

*The characters Torvald Arend 'Tor' Svensen, Victoria Angela 'Vicki D'nan' Connell-Svensen, Conrad & Cathryn 'Cathy' Svensen, Dana Lynn Svensen-Kashnikov, Brett Kashnikov, Gytha Louise Svensen Delancey, Roger Delancey, Roger Jr, & Heather Delancey, Axel Torvald & Madelyn Svensen, Valerie Connell, Joseph & Harriet Connell, Barbara Caine, Wilhelmine Marie Kurzweil-Delancey, Richard Delancey, James William & Nancy Kurzweil, Peter the dispatcher, El Casa Del Burrito<sup>®</sup>, Leonard's Restaurant<sup>®</sup> and Steven Nanomantube are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be published or reproduced in any form without express written permission. Any resemblance to any fur or person, either living or dead is purely coincidental.*

*Aslaug "The Angelbreaker" Larsdatter is the copyrighted property of Joan Jacobsen, 2005-2008. Her writings may be found at a wonderful place called "Aslaug's Axe Shed" and the URL is as follows; <http://www.aslaug.eu> Please have a look and enjoy her writings. The characters of Joe and Annie Latrans are copyright The Silver Coyote 2003 - 2008, and are used here with permission. Stories containing Joe and Annie Latrans along with The Silver Coyote's wonderful writings may be found at <http://thesilvercoyote.net/> Tell them Kellan sent ya. ;-)* Note\* This is a shameless plug for Aslaug and The Silver Coyote! What are friends for, anyway?

Copyright© 2008 Kellan Meig'h All Rights Reserved <http://www.kellanmeigh.com>

## **“A Loss Of Rights”**

By Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter 16

Mike was sitting against the tree while Doug carefully stitched his left temple up where it just would not quit bleeding. Thankful that he had extensive military medical training, the suturing was going just fine. Well, maybe not in Mike's opinion.

“Dammit, Doug! Be careful, will ya?” he begged, gritting his teeth. “This is hell without anything to kill the pain!”

“I'm almost done,” the jaguar pointed out, tying off another stitch. “Just two more to go and I'll quit poking you with this needle.” Mike gritted his teeth again while his partner put another stitch in, tying it off. Mike made his feelings in the matter known.

“Yeah, no more of this molecular transport, bro. They can just fly me in from now on.” The feline nodded, giving his workmanship another quick looking over after the last stitch was put in. He wiped it with a gauze pad soaked in betadine solution, then wrapped it up again.

“You think they would do that for us? You know, fly us in?” Doug asked, putting his medical equipment back into its pouch.

“I really don't know but I can tell you what, this wasn't worth the pain.” Mike went to stand, holding the tree for support. “We'll get underway here as soon as the world quits spinning so damned fast,” he commented, holding his head that was pounding with a headache. His mount wandered over to him, giving him the once-over.

“Mike, you sure you want to try this?” Woodstock asked, concerned for his rider. “Look, we could let Doug catch up to them on Storm and we could follow after them later, when you're able to ride safely.” Mike looked at him for a moment, then shook his head.

“You know Woodstock, now I understand why you guys are worth over one-half million credits apiece,” the giant fur stated. “That was a pretty good piece of reasoning, if you ask me.”

“I do have an IQ over 160, for your information.” Woodstock said nonchalantly, then gave him a smile. “I'll bet they made you sign for us, too.” Mike nodded, still wincing in pain. The clerk insisted he sign for Woodstock and Storm when he drew his supplies for this mission. “You shouldn't have signed for

us, since we're considered sentient and therefore cannot be construed by current department regulations to be equipment.”

“Geez, I knew I was being taken by that requisition clerk,” he spat out, shaking his head. “Well, the sun's almost down, so let's get started putting your goggles on.” Mike removed Woodstock's halter, hanging it over the horn of the saddle. He then took out a stretch lycra hood with muzzle, eye and ear openings, slipping it over the horse's muzzle, zipping it closed under his neck. After putting the halter back on him, Doug brought over the night vision goggles which would attach to velcro patches on the hood. Mike turned on the goggles, adjusting the intensity to the mount's needs.

“That's good, Mike. I can see every small detail now,” the drafter stated, looking around the clearing. He looked over to see Mike putting his night vision goggles on, setting them too. “Mike, synchronize your goggles with mine, please. That way you can keep us both from being blinded by some stray light we might happen upon.” The huge fur did as his mount asked, making sure that if he turned his up or down, Woodstock's goggles did the same.

“OK, let's get the hell out of here,” Doug stated, getting on his mount. Mike carefully mounted the drafter, waiting just a minute to get used to being in the saddle again and let the world stop spinning so fast once more.

“Alright Woodstock, I'm ready,” the huge fur stated, nudging his mount gently with his hooves.

“Here we go,” the drafter responded, getting underway. “And Mike, whatever you do, don't puke on my back, please? I'll stop if you'll just ask.”

“Alright, Woodstock. I'll keep that in mind.” Once they were moving, Doug made a comment about the situation.

“Mike, I hate like hell to get all this technology out where others can see it, especially Willi Marie's group,” he stated, looking at his partner.

“Yeah, I don't like to do it either but we have to make some time, bro. They're way ahead of us now.”

\*\*\*

The Doberman TSA agent behind the conveyor belt was looking at Conrad with a very evil scowl. “Sir, you need to go through the metal detector or I will have to retrieve your things and make you go through the line again!” The upset tiger was trying to finish up a call so he could put his cell phone through the scanner and get on his plane from Sacramento to LAX.

“Irv, I have no idea when I'll be back!” he was trying to tell his coach, Cathy in the meantime trying to urge him to call back once they were in the air. “Yeah, yeah, I know Irv, the regular season starts in four weeks! Let me see about my aunt and I'll call you back later today! I promise!”

“Sir, you must go through the detector now or miss your flight!” the Doberman stated in a firm voice. “Listen, I can tell things are going sideways for you just by your side of that conversation and I feel sorry for you. Please get through the detector *NOW* or you will miss your plane!” Cathy took the phone from his paw, closed it and put it in a tub, sending it through the scanner right before pushing Conrad through the detector. The metal detector went off loudly.

“Mr. Svensen, over here quickly!” the lioness TSA agent said, trying to hustle him through so he could make his plane. “Hold your arms up, please,” she said firmly, using a paw-held metal detector to find the offending item, a metal bodied writing pen in his coat pocket. “Sir, grab your things and I suggest you jog to the gate, Sir.” Cathy already had his things, headed to the gate ahead of him.

“Cathy, you have our tickets, right?” he asked, coming up beside her and taking a few items from her paws.

“Yeah, they're right here,” she said, holding up her ticket valise. “There's our gate,” she said, the boarding attendant motioning them her way. They got on the plane, finding their seats in first Class.

“And the Captain thanks Sacramento 49ers Wide Receiver Conrad Svensen and his wife Cathy for making the flight,” the voice over the loudspeaker in first class said in a sarcastic tone, another voice overhead chuckling in the background. Conrad rolled his eyes.

“Did he have to say that?” the tiger stated, looking at Cathy with a disgusted look on his muzzle. “Now everybody will be bugging me for an autograph.”

“Look, maybe it won't happen ...” her voice tapered off as the young fur across from them asked Conrad to sign his cap. “Sorry,” she said, giving her hubby a kiss. Conrad nodded, taking the cap from the young fur. Cathy gave him a Sharpie<sup>®</sup> from her purse, smiling politely while her hubby put his signature scribble on the bill of the kit's hat.

“Why didn't I just take that job with the LAPD, working with my dad?” Conrad mused. “He never gets stopped for a signature.” Cathy tried to stifle a giggle but it didn't work. “OK, maybe that is funny, but think of the last time we were out and I wasn't stopped by somebody wanting my autograph?”

“OK, I concede that fact, Mr. Professional Football Player. Maybe after you stop playing someday, you won't be stopped so often.” Conrad nodded in agreement, trying to settle in for their flight.

\*\*\*

Night had fell and Torvald's group had finally made it to Whitehall, a small town on the road to the castle. They made their way through the village, headed for the Inn.

“This seems like a nice place,” Joe commented, noting it was clean and nicely kept.

“There are a few villages nearby that even I would not dare venture forth at night in,” Sir Marc stated, keeping his eyes peeled for trouble. “I will still feel safer once we arrive at the castle.”

“I could use a bath,” Axel stated as they began to dismount in front of the inn. “I'm stinking to high heaven,” he muttered, helping Morri lead the horses to the stables. Sir Marc and Sir Jac led the prisoners down to the town jail, where they would cool their heels overnight.

Torvald held the front door of the inn for his mate, which caused her to begin to reach for her sword right before a smile crossed her muzzle.

“I should let you hold doors for me, since you are my husband,” she told him, giving him a kiss. They

found a few tables for the group, waiting until the others had made their way inside to order their meals.

“So, um, what's for dinner?” the tall filly asked, looking at Torvald for direction. He smiled, shrugging his shoulders.

“Whatever the innkeeper is serving is what we're having,” he replied, hoping that he reassured her they would have a nice meal this evening. They were served a stew of sorts, some wine, fresh fruit and bread. Victoria seemed to enjoy it, sitting next to her mate.

“This is very good,” she commented, giving her stallion a smile. “What do you think?” she asked, noting he was enjoying his meal too. Of course Torvald would enjoy practically anything; he was not a fussy eater.

“I prefer your special spicy meatloaf over anything else,” he stated, causing his mate to get a confused look on her muzzle.

“I cook food?” she asked carefully, giving her mate a nervous smile. “My stallion, I can't cook at all! When I lived outside the castle as a huntress, I ate at the local tavern every day. I couldn't cook to save my life!”

“Well, maybe when we get home, you will remember how to cook.” He thought for a moment before asking *the* question. “Victoria, are you really sure you want to return home with me? If you don't, I'll understand and stay here with you, just so you'll be happy.” This made her look at him funny.

“Torvald! I intend to return to our homeworld with you! Don't you dare ask that stupid question again!” Even though she was mad at him, her normal speech patterns returning to her made him smile. When he smiled at her, she stood and looked at him with fire in her eyes. “And what do you think is so damned funny, Mr. Funny Stallion?” she shouted in English, lightly resting her paw on her longsword.

“You're beginning to sound like my tigress again, that's what's so funny.” he replied, standing and taking her in his arms. She melted into his embrace, closing her eyes and purring just a little while tears of joy fell from her eyes.

“I'm just glad to have you back in my life,” she said softly, hugging him around the waist, burying her face in his chest. “I'm so glad to have you back.”

\*\*\*

Their meal over with, they had all retired to their rooms for the night with the Immortal Couple getting a room to themselves. Torvald stripped down, turning the bed covers down for them. The tigress began to get undressed somewhat slowly, seeming distracted by something.

“Sweetheart, if you want me to, I'll put my leggings and tunic back on,” he stated, wondering if she was still a little nervous. Victoria shook her head 'no', taking her clothes off a bit faster. She smiled at him, trying not to be apprehensive as she told him her thoughts.

“No, you are my mate so you deserve to feel my naked body next to yours.” She took off her tunic and leggings, laying them over a chair. “Please, let's get reacquainted with one another.” She motioned to

the bed, sitting on the edge of it, waiting for him to get into bed. He got into bed, holding the covers for her to join him. The tigress got into bed next to her hubby, snuggling up to him closely, feeling his body heat radiating from him. It felt ... good to her.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” he asked, not wishing to force himself upon her, even if they were married. It wasn't right to do that and it had been a very long time for her, indeed.

“I'm sure, sweetheart. I want to do this,” she replied, giving him a kiss on the lips. “Hold me tightly, sweetheart and never let me go.” She kissed him again, stronger, hugging him tightly while she sobbed silently into his chest. His musky smell was familiar to her, triggering little snippets of memories, jumbled together but sweet, loving memories nonetheless .... This felt so right to her, to be in his loving embrace.

They laid in bed for a while, hugging, cuddling and kissing until the tigress got her husband's attention again. “Make love to me, please?” she asked, tears running from her eyes. “Show me just how much you love me,” she begged, kissing him deeply again.

He wiped the tears from her eyes, giving his mate, the love of his life, a deep, sensual kiss in return. He would try his best to comply with her wishes this night.

*( If you think I was going to go there with this story, you're mistaken. Although it would have been fun to have penned a bit of a heated, torrid love scene, instead I'll allow you to let your imagination run wild for a few brief moments, thinking about a love starved tigress and her stallion mate in a bed. Enough said. Now back to our story. )*

\*\*\*

*( Uh Hem, I said only a few brief moments! Get your mind out of the gutter and start reading again! )*

“Axel, are you asleep?” Joe asked, rolling over to try to get comfortable.

“Uh, no, I'm not,” he replied, leaning up against his elbow. “I don't know about you but Willi Marie's snoring is keeping me awake.” Several of Torvald's group were sharing a room with several beds and sleeping mats.

“I too am awake,” Morri spoke in decent English, having been taught the language by his superior. “Does your sorceress always sleep so loudly?” he asked as he shook his head in disbelief, getting up to stoke the fire in the fireplace for them to stay warm by.

“I'm afraid she has always snored like this,” the tall male equine replied, shaking his head too.

“I heard rumors you might be getting into the business, Axel,” the coyote mentioned, looking across the room at the curtains separating their beds from the tall femme equine.

“Christopher is looking for youth counselors, kind of the same thing Aslaug does,” Axel replied. “Just as long as I don't have to leave the planet, I'm cool with working with troubled teens. Dad has given his blessings for me to do that much.” This made the canid give thought to his situation.

“You know, sometimes I think I need to quit before I become lost on a mission. We go to some really bad places to straighten things out.” Joe thought back on his missions for the good of all furkind. There had been some times he was sure he wasn't coming home at all but somehow managed to make it back

to his vixen's arms. There was that mission that involved the squad and that damned spotted lion that had went sideways, making him have to sit it out while he healed up again ... the coyote shuddered at the memory.

Axel got out of bed, walking over to the foot of Willi's bed that was behind some movable divider curtains. "Willi? Willi, you're snoring," he said softly, shaking her hoof to get her attention.

"Richard, go back to sleep. Your alarm hasn't went off yet," she replied sleepily, yawning and rolling over to face away from the young male.

"Willi, this is Axel! Wake up!" he said firmly, shaking her hooves again.

"OK, I'm awake, cousin Axel. What is it?" she asked, looking at him through bleary eyes. She scratched her mane, running her tongue around her lips to get the dried spit gunk off them.

"Willi, your snoring is keeping us awake." he replied, "You need to conjure up some earplugs for us."

She nodded, making an equine set, a canine set and a human set appear in her paw. "There you go. I hope that works out for all of you. If not, wake me up again."

Axel took the earplugs and passed them out, instructing Morri in the use of the sponge stoppers. Joe got his in place, smiling as it blocked out the femme's log sawing. Axel put his in, having to struggle a bit due to the size of the plugs. Once in, however, he was rewarded with near silence to sleep by.

\*\*\*

Hilda and Glenda finally arrived at Whitehall, late at night and totally exhausted. Glenda agreed to be stabled with the other horses on the agreement Hilda would take her out to dinner when they completed their mission. The two females recognized the other horses stabled there so she knew the Immortal Couple and their troupe were most likely at the inn. The red-headed female made her way to the lodge, getting a plate of food to eat and a room to rest in.

Still nibbling at her meal, she thought about the briefing. This whole trip was caused by a time traveler of unknown origins, disrupting timelines by the dozens. That unknown player was here on this planet but who was that person, anyway? Even their boss had no clue who they were searching for. Just how in the hell were they to find this person if they had no clue who they were? It was time to quit thinking about it because it made her head hurt. All she knew was she had to keep three more marks from harming their targets.

Hilda's mind wandered off to think about her husband Steven, her Significant Other of eleven years. Her black panther hubby was still not happy with her doing this type of work and he would be overjoyed to hear her say she would go back to teaching Molecular Fluid Slipstream Dynamics again. He did have a point; someday she would most likely meet her end on a backwater planet in some unknown realm. It wasn't like she could heal herself, like Eyr could. If she met her demise on this planet, that was the end of her with no do-overs to be had.

Going upstairs and making sure the door to her room was secured, she slipped off her tunic and leggings, putting on a nightshirt made from mil-spec polar fleece. She smiled to herself, knowing she would be warm tonight. She just hoped that winter weight thermal blanket she put on Glenda would

keep her friend warm tonight. Blowing out her lamp, she snuggled under the covers, slipping off to a well-deserved sleep.

\*\*\*

“Conrad! Turn here!” the lioness said in a loud voice to keep her hubby from missing his turn. Conrad nodded, making a left at the intersection. “Good Grief, sweetheart! I practically had to yell at you back there!” Cathy commented, looking at her hubby to see if he heard her speak to him or not.

“Sorry, Cath, I probably shouldn't be behind the wheel right now,” he mused out loud, keeping his eyes peeled for his next turn. His focus was shot right now, thinking about Valerie's injuries. The information that they had been given about her condition was sketchy at best. The officer that he spoke with once they were back on the ground again really couldn't tell him anything which only made him more upset.

“Do you want me to drive?” she asked, hoping in her heart he would agree to that. She got a better hold on the dash mounted grab bar of their rental car, just in case he made another fast maneuver.

“No, I'll be fine to get us there,” he retorted, taking his right turn at the appropriate street. A few more blocks down the road they found the hospital so he turned into the lot, found a parking place and parked the car. They locked up the rental car and headed for the lobby so they could locate his aunt's room and hopefully hear some good news. Crossing the parking lot, he spotted Axel and Madalyn's [1957 Ford Ranch Wagon](#). They had it restored and converted to fuel cell electric a few years back just so they could keep driving it. It was costly but the wagon had plenty of power and it was just plain old cool, too.

They went into the lobby and were headed for the information kiosk when a voice called out to them.

“Conrad, Cathy, over here,” Madalyn called out, motioning for them to follow her. They quickly caught up with the femme zebra, who had a very worried look on her muzzle. They caught an elevator going up, headed for the third floor.

“She's not in good shape, Conrad,” his sister-in-law told him. “She keeps drifting in and out of a coma and the doctors aren't sure why.” The tiger hung his head, saying a silent prayer for her quick recovery.

“I heard Barbara was with her when this happened,” he stated in a strained voice, trying to keep himself together. His emotions were threatening to run away with him any moment from his highly charged state.

Madalyn looked at the floor, not knowing how to tell him this. The truck that hit their Tahoe ethanol-electric SUV had broadsided Barbara's side of the vehicle. She was in dire condition as a result of her side of the vehicle being flattened to a third of its width.

“I'm sorry, Conrad. She's in a coma and she might not make it.” This seemed to unnerve the tiger even further.

They finally got to Valerie's room to find her asleep for now, resting while Dana and Brett stood a vigil over her. She had numerous places in her fur shaved for suturing or administering medication and such. Her right arm was in a soft cast and she still had a neck brace on, even though the doctors had indicated she hadn't fractured her neck.

Barbara's younger sister Elizabeth was sitting in the hall, looking at the floor. Her face was matted from her tears and her paws were shaking badly. He went to see about her, since her parents weren't due in from Arkansas until late that night. Conrad sat down by her, taking her paws in his.

"How are you holding up," he asked, looking into her eyes that seemed lifeless. She looked back at the floor, shaking her head. She finally spoke up in a tiny, frightened voice.

"I'm afraid she's not going to make it," the ocelot femme replied, her paws shaking worse now that she was thinking about it. "She's been in a coma ever since they brought her in here. We're just waiting for Mom and Dad to get here to ..." She couldn't finish her sentence, she was that emotionally charged.

"You're waiting to do what?" Conrad asked, still not sure what she was talking about.

"To pull the plug on her, Conrad. She wouldn't want to live like this much longer. We don't want her to suffer ..." She began sobbing softly, trying her best not to come unglued again.

Conrad bowed his head, trying to hold back his tears. He had known Barbara for over twenty years and she was just like part of the family. This was not fair, for her to lose her life like this. If there was just something he could do ...

\*\*\*

Barbara and Valerie were sitting on a vacant bench in the hallway with Uriel, the winged feline angel of death, looking through a list of names, maybe thirty pages or more. He was shaking his head, searching the list for a third time. He looked at the two femmes and shook his head, seeming confused by this.

"I'm sorry but it just isn't either one of your times to go," he said wearily, tired from his daily duties of collecting the souls of the deceased. Valerie spoke up, pointing to Conrad, who was sitting right across from them.

"Can he see us?" she asked, curious about this situation. I had been a very strange ride for them so far. She had been pulled into her body momentarily multiple times, only to return to the hallway again.

"No, he can't see us at all. I'm not letting him see me so he won't get upset any further."

Barbara looked over at her sister, sitting across the hall from them. "Why can't I wake up, Uriel? This is hell, watching my family torn apart like this." The ocelot shook her head, confused by all of this.

"Uriel, I should have been dead by all accounts. I watched them literally pry my body from the wreckage."

"I was there, standing by just in case I was needed by the drunk driver that hit you two so I did observe your predicament. Your vehicle's hybrid battery pack absorbed the brunt of the hit, Barbara. That's why you aren't busted up too bad. All you really have bad wrong is that shattered right wrist but I'm sure these doctors will fix that for you. Trust me, Barbara, you will wake up when it's time for you to do so." Uriel could still see the other driver's face, a Golden Retriever, gasping for air from his crushed larynx. He tried his best to calm him until the paramedics and firefurs eventually got him out of his truck. The furs attending to him successfully established an airway, releasing Uriel's need to take him.

“Listen, Uriel. They plan to pull the plug on me when my Mom and Dad get here. Don't let them do it, please? I don't want to die.” Barbara said softly, looking at her body lying in a bed across from her. “Please tell Conrad I'm here and don't let them pull the plug on me, please?”

The angel thought about this for a moment before he let himself materialize in the hallway. Walking over to Conrad, he sat down next to him, noting that the young tiger was very distraught. The tiger's paws were shaking badly, his silent sobs a testament to his inner strength. Any normal fur would have been bawling his eyes out right now.

“Conrad, could we talk for a bit, over there?” he asked, lifting the tiger by the elbow, coaxing him to stand again and walk around the corner into a short hall.

“what do you want to talk about, Uriel? Who's gonna die today? Is it Aunt Valerie or Barbara?” Conrad asked, just barely holding himself together at the moment.

“That's just it, Conrad. Neither one is going to die. Their spirits are right here with us. Barbara wants her family to know not to pull the plug on her. She wants to live.”

Conrad looked at the angel in surprise, since his presence usually means there is an imminent death. He then felt something brushing against his paw, to the extent he could see whatever it was making patterns in his fur. He held his paw out, hoping whatever it was would take it. He felt something warm touch him, the feeling of fingers wrapping around his paw, a paw holding, squeezing his. Momentarily he could begin to make out Valerie's outline, standing right in front of him.

“Valerie? Can you hear me?” he asked, still not sure if he was seeing her or not.

“She can hear you but you can't hear her at the moment. Sit down in that chair and trust me,” Uriel told the tiger, waiting until he did so. “Close your eyes, Conrad.” Once he did that, the feline felt Uriel pull on his paw so he stood up, opening his eyes. Everything looked different now, the colors around him very vibrant. Turning around, he saw his body sitting in that chair, apparently asleep.

“Conrad! I'm glad you finally got here to see about us!” Valerie said excitedly, wrapping her arms around him and hugging him tightly. Barbara came up to him, hugging him too.

“Uh, Uriel, what did you just do to me?” he asked, looking at the angel.

Uriel smiled, putting his paw on Conrad's shoulder. “I let your spirit leave your body temporarily so you could see for yourself and talk with them. Valerie and Barbara are both here, waiting to go back into their bodies when the time's right.”

Conrad was very puzzled by this so he asked a very important question. “How do I get back into my body?”

“Just sit down into the chair and close your eyes. It's real simple.” this news seemed to settle his mind.

“Conrad, don't let them pull my plug, please! I want to live!” Barbara pleaded to him, holding his paws. “As soon as Mom and Dad get here, they're going to shut off life support for me.”

“OK, I'll keep them from doing it but I'm not sure how,” he stated, giving thought as to how to do this.

The elder Caines didn't know about the family 'secrets' so some way had to be found to convince them to wait. "Uriel, can you do this with Elizabeth? I need some way to convince her."

Uriel nodded, giving some thought to the matter. "Yeah, I can do that much." he replied. They walked over to the bench where the young ocelot was napping and the angel knelt in front of her, passing his paw in front of her muzzle. Her spirit stood up, momentarily leaving her body.

"Barb? Val?" the young femme said cautiously, looking back at her body. "Did I die?"

"No you're OK, Ellie," her older sister stated, giving her a hug. The young ocelot noticed Conrad's body in one place while his spirit stood near her.

"Uh, this is strange, Sis. What's going on here?" Elizabeth asked, clearly confused by the happenings around her. "And why is there an angel here? Who died?"

"I needed to tell you, don't pull the plug on my body! Don't let Mom and Dad do it no matter what!" was the reply from her sibling. "I'll wake up when it's time, Ellie!"

"Erm, OK, I'll do that ... Uh, how do I get back in my body?" she asked carefully. Uriel waved a paw in front of her again, making her return to her body. She rubbed her nose, yawning and stretching afterwards. Looking around, she was confused until she could see her sister's life force standing near her. She smiled, now happy in the knowledge her sister would return to them in due time.

"Conrad, you need to get back into your body right now," Uriel stated, shooing him towards his sleeping mortal coil. "Go ahead, sit down," he directed, waiting until Conrad had done so. He then woke up, looking at Valerie's spirit nearby. He smiled at them, nodding that he would help the young ocelot to protect Barbara's physical form. Conrad got up and went into Valerie's room, standing behind Grandma Connell, who had come in right after them. He looked at his aunt, noticing a slight smile cross her muzzle momentarily.

\*\*\*

Mike and Doug were still moving, taking it easy for the tall one's sake. He was hurting badly and Woodstock was very concerned about his condition. The gray drafter looked back at his rider, worried he was not going to make it.

"Mike, tell me you're doing better than you look," he queried, looking back again. Mike looked down at the horse, shaking his head.

No, I'm not doing so well. I think I have a punctured lung," he pointed out, coughing up some more blood. This didn't look good for them making Whitehall any time soon. Doug rode up beside his partner, assessing the situation.

"Mike, why don't we use up a ground transport to get us there," he suggested, noting there was blood around the tall one's mouth. They stopped, letting Mike think this over a bit.

"He has a point," Storm suggested, noting the giraffe cross was breathing harder than usual. "You need Willi Marie to at least take a shot at helping you. You might die unless you go and let her take a shot at trying to heal you." Mike nodded, knowing they were right.

“OK Doug, get close to me and do it,” he said, not happy with the situation. “Just don't put us inside a boulder or other solid object, please?” That thought made Woodstock cringe. The horses got right against one another, Woodstock draping his head over Storm's neck while Doug reached out with one hand to grasp Mike's arm. He used his other hand to activate the small device he held, sending them to a meadow just outside Whitehall. Woodstock and Doug both became sick immediately from becoming disoriented by that transport.

“Gah! I hate that!” Mike spat out, holding his head while it swam from the effects of the rapid transport device. “Doug, just don't ask to do that again,” he suggested, fighting his bout of nausea. Doug wasn't really paying attention to him, considering he was still losing his lunch on the ground at the moment.

“I'll second holding off for a while on another ground transport,” Woodstock stated, trying to get that taste of bile out of his mouth with a mouthful of sweet grass.

“Let me get this gear off our buddies here and we'll get into town. Hopefully we can convince the sorceress to heal you.” Doug dismounted, taking their night vision hardware off and stowing the items in their saddle bags. Mike dismounted, taking his saddle and halter off Woodstock while Doug removed Storm's tack.

“OK, I'm ready, Mike,” Woodstock stated, standing still for him to do what he needed to do. The tall giraffe cross knelt down, touching a bracelet around the drafter's left front leg. The horse morphed in an instant into a bipedal dapple gray equine about seven feet tall and around three hundred pounds. Doug touched Storm's bracelet, the black horse morphing into an equine about six feet tall and about one hundred-seventy-five pounds. Both were dressed to fit into the time period.

“Thanks, Mike, it feels good to be standing up again,” the gray one said, stretching out his arms. He looked over to see his partner bending over, touching his hooves. “I guess you can call me Alan now that I'm bipedal again.”

“Yeah, I'll go by Samuel, I suppose,” the dark stallion stated, picking up his saddle. Alan grabbed his, the foursome heading for the inn for some food and rest. Alan made sure to say close to Mike, since he still didn't look well. It might become necessary for him to carry the giraffe cross instead if he didn't look like he would make it. Doug would need to take some time this evening to find Willi Marie and ask for her help once they had been fed.

\*\*\*

Hess and Nevaeh were enjoying a meal of meat, vegetables, bread and wine, having finally made it to the village. Their feet were sore and they were tired from having to travel like mortals.

“I hope you acquired us a room, Hess,” the shorter canid stated, breaking off another piece of bread to sop up the juices from the meat. This meal was a very good one, since they hadn't ate much since the farmer had fed them.

“I traded another bauble for our room,” she replied, looking up at the males coming into the inn. There was two equines, a strangely marked one that was slightly taller than the rest and a spotted felid, most likely a jaguar or leopard. The men went across to the bar, talking with the innkeeper for a few moments. They then went and sat down at a table where the innkeeper's wife brought out some food

and wine for them. She noted the two equines ate only vegetables and fruit, which struck her odd. Generally, equines ate just about everything that any other species would consume.

Nevaeh watched them for a few moments, then looked at her partner. "I don't know why, but those males sitting over there don't fit in here," she stated, looking at the situation with curiosity. "Don't ask me why, but they just don't fit."

"You mean like us, don't you?" Hess asked, turning nonchalantly to look at them. "Celestial Police, maybe?" she theorized out loud after she looked back at her partner.

"Not likely, since we're both still alive." Nevaeh retorted, looking at them again. "Well, I'm not going to worry about it. All I need to do is find the tigress at the castle and eliminate her and maybe do in that meddling stallion of hers while we're at it."

"Yeah, let's get some rest," Hess suggested, getting up and stretching out. "I for one need some sleep." They both slowly left the room, walking right past the foursome seated at a table by the stairs.

\*\*\*

"Did you see who just walked by us?" Alan asked quietly, leaning over to see them better as they walked up the stairs.

"Yes, I saw Hess and Nevaeh, if that's who you were referring to," Doug replied, sampling the wine again. It wasn't too bad for primitive wine from a backwater planet. Samuel got up, going to see about something for them. After a short conversation with the innkeeper, he came back with a smile on his muzzle.

"They're in the room right next door to us," he told his group, that information bringing a smile to their muzzles. Doug nodded, knowing what he needed to do.

"OK, I'll set up some surveillance gear tonight to keep track of them."

\*\*\*

A male warrior sat in his lean-to, trying to get some sleep this evening. He needed to rest and have all of his energy available to him for the task he needed to do at sunup. That damned tigress that had killed his brothers was coming this way in the morning and he intended to kill her, paying her back for the loss of his family twenty-four years ago.

He had sharpened his sword and axe, which he would use to behead the demon that masqueraded in a tigress' body. If he took her head off, she would die, according to the old legends. Just unhorse her with a pike and behead her, that was all he needed to do. If he died afterwards, that was unimportant as long as she went to the afterlife and eternal torment with him. He had lived a long life and avenging his brothers untimely deaths at her hands would be worth an eternity of fire and brimstone.