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## 'Lost'

By R C Stankewitz

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### Chapter 1

“This Isn't Kansas”

As the sun was setting on the Pacific ocean, Torvald reached out and hugged his tigress. “It was nice of Valerie and Barbara to keep an eye on Conrad” he commented as the sun finally touched the horizon. The two lovers were having a second honeymoon just to go blow off some steam with each other.

Since Victoria had become immortal, her warrior instincts had been extremely heightened. Torvald could no longer best her at the longstaff, finding his mate was more than an equal to him. She had even held off the Shieldmaiden for about 90 minutes before the match was called a draw. Because of this new heightened instinct, she needed to do something to relax and stop her from stalking her clients that were looking at houses she was trying to sell.

Victoria sipped her soda as they sat on the sand at Pescadero beach, enjoying the last rays of sunlight. “How much farther up the coast to Half Moon Bay is it?” she asked. They had made reservations for the weekend at a nice bed and breakfast that had an ocean view.

“It's about 14 miles according to the last sign I saw” her equine mate replied. He looked at his watch and then took it off and put it in the pocket of his favorite black leather vest. “Let's forget about time for this weekend, OK?” he asked as he gave his loving tigress a peck on the cheek.

“Keep that up and we won't get there at all tonight” she purred, giving him a long, wet kiss in return. She then reached up and put her arms around him and began to kiss his neck in a provocative way.

“We better go now, it's almost sunset” the berserker pointed out to her, hoping to stave off a tigress love pounce on him. The state regulations said that the beach was only

open from 8:00 am until sunset and he didn't want to start their honeymoon with a citation for being on the beach too late.

“Oh, OK...if you insist” she said in a soft purr, giving him that 'you're in trouble now' look through half lidded eyes. “You're mine when we get to our room” she said in a sultry voice as she raked her claws gently down his bare chest. She smiled when she noticed that he had shuddered from the sensations this caused.

“Just wait until we get to our room and I'm yours” he retorted to her as he got up and helped her up off the sand. She still managed to give him another kiss before he knew what was happening. “This is going to be a wild night” he thought to himself as she finished her soda off and put the empty in the nearby trashcan.

Torvald picked up their cooler and they climbed the slight embankment to the parking lot. The huge equine stopped for a moment to wipe off the sand on his lower legs and hooves so he wouldn't track it into his car.

“I hope that B&B is as nice as it looked on-line” the tigress commented as they stowed their gear in the '49 Ford's trunk. They had decided to use his car because she wanted to get her Dodge minivan serviced while they were gone.

“For the price we're paying, it better be!” the huge equine replied. They got into the car and Torvald made a left out of the parking lot, headed north on Highway 1 towards their destination.

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As they drove along, Victoria was remembering the last time she had been this way. She had just finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and her family was on an outing to see some of their relatives. That had been a fun summer that she had hated to see end. The tigress was looking out at the trees and the ocean beyond, mesmerized by the beauty of nature. She finally realized that she had been daydreaming as her husband turned towards the ocean and their destination.

“Well, I think that's it” he commented as he pulled into a parking space and shut the engine off. “Hmm, It's not as big as it looked on the web” he stated, looking the place over. It was a Victorian style 2 story building that really looked the part. It had all the various gingerbread trims and the 7 color treatment.

“Oh, let's go check it out, party pooper” Victoria stated, giving him a punch in the shoulder. “This was your idea, anyway” she reminded him. He got out and opened the door for her like a gentlefur, closing it after her. They walked up the few steps to the front door and went inside.

Once they were inside, the couple knew they were going to enjoy the weekend. The interior was decorated in sumptuous period furnishings. From the furniture to the pictures on the walls, somebody had taken extreme care to please the guest's eyes.

They walked up to the counter only to be greeted by one of the owners. The Border Collie behind the counter introduced himself as Don as he got the paperwork together for them. After a few minutes spent signing in, Don showed the couple to their room.

Their room was upstairs on the ocean side of the building. Torvald was checking out the oak staircase as they went up to their suite. "This is some nice woodwork" He commented as he ran his hand along the banister. It felt to him like it was glass smooth.

"Thanks for the compliment" the owner replied to the huge equine. "My brother and I did most of the restoration ourselves." As he opened their door he told Torvald and Victoria "There's a photo album downstairs that shows all the ugliness we dealt with in the beginning. We had to finance it ourselves because the banks wouldn't touch it."

"This is nice.." Victoria purred as she stepped onto their room. It was large by B&B standards with a huge jacuzzi tub in a nook under the bay window. "I think you will fit in here" she said to her mate as she sized the tub up. The bed was a California Super King, being 6" longer than a regular California King. There were two cozy looking recliners by a reading lamp and a large vanity for her.

"Look at this..!" Torvald said as he discovered a full body fur dryer in the bathroom. "I've never used one of these..." He was looking it over carefully with some thoughts of putting one in their home.

"Uh...enjoy your stay" the owner said as he pulled the door shut. Right before he closed it, he reminded them "The times for breakfast are on the back of the door." He was sure that they hadn't heard him as he observed the tigress wrapping her arms around the stallion.

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"Mmmm" the tigress purred as her mate washed her back for her. She was sitting between his legs with her back facing him. "Just a little more to the right...Mmmm, right there..." she purred as he found that spot that needed extra attention. She was washing his legs and hooves for him as they enjoyed the oversized jacuzzi to it's fullest. "I told you we would fit in here just fine" she commented as he scrubbed her shoulders.

"Yeah, we should get one of these for ourselves" the stallion replied as he got out the sprayer to rinse off her fur. "We just need to take over Conrad's room to make it our master bath" he joked as his loving tigress rinsed the shampoo out of his mane.

Torvald turned the bubbles up to the highest position and slid down into the tub further, putting his arms around his mate. He could hear her purring with content as the bubbles worked their tensions away.

“I’m glad we did this” she purred as she put her arms over his. “We *really* need one of these at home” she added as they enjoyed the moment. The tigress reached over and picked up a chocolate covered strawberry and put it in her mate's mouth. She could see him smiling as he enjoyed the flavors of this little treat.

“You are spoiling me” Torvald stated as he sipped some sparkling apple juice. “I would have to have this every time we used a tub like this” he added, giving her a kiss on the cheek. He then gave her a strawberry, which she took gently from his fingers, letting her fangs gently brush against his paw.

“Now to use that fur dryer” she said as she begrudgingly got out of the jacuzzi. She walked over to it and turned the dryer on, adjusting the temperature according to the fur chart provided. After a few minutes, she stepped out, looking radiant albeit just a little bit fluffy. “I knew that would happen” she said, smiling at her mate. “I’ll have to use some conditioner to tame this unruly fur.”

“My turn to dry off” the berserker stated and he adjusted the temperature setting for his coat. Within a few minutes, he looked like a rock star, his mane and tail dry but with a definite wild, unkempt look to it.

“Oohhh, the 'Hollywood' look...I like that!” she said as she put her arms around his waist. “Time to turn the lights out” she purred as she walked him over to the bed, hitting the light switch on the way. “Don't be setting any alarms, either” she scolded him as she slipped under the covers. “I’ll wake up when the room gets light in the morning.”

“OK, no alarms as you wish” the berserker replied to her request. “Just don't go stealing the covers tonight...”

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It was morning out but something was amiss to the berserker. He was cold and the bed was as hard as the ground. He could feel Victoria snuggled up against his back, snoring away. He reached back to feel that she undoubtedly had all of the covers. That still didn't explain why the bed was so hard. He opened his eyes to see the reason for the things he was experiencing. They were on the side of a wooded mountain from what he could observe.

“Victoria, if you're awake don't open your eyes right now” he said as he sat up and looked around at their surroundings. They were still lying on the bottom sheet but the bed was gone. His mate had the covers wrapped up around her to stay warm as the air temperature was probably no more than 45° currently. “This is really weird” he said to himself as he stood up and took stock of where they were.

They were on a mountainside in what was obviously fall by the colors in the valley below. The forest was a pine and redwood mix but the trees didn't seem completely familiar to him. The biggest problem right now was the fact that he didn't have any clothes on. “Loke!” he yelled, looking around for that sorry weasel. “If this is your idea of a funny trick, you're wrong!” he bellowed, still scanning for the Trickster.

As he scanned the surroundings, this was starting to look worse by the minute. The sky was a beautiful mix of blues, reds and oranges from the morning light. What was missing was the contrails from jet aircraft. The air also seemed too clean to him as he breathed in a huge lungful. “We are not on our home world” he said out loud as he looked around some more.

“What's that, Sweetheart?” Victoria said sleepily as she sat up. It only took a moment more before she screamed as she opened her eyes. “Where are we?!?” she shouted as she leaped to her feet and took up a fighting stance. Her tail was poofed out like a khat would if they were frightened and her eyes were wide with confusion and fear. “Torvald, is this one of Loke's tricks?” she asked as she observed where they were.

“It is *not* one of his tricks because I don't see him standing nearby, laughing at us” the huge equine replied. He looked at her and stated the obvious. “You need to cover up” he said, pointing at her naked body.

“Err...yeah” was her short reply as she took the quilt and put it around her shoulders for warmth. The tigress stood there for a moment before looking at her husband. “Where do you think we are?” she asked, still looking quite confused. “If this isn't home, where is it?” It was clear that she wanted answers and she really wanted them sooner rather than later.

“I really don't know what to tell you” the stallion said as he was still looking around at their surroundings. “I really...don't know.”

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“They seem to *be* confused” the larger entity commented as he viewed the goings on remotely. “I didn't expect that at all.”

**"I still say you cannot turn them to your will"** the smaller, older entity replied. He rubbed his 'chin' as he took in the sight. **"Surt could not turn them so what makes you think you can?"** he asked the younger entity.

"I have recruited since before time" the larger entity replied to that. "This pair would make a fine addition to my forces."

**"I'll remind you that Surt couldn't turn them"** the older entity stated again.

"Suit yourself" he said as he watched the events unfold. "I will have them and the Shieldmaiden before this is over."

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"Well, what are we going to do now?" the tigress asked her husband. The stallion was sitting on a fallen tree, pondering what move to take next.

Torvald was thinking that this wasn't of Loke's doing and it wasn't a mission that they were on. He thought back over some previous missions to see if something would leap out at him as being out of the ordinary. As far as he could remember, there was nothing to indicate who or what would have done this to them. The only thing that kept coming to him was that nobody knew just what powers had pulled them from Surt's realm.

As he sat there, he noticed something in the distance. "Victoria, what is that over there?" he asked, indicating which way to look. "Your eyes are sharper than mine. What is that?"

The tigress looked over to see that he was looking at. "It's a plume of smoke coming up that's just started in the last 10 minutes or so." She squinted to sharpen her vision a little to see a reflection off of something in the valley. "There's something or someone down there."

"OK, I think we had better go that way, then" he stated as he got up and picked up his pillow and the bottom sheet. He looked down at himself and made a realization. "I will probably need some clothes before long" he said as he looked at the sheet. He folded it up and made himself a makeshift toga to cover up with. "Now that's taken care of, Let's go" he suggested, leading the way down the mountain side.