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“Redemption”

By Kellan Meigh

Epilogue 1 – “First Day And Some Unexpected News”

Torvald could hear some sort of a noise, a very insistent one, waking him up from his much-needed sleep. Rousing slightly, he rolled over to put his arm across his mate. What he found instead was an empty bed. A quick examination proved that the bed was still warm but devoid of a tigress.

The stallion slowly sat up on the edge of the bed and rubbed his muzzle to wake up. Mornings were not Torvald's favorite time of day, especially back when he was still working full time as a police fur, before he finally retired from active duty. Deciding that he had heard just about enough of that incessant alarm, he carefully pressed the cancel button on top of the device in question. It was now ten minutes after six in the morning.

The blond one stood, stretched out his body and then made his way to the master bathroom where he heard the fur dryer running. Stopping in the doorway, he watched his mate, one very lovely tigress, work at brushing her fur while it dried to kill the fluffiness. He mused that only a tigress could move in such a fluid manner, smiling ever so slightly while he watched his own private performance. She turned to look at him, smiling back at him.

“Enjoying the show?” she asked, turning to face her hubby and stretching out on purpose to give him a fully unimpeded frontal view.

“I am enjoying watching the love of my life.” he replied. “I think any male should be highly envious of me right now.”

“And why is that?” she wanted to know.

“I wake up to my own private little show, getting to watch my tigress dance for me in the fur dryer at

just a few minutes after six in the morning.”

“They will never know what they're missing,” Victoria put forth with a mischievous smile. She then began to dance in earnest, playing a pair of non-existent finger cymbals while she went through a few of her Raqs sharqi dance moves that she had learned in High School.

Tor smiled widely. “You keep that up and we will never leave the house today,” he warned.

“You spoil all my fun,” she retorted, stopping her dance and throwing away her imaginary finger cymbals. “Now, you get showered up and I'll have breakfast ready for you by the time you're done.” the femme feline stated as she stepped from the fur dryer. She tried to slip past her hubby to get dressed but he wasn't having none of that this morning. He deftly caught her around the waist and pulled her to him so he could plant a kiss on her.

“Waffles or pancakes?” he asked, trying to be *Mister Innocent* now.

“I thought scrambled eggs, Canadian bacon and toast would be nice.” she suggested, right before she kissed him on the chin. “And while you're at it, trim your beard a bit.” she pointed out, rubbing his chin with a free paw.

“Do we have some of Willi Marie's Jalapeño jelly?”

“Yes, we do.”

“I'll hurry up and shower real quick.”

“Don't forget that beard of yours.” the tigress reminded her hubby as she walked into her closet to dress for the day.

The stallion quickly undressed and began to shower up, feeling more awake now. While he washed his mane, he thought about the day ahead of him. Today would be the first of many days running what was now known as 'Redemption Ranch', the next big adventure in their lives.

There were three teens coming up this morning, directed to them through his connections with the Los Angeles Police Department's juvenile division. They were not hardened criminals, yet and it was their plan that these teens, through their diversion program, would abandon their former lives for a better one. There would be some funds from the courts to pay for their guests' stay and an unexpected surprise from the state in the form of some further funding to assist in running the ranch, since this venture was just recently sanctioned by the State of California Department of Corrections.

His shower completed, he began to dress in what Victoria suggested as a deterrent to any hasty plans to escape. He slipped on a pair of black tactical pants, a black t-shirt and finally a black uniform shirt with his badge and nameplate firmly affixed.

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Their breakfast over with, the Immortal Couple went up to the bunkhouse to oversee operations and help out where it was necessary. Cami seemed to be taking it well, which was quite the opposite of their security manager, 'Ron Patel'. The pachyderm seemed distressed to Torvald and Victoria for some reason.

“Ron?” the stallion called out, getting the huge one's attention.

“Uh, yeah, make it quick, though.” he said in a slightly panicked tone.

“Ron, you seem upset or distracted to us.” the blond one put forth.

“No Shit!” the former fallen deity retorted. “I'm missing my assistant, Morris, who hasn't shown up this morning and I can't find my holster for my radio!”

“Morris is next door, getting his equipment belt on and loaded,” Renee stated as she came into view, dressed in her security uniform. “I really think I saw your holster and your belt on your desk when I went to pick up my radio.”

'Ron' thought for a moment, then he nodded. “Tell Morris to find me as soon as he's ready.” The gray one then took off in the general direction of his office.

Cami met up with them, giving them a crooked smile. “By some off-the-wall chance, do you have a tranquilizer gun?” she asked.

“Why do you ask?” Victoria replied, raising an eyebrow at this strange request.

“Might need it for Ron.” she replied. “He is just this close to full-on panic,” she added, holding her thumb and forefinger just barely apart to reinforce her statement.

“I'll put it on a short list of needed items.” Tor said, giving the wolverine femme a wry grin.

Cami and Renee's radios crackled to life, startling them momentarily.

“Radio Check! Radio Check!” Ron shouted, then an open carrier was heard for a few moments, until he remembered to take his thumb off of the transmit key.

“Radio check confirmed code four.” Cami replied. She looked at her new employers and shook her head before she continued. “Looks like it might be a long day.”

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The black and white Ford passenger van made its way slowly up the driveway to the high parking lot, being careful of the blue Holden Maloo and the black four-door Ranger pickup that were parked in the 'Reserved' parking spaces. The fur driving the van parked in the 'Official Business Only' space, then the buff-colored canid got out and went around to the passenger side where his partner, an okapi was waiting. They opened the sliding door to the van and out stepped the first Redemption Ranch inductees.

Victoria, Tor and Cami had walked over to the parking area, just in time to greet the first teens to arrive. The first young one out of the van was a white bull wearing jeans and a tan jacket over a bright orange 'Department of Corrections' t-shirt. Behind him was a femme greyhound, dressed similarly. The last one out of the vehicle was a male wolf whose coat seemed to suggest he might be a mix, since it was brindle patterned.

“Line up on this line!” Cami shouted, startling the teens. “What's the matter? Did I just tell all of you to just stand there with your thumbs up your respective butts?” She rolled her eyes. “On the line! Now!!”

The femme wolverine chimera walked up to the bull once the trio had lined up. “What's your name, cupcake?”

“Marty Rogers.” he said sort of half-heartedly.

“I can't hear you!” Cami shouted loudly.

“I said, Marty Rogers.” the bovid replied, not much louder than before.

“Say it like you got a pair!!” the former femme soldier practically shouted in Marty's face, shocking him with such a militaristic attitude.

“Martin Rogers!” the white one shouted loudly out of fear of reprise.

“That's better!” Camille replied loudly. She then stepped in front of the femme greyhound. “What's your name, princess?”

“Natalie Strickland!” she shouted, her voice seeming to indicate she was a bit scared at the moment.

Cami stepped in front of the canid male. “What's your name, hotshot?” she demanded.

“Trevor Two Feathers!” he responded loudly.

“What tribe are you from, Mister Two Feathers?” she questioned.

“My father is Iroquois and my mother is Irish!” he replied smartly.

Cami nodded. “Okay, I'm Staff Sergeant Camille Carter, a retired, highly decorated soldier that has served in a war zone for Her Majesty's Royal Army. As such, you can be sure that I will not take crap from any of you.” The femme wolverine was pacing back and forth in front of the teens like a drill instructor. “When speaking to any and all staff, you will use 'Sir' or 'Ma'am' when the situation warrants it. Do you understand me?”

“Yes, Ma'am!” rang out a chorus of reply.

“Good. The two furs here are the Svensens. They are your benefactors.” Cami turned and smiled at the Immortal Couple. “They are some very good furs. Do not piss them off.”

“Yes, Ma'am!”

“Good. Now follow this path up to the bunkhouse where you will find an open door with an orange traffic cone outside. Go inside and wait for me, I will be up shortly to get all of you fed this morning.”

Martin, Natalie and Trevor had removed their baggage from the police van and started their journey up towards the bunkhouse so Cami met up with her employers. She shook Tor's paw and hugged Victoria.

“You know I think things will be just fine.” she mused.

The tigress smiled back. “Yeah, I agree. I think things will be just fine, too.”

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That evening, Jenna had come to retrieve her older brother that had been rescued by Aslaug and Constantine. She was overjoyed to have her sibling returned to her but it was not as joyous as it could have been. The sorceress had overheard some talk from an Agent that she had assisted in bringing to the ranch and then she took some time to either authenticate or debunk that rumor.

She looked across the dinner table at the two furs that could get her out of the business and grimaced. They were laughing, something she hadn't seen from them in a while. Jenna didn't want to spoil their evening and their wonderful meal but it was important that they knew what she had dug up. The information she had uncovered proved that the talk was not a rumor, but rather it was cold, hard fact. A fact that would not set well with the Svensens and at least one other Amendment Foundation member.

“Victoria, I need to pass along something,” the femme otter stated. “Um, when I went to get that stoat, Mister Rex Tremaine, I overheard some talk in an Underworld bar that bothered me. I did some digging and I found out some very disturbing information that I think you should be made aware of.”

The smile on the tigress' muzzle faded as she looked at the serious set of the femme sorcerer's jaw. “Okay, what is this information?” she asked.

“Erm, this is hard for me to say,” Jenna stated. She had to look away for a moment, to steel her nerves before she continued. “You know what you were told about being retired?” The femme otter could see the wheels turning in Victoria's head. “I found out that you're only inactive Agents. It seems that your god, *The Almighty*, does not believe in retirement unless it's permanent. As in dead.”

“No . . .” Victoria whispered, shaking her head. “No, we are retired. No more missions for that pompous asshole.” she explained in a strained voice.

“I think we had better look into this.” Tor offered up.

“Yeah, damn straight we will!” the tigress interjected, mentally counting to about one hundred to calm herself down. She rubbed the dampening bracelets on her wrists that Bethany Carmel had made for her, ones that would stop her from accidentally transporting herself across time and space. “I'll get Hrist or Denise to go ask about this. No, better yet,” she offered, standing up and getting her mind set together. “Michael, I know you can hear me!” she shouted. “Michael, you get your tail end down here right now!!!”

The Archangel shimmered into existence in the tigress' kitchen. “You called out to me?” he asked. It was clear by the look on his face that he knew exactly what she was going to ask.

Victoria stated her question. “Michael, for once, just give it to us straight. Are we retired or just inactive Agents, to be called up at any moment?”

“Inactive.” he replied. “Victoria, please believe me when I say that I am truly sorry that you were lied to.”

“Lied to?”

“Yes, lied to.” The winged lion swallowed hard, then continued. “You were told truthfully that your immortality could be lifted. You were not told the truth about being retired.”

“Why?” she asked, clearly confused about this turn of events.

“It is my Father's way of 'retiring' those Agents he thinks are dangerous to his cause.” the winged one replied. “Allow that Agent to have their immortality removed, then later on, send them into a bad situation, one that they have no hope of returning from.”

The tigress growled deep in her throat, a very threatening sound, indeed. “That tears it. That just fucking tears it! You just wait until I'm asked to take another fucking mission . . .” It was clear that she was steamed up. “Yeah, I have some very choice words for your Father, Michael. Unfortunately, mere words cannot fully express what I feel right now.”

The winged one spoke up. “I will tell the other Archangels to help out, if we can without causing 'the' war.” The lion then shimmered out of sight, allowing the tigress' family and friends to console her. The last thing that Michael observed before he vanished completely was Victoria, breaking down in tears.

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That night, while her stallion still held her tightly while they sat on the couch, the tigress thought about the situation. They had been told that they were retired, no strings attached. The truth that had been told to them by Michael contradicted what they had been told. Why? Why would they lie to them?

The fact that the Celestial Order didn't see a problem with 'retiring' an Agent the hard way really upset her. It had been so disturbing to Victoria that she actually had one dampening band off and she was getting ready to unlock the second one when she stopped herself. What would she have done, anyway? Reamed **The Son** a new one? Went in search of **His Father**, just to put a foot up his ass?

The femme feline fingered the dampening band on her left wrist, wondering if they would eventually be screwed over by The Order. Not if she could help it. Victoria knew if they were transported unwillingly, she was sure that she could return them to their home. Whether or not she would survive a transport such as that, she didn't know. It would be a chance that they would have to take. Whatever the consequences, it would be necessary.

She knew Tor was upset, too. He had called Nancy, Bradley and Ronald, just to make sure they were okay. His phone call to Ron had been upsetting to the stallion when he was told that The Order had called Ron and Brad up for a 'quick job' in a very hostile environment. Thankfully, Tor's grand-kits had the forethought to stay immortal, just for a while longer. They knew the dangers that would result from Redemption Ranch's 'retirement' policy for Agents. Best to stay immortal, at least until it was clear that no demon or angel would be coming after them in retribution.

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The tigress didn't argue when her hubby had guided her to the bedroom and helped her to dress for bed. The day had been a big bust in her eyes. The high from seeing the first 'guests' arrive was totally offset by Michael's revelation to her.

While she allowed Tor to tuck her in, Victoria vowed to herself, to hell with today and she would make sure that tomorrow would be better. And damned be those who sat on the Celestial Order. She just felt sorry for Joe Latrans. He would be devastated by this news.