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“A Loss Of Rights”

By Kellan Meigh

Chapter 28

Victoria fumbled around her nightstand with one paw, searching for her alarm clock. She knew it was early but how early, she wasn't sure. Looking over the edge of the bed, she still didn't see her missing time piece.

“Torvald, what time is it? I must have knocked my alarm clock under the bed yesterday morning,” the tigress inquired, yawning widely at this early hour.

“Uh, it's almost 7 a.m., Sweetheart. I suppose we should get up before that repair repair crew gets here.”

“Yeah, you're right. Help me with my hair, please?” she asked, getting her brush off her dresser. “Uh, Tor, did I always wear my hair long like this?”

“No you didn't. It usually was no longer than this,” he stated, touching her waist. “I can't remember your hair ever being longer than that.” Her hair was currently almost to her knees in length.

“Well, maybe I'll get it trimmed up to shoulder length and styled today,” she mused, starting to brush out her hair.

“Are you still jumpy from yesterday?” he asked, helping her by brushing out her hair where she couldn't reach.

“No, I don't think so.” She gave him a few hair ties to secure her hair once she gathered it at the nape of her neck. “That was a very scary episode, though. I've never been comfortable with having to shoot another fur like that, especially since I know they can't kill me.”

“Well, how about I cook breakfast again?” he suggested.

“That sounds very good,” the tigress replied, putting her sweats and a tank top on. “I just hope today is a little bit quieter.”

“You and me both,” Torvald replied, giving her a hug. “You and me both.”

Bill Harper had been up since before sunup, ‘finding’ an appropriate van to ‘borrow’. Locating a Holden dealer, he had stolen a used white 2007 Holden Combo from the lot and applied black vinyl stick-on numbers to the hood, back doors and front fenders. The ‘Exempt’ plates, stolen from a city bus, would help with the deception and the amber lights on the roof, held on with magnets, would finish the appearance. He had taken some orange road cones from a construction site and he had bought an orange vest, clipboard and a hard hat at the local K-Mart just minutes ago. Now to go park a few houses up the street from the mark’s house and plant the package. Would they ever be in for a surprise. A nice, loud, deadly surprise.

The chipmunk was sitting on the couch, watching the television with the sound down on purpose. Vinnie and his wife Dolores hadn’t rose yet so Ralph was trying to be a polite house guest. The lapin finally made his appearance, sitting down in an easy chair near the couch.

“Mornin’, Ralph.” he said while still trying to stifle a yawn.

“Hey Vin, you’re lookin’ pretty rough this mornin’, the shorter fur stated. “You’re not feelin’ well?”

“Naw, Dolores and I were up late last night, talkin’ this thing over.” he replied. “We decided I would turn myself in an’ *The Legion* could go underground for a few years, takin’ the heat offa’ the organization.”

“Vinnie! You’re talkin’ suicide, buddy!” Ralph pointed out. He stood up, repositioned his tail and sat back down slowly, giving thought to his boss’ idea. “No, you can’t do that.” he said bluntly.

“Ralph, look what’s happenin’ around us.” the lapin retorted calmly. “We’re losin’ furs quicker than we can recruit them.”

Dolores came into the room right after the phone rang, bringing Vincent the cordless pawset. He answered the call, waiting just a moment before he wrote down a phone number and ended the call quickly.

“that was my contact inside the police department,” he said, entering the number into his cell phone. “I had him get me the cell number of that stallion so I could talk with ‘em. Maybe if I can talk to him, I can carefully negotiate my surrender and I can get off with just a few years in jail.”

“Vinnie!” the chipmunk blurted out, starting to think that his boss had went around the bend. “You at the very least should talk to the number two fur before ya do this!”

“That’s who I’m callin’ right now,” he pointed out, punching speed dial 666. “I’ll talk this over with Kerry Ross before I do somethin’.”

Bill looked up to see that damned stallion picking up his morning newspaper. He got out of the front seat of his van, put some cones out and got into the back to make the final preparations.

Torvald let the first maintenance fur into the house right at 8 am, just like he had promised. The gopher set about sanding the patches just a bit, then opening the can of paint to give it a little bit of stirring. He checked the color against the walls, noting it was off by several shades.

“Excuse me,” he said in an embarrassed tone, getting the Immortal Couples’ attention. “I hate to interrupt your breakfast but the paint doesn’t match very well. I’m going to have to paint that whole wall just so it won’t be as noticeable. I just don’t want you getting fresh paint on you.”

“Thanks for the warning,” Torvald stated, offering him a cup of coffee.

“No, thank you for the coffee,” he retorted, smiling at the taste of the fresh brewed java, even if it was decaf, before nodding and going back to work.

“Tor, something’s bugging me again and I can’t see whatever it is,” the tigress told her mate while they were eating their fare at the breakfast bar. She sat quietly, trying to clear her mind to ‘see’ the issue. It still would not come to her clearly, however.

“Uh, Victoria, should we arm up?” he asked, getting slightly worried by this.

“Maybe we should,” she finally suggested. “This feeling won’t go away but I keep seeing a work van. That’s it, just a white work van, nothing more.”

“It’s not the maintenance fur’s vehicle because he’s driving a pickup. I’m not taking any chances, hon. I’m getting my shotgun ready.” he stated, wiping his paws on a napkin quickly before heading to the bedroom.

“Yeah, I’m gonna get my pawguns out right now. This feeling is getting too strong for me to ignore,” she told him, following him out of the kitchen.

Bill had taken the package out of the pouch he had procured, taking the bag and threading it onto his belt so he could carry the bomb covertly to its resting place. He then took the package and inserted the battery into its holder, using a portable 12 VDC to 110 VAC inverter to power his hot glue gun so he could secure the battery against falling out. It was kind of tedious because two points on the board had to be shorted with a paper clip while inserting the battery to prevent the package from going up prematurely.

Satisfied that the display read 00:00:00, he then programmed in the date, day and time. He decided to give himself 60 minutes to do the deed so he set about inputting the detonation time. This again was tedious because the buttons weren’t there to use. He was forced to use that paper clip to depress the small row of switches on the timer that were for numeric input. He got the ‘6’ inputted and he was getting ready to do the series of zeros when he accidentally depressed the next switch to the right. That started the countdown.

Knowing that everything was too secure and with no way to stop or disarm this package in what few seconds remained, he spoke his epitaph.

“Bill, you stupid klutz! This is gonna hurt!”

The explosion rocked the immediate neighborhood, damaging homes, breaking a large number of windows, cracking stucco siding, setting off car alarms and showering the surrounding area with the remains of the Holden Combo and what was left of the unfortunate fur inside.

Torvald ran into the bedroom and grabbed his shotgun, headed afterwards for the front door to see what had happened outside. In the meantime, Victoria had retrieved her pawguns from the bedside safe and herded the stunned maintenance fur into the back yard for safety. She was rather shocked to see a smoldering engine block with part of the chassis subframe still attached, sitting just scant feet from her back door.

Torvald had opened the front door slowly, looking to see what he could see. Across the street, two doors down, there was a huge, smoking crater in the ground and debris littering the yard in front of a very destroyed house. He didn't waste any time in calling this in.

“Modesto PD, are you reporting an emergency?” the fur on the other end asked.

“This is Detective Torvald Svensen, badge number 3781. There's been an explosion of some kind in front of 1031 Magnolia. There's a huge crater in the street right in front of the house.”

“Roger, detective. Yours is the second report so far with an address. Uh, is your family OK?”

“Yeah, we're not harmed but this looks bad. I'm going down to 1031 and check on the occupants. The front of the house is pretty much destroyed.”

Um, Torvald, could you go down to 1022 Magnolia instead and see a Mrs. Crabtree? She sounds pretty shook up on the phone.”

“OK, I can do that,” he stated, putting the shotgun in the closet by the door before he went to see about the femme bovine. He went to the bedroom, grabbed a polo shirt that had “POLICE” silk screened onto the back of it and slipped it on, put his Desert Eagle in his waistband and snagged his badge on the way out of his bedroom to go down the street.

Bill was looking around himself in amazement at the smoking crater he was sitting in. All in all, it really hadn't hurt that much when the bomb went off. He had actually heard the detonator pop, observed the flash of light and felt the heat when the Primacord and Semtex went off.

“William Harper, I need to talk with you,” the winged hyena stated, helping Bill to get up. “I suppose you know who I am and why I'm here?”

"I know you're not from Heaven," the goat replied. "I suppose you've come for my soul, then. You must be Lucifer."

"You're right on all three counts," the Prince Of Lies stated. "My, you've really made a mess here." he mused as he looked around at the carnage that had ensued.

"It was 10 pounds of Semtex," Bill pointed out, looking at the destruction he had wrought. "All this work just to fail miserably. I was after him," he indicated, watching Torvald run down the sidewalk towards his destination.

"What an idiot!" Lucifer exclaimed. "You can't kill him! He's immortal! He's a warrior for the gods!" The evil one turned the goat to face him. "I'll almost bet the last thing you said before the explosion was that infamous phrase, "Here, hold my beer, watch this"."

"Crap! No wonder Ed couldn't kill him." The goat exclaimed, then he corrected what was said. "I actually commented that the explosion would probably hurt, in case it matters."

"No, it doesn't matter but you'll get a chance to tell your cousin Ed you failed too," the devil retorted, preparing to take the deceased goat's soul to eternal damnation. Bill didn't even protest, knowing he had brought this upon himself. He just held out his paw, letting Lucifer lead him to a destiny full of fire and brimstone.

"Mrs. Crabtree? Are you in there? This is Detective Svensen, your neighbor! Are you all right?" Torvald shouted through the front door that was ajar, waiting to see if there was some movement in the house before he did something.

"I'm in the living room!" she shouted back. "You can come in, the door's not locked!"

The stallion opened the door carefully, looking around at the house for anything wrong. He found the femme bovine sitting on her couch, covered in blood.

"You need an ambulance!" he spat out, looking her over carefully. "Ma'am, you're cut all over." He made a quick call for medical assistance on his phone and he was ending the call when she got his attention.

"Could you do something about that ... that ... thing?" she asked, pointing to a severed goat's head staring at both of them from the opposite side of the living room. The head was still wearing a slightly scorched orange hard hat, oddly enough.

"Sorry, Ma'am, we shouldn't tamper with evidence. Why don't you come outside until an ambulance arrives. That way you won't have to look at it." he suggested.

"That was him, the one that was in the van that exploded," she told him, closing her eyes as she started to cry. "I watched him get into the back of his van, then the van exploded." That was when Torvald noticed her binoculars lying on the floor by the couch.

The stallion helped her to the front door just as the first of many emergency vehicles arrived. Looking

around at the carnage, he noted that there were several angels and a familiar Valkyrie, Elin, doing the needed tasks at 1031 Magnolia.

“Detective Svensen!” a voice called out. “Over here!”

Torvald looked over to see Lt. Cahill headed his way.

“Lieutenant Cahill?” he asked, looking at his boss strangely. “What are you doing here?”

“Detective, I think you, your wife and I need to talk. One or both of you, I’m not sure which, seems to have a huge target painted on their back.” he stated almost too casually.

“Sir, would my home be OK for us to talk or would you rather use your office downtown?”

“How about your home first, so I can decide if we need to take it downtown.” the ursine responded.

The two of them walked back down to the stallion’s temporary home, being careful not to step on any evidence, such as the paw and arm from the deceased bomber. Once inside and the maintenance fur sent to get the right color paint to keep him occupied, they sat down at the dining room table to talk.

“Detective, Mrs. Svensen, I won’t mince words. One of you has a huge target on your back. I want to know who and why, right now.” Lt. Cahill stated very firmly.

“Lieutenant, how religious are you?” Torvald asked, giving his mate a quick glance.

“I’m a believer, I just don’t go to church here locally. My church is over in Oakdale.” he responded. “What does that have to do with my question?”

“Stay with us on this, Lieutenant. Do you believe in heavenly assistance?” Victoria asked the police fur.

“Well, yes, in a way. I believe in the old days, in the time of the Bible, beings, well, angels were sent down to earth to assist us in religious matters.” he admitted.

“Well, we’re going to share something with you that you might have a hard time believing.” the stallion told his boss.

Torvald pulled out his Buck knife, cutting the palm of his paw deeply. Victoria then followed suit. Once they wiped off the blood, the ursine could see the skin of their palms healing at a very rapid rate.

“What the ... !?” the ursine blurted out, grabbing both of their paws to examine them closer.

“We’re troubleshooters for the gods, Sir. That’s why we both have huge targets on our backs. Our mission is to topple *The Legion* and return a bit of sanity to this seriously divided country.” Torvald proffered up.

“You’re not Avengers, are you?” the bear asked cautiously.

“No, we are certainly not.” Victoria replied. “We are immortal, though. No mortal can kill us.”

“Are you from ... you know, up there?” Lt. Cahill pointed towards the sky.

“No, our orders come from On High but we’re actually from a parallel world, Sir.” the stallion proffered up. “It’s not too unlike here, except the country is not divided and this *Legion* doesn't exist there, as far as I know.”

The ursine nodded his head, thinking this over. There were certain aspects about this he didn’t like but he knew in his heart this couldn’t go downtown. He just needed to get some more information for his own edification.

“Are you two working with any other fur within the department?” he asked carefully.

“I am aware of Detective Black having a connection with the church and a group seeking to eradicate this infection known as *The Legion*.” Torvald pointed out.

“That’s what I thought.” the boss retorted. “You two need to meet with Alan Samick, then. Ask Matt to arrange it as soon as you can. In the meantime, I want to put armed patrols on your property and for looks I want both of you to wear bullet-proof vests. I’m guessing that a bullet wound won’t hurt either of you mortally and I really suspect that leg injury, Detective, wasn’t what it appeared to be.”

“You are right, it wasn’t much of a wound,” the stallion admitted. “It’s healing quite nicely now.”

“Well, anyway, I’ll have a bullet-proof vest sent over for you, Mrs. Svensen, right away and I’ll expect both of you to wear them religiously, no pun intended.”

“I take it you’re part of this group that wants to topple *The Legion*?” Torvald asked.

“Yeah, I am. Been on the inside so long, my job as a police lieutenant seems to blur with my career as an Army Lieutenant Colonel.”

“Is this Alan Samick a chestnut roan stallion?” Victoria asked, giving thought to something that had happened to her, but what amounted to 24 years ago for her.

“Um, yeah, he is, Ma’am. He’s also my boss, a full bird Colonel and he’s been on the inside longer than I have.” Deke admitted. “You know, this parallel world of yours; what do you do there?” he asked.

“Well, oddly enough, I’m a police fur, a detective but I’m assigned to juvenile division, LAPD as a counselor and my wife Victoria is a real estate agent with Century Realty in Irvine. Our real home where we’ve lived for years is in Mission Viejo.” Torvald told him.

“If your Mission Viejo is anything like ours, it’s a nice area. A bit pricey but nice. My real home is in Anaheim, right around the corner from Disneyland.” the ursine mused. “Now make sure to have Matt set up that meeting. You need to coordinate your efforts with ours.”

Conrad limped his way back into his home, making a beeline straight for the couch. Laying down on it,

he stretched out, then brought his left leg back up to massage the knee.

“Conrad, are you OK? You were limping just now!” his wife blurted out as she came to see about him.

“I really got worked over, hon.” he proffered up. “That new therapist, the aardvark? He had me do some work on the leg press machine, then he massaged my leg. That fur has some powerful paws and arms, hon.”

“But Conrad, You ...” He cut her off politely.

“Cathy, I might be immortal but I will still get injured. I just heal up real quick now.”

“So, did they say if you could play in the opening game?” she asked.

“Yeah, the therapists think I will be OK to play. I’m just glad they have no idea about this mess.”

“Conrad, your sister Dana called today.” Cathy proffered up.

“What was my little sister up to?” Conrad was still massaging his knee, which was still hurting at the moment.

“She called to tell us that Willi Marie is expecting twins,” the mountain lioness proffered up.

“Oh No! That sounds like trouble!” Conrad blurted out, looking at his wife in shock. “They’ll be sorcerers or sorceress’, won’t they?”

“Well, one for sure, Sweetheart. They won’t know about the male until he turns sixteen.”

“That’s a long time to wait, isn’t it?” he mused.

“That’s not that long, Conrad. I hope some day we’ll have a few little kits of our own so we can watch them grow up.” she suggested.

“Yeah, we will.” he retorted, giving her a kiss. “You can bet we will.”

Clyde Moraine had been sent over with a vest for the tigress, helping her to put it on and making sure it was adjusted properly. It wasn’t comfortable but it did fit her correctly.

“Victoria, I’ve already told your husband so I’ll tell you the same information. I’m also a part of the military that’s working to eliminate *The Legion*.” the stallion told her. “I spoke with Matt before I came over here and he asked me to convey to you that he would like to have you and your husband over for dinner this evening to meet Alan Samick.”

“I think we would like that,” she replied, putting her double shoulder holster on over the vest, adjusting the harness to fit the added bulk.

“Uh, I also need to apologize for what happened at the Identification Center,” he proffered up, helping

her to adjust the straps across her back. "I had no idea who you were and I have to admit, your pheromones that day were attacking my mind, making it hard to think clearly in the matter."

"Listen, you said it yourself; you had no idea who I was." she retorted.

It was clear that Clyde was totally embarrassed, knowing he mistreated an agent for the Lord.

"Still, I feel a deep need to ask your forgiveness." he stated, bowing his head. "I really messed up and I need your forgiveness before I can feel like I've put the incident behind me."

"I forgive you, Officer Moraine," she said to him, knowing this must have really upset him when he found out the facts.

"Thank you," he said quietly, leaving her to go outside to give direction to the furs standing guard on the Immortal Couple's front porch. Once the dark stallion had went outside, Victoria went over and sat down beside Torvald on the couch.

"Sweetheart, this is one strange mission," she commented, taking his paw in hers and squeezing it.

"Yeah, we've never been on a mission where any fur openly knew we were agents," he proffered up. "I can't wait to get this Vincent James in custody. We need to end this and quick."

"I agree," the tigress offered up, snuggling up against her hubby. "We seem to have some very big targets on our backs. The sooner we're out of here, the better."

On the front porch, Officer Moraine gave his furs some very important direction.

"All of you furs were paw picked by Colonel Cahill for this detail. I expect you will not fail in protecting the occupants of this house. They are very important to this divided nation being reunited."

"Sir! Yes Sir!" they all shouted back in unison. "We will not fail, Sir!"

"That's what I thought you would all say." the dark stallion retorted. "Now get busy!"

Richard was sitting on the couch, looking at the bills that had come in the mail. Looking at the PG&E bill in particular, he shook his head in disgust. Their gas consumption for last month was over \$200 alone and that was just the two of them. He cringed to think of how much the two little ones on the way would add to that bill.

Listening to the noises in the house, he heard Willie Marie was back in the bathroom again, talking with 'Ralph'. He sat the bills down and went to see about her.

"Hon, are you OK?" he asked, observing his wife wiping her muzzle with a washrag. She was shaking her head 'no' to his query.

“I’m sick as all hell this morning,” the palomino mare replied, looking as if she was deciding whether or not she needed to throw up again.

“Need some Pepto?”

“Please?” Willi was looking very green around the edges this morning.

She took the medication offered, hanging her head between her knees while she sat on the edge of the tub and waited for the nausea to pass.

“Willi, maybe you should see those other doctors again,” her hubby suggested, patiently waiting to see what he might need to do for her.

“If I go, would you come with me?” she asked, since Tasha and Jason had some business to take care of. They had left earlier in the morning, letting her know they would be back for dinner.

“Well, I guess so ...” Richard was very hesitant about being sent to and fro around the universe by his novice sorceress wife.

They got dressed, then Richard closed his eyes while Willi Marie transported them to a parallel world where her new doctor’s offices were. He looked around, noting they appeared to be in a normal-looking office complex. The sky, however, looked weird with its slight purple tinge.

She led Richard over to a building that had the doctor’s names on the door and went inside to go up to the second floor. They stepped out of the elevator, turning right to go down the hall. Finding the appropriate office, they went inside.

“You’re right on time, Wilhelmine,” the human female receptionist said in a cheery tone. “Doctor Adams will be ready for you in a few minutes.”

“How did they know you were coming?” Richard asked quietly once they sat down.

“I don’t know,” she replied, picking up a ‘Incantations Simplified’ magazine. “They knew I was coming the last time, when I came here with Tasha.”

Eventually they were led back to a examining room that was not unlike one found on their homeworld. It had a very odd feeling to Richard, seeing they weren’t back home. Before they could sit down, Dr. Adams made his entry.

“Hello, Wilhelmine,” the elderly human male bid, sitting down on his stool to look at her records. “I see here that you’re a feline/equine mix,” he mused as he looked her records over. “Richard, are you full equine?” he asked the huge gray male.

“Uh, yeah, for the most part. I have some okapi from a great-great-grandmother.” he replied.

“Well, what I see is this,” the doctor told her. “Your feline/equine mix, combined with a touch of okapi from Richard, is what’s making you sick. I’ll write you a prescription for a supplement that will help with the various hormonal imbalances you’re suffering.”

“Um, where do I go to fill this prescription?” she asked, not knowing how they would deal with an off-world doctor’s request.

“Go right here,” he replied, giving her a card with the address of a pharmacy in Lake Forest, near their home. “They’re part of our network of pharmacies.”

“Thank you, Dr. Adams” Richard said as he shook his hand. “How much will this visit cost us?”

“Don’t worry, Wilhelmine’s future service to the Sorcerer’s Consortium will more than pay for this visit.” the doctor replied right before he left the room.

“Future service?” he asked, looking at his wife in confusion.

“Um, yeah, about that. I uh, seem to owe them some service that my mother didn’t serve.” she proffered up.

“And what will you be doing for this consortium?”

“Well, I will be sitting on a review board, deciding matters that concern our group of associates.”

“And how much time will that take?” he asked, trying to see where this was going.

“Oh, only one day a week, for ten years or so.” she replied. “It won’t be like I’ll be gone all day, either. Just a few hours is all I need.”

“OK, that doesn’t sound like it’s much work, after all,” he said, thinking his life was getting stranger by the minute.