well on the road to recovery and he even had a doctor that would help him with the deception needed. All he needed to do now was to actually get well. That, and try not to be too anxious to see the game.