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'Lost'

By R C Stankewitz

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Chapter 3

“Nasty Surprise”

It was a nice afternoon in Asgaard and Loke was relating his experience to Odin. “I was trying to hide Thor's hammer from him when I was pulled from here to a realm that I was not aware of.” the weasel looked like he was still uneasy about even being there. “I was there for a long time, maybe hours before I happened across Torvald and Victoria.”

“And what were they doing there?” the one-eyed wolf asked as he crossed his arms. “Were they having a vacation that you were barging in on?” Odin was giving the weasel a very hard stare as he waited for an answer. Something like this wasn't beyond the Trickster to try.

“I *wasn't* barging in. You know that Torvald sometimes 'summons' me when he says my name!” the weasel stated in his defense. He sipped some wine before he continued. “They had no idea where they were or how they got there. I saw the confusion in their eyes.” Loke swallowed hard before he said the next part. “It...it scared me...”

“We must try to find them, in any case” Odin commented. “I will let Christopher know what's happening.” He looked at the Trickster with a hard stare as he said “Thank you for telling us but please do me a favor and leave Thor's hammer alone.” The weasel nodded his head as he shimmered and left.

###

Torvald roused from his sleep when the sun began to strike him in the face. Sitting up, he realized that he had all of the sheets, blankets and quilt to himself. He quickly scanned around to see that his tigress was nowhere to be seen. He got up, quickly dressed and put his weapons on. As he picked up his Dane axe, the tigress walked into the clearing carrying two small animals by their hind legs.

“Breakfast” she said as she dropped them at his hooves. “Same deal as before?” Before he could answer, she opened her pouch and pulled out some rootstocks that looked like carrots. “I saw the animals digging these up so I brought them for you” she said, giving him a kiss.

“Thank you” he said as he began to prepare their morning meal. As he cleaned the catch, Victoria found a pair of small branches to use as roasting sticks. She stirred the fire and added some wood while her mate finished with his part. While Victoria cooked the game, Torvald tried one of the roots to find that it was sort of a cross between a carrot and a radish. He smiled as he nodded his approval of the unique taste. Within a few minutes, the game was roasting by the fire for their consumption.

###

The fur had woken from his slumber to see that he had slept in his chair once again. He had done that a lot since he had been brought here. The fire in the fireplace was just barely burning now, mostly embers from the big back log that he had put in the hearth. He stirred the coals and added two pieces of wood to get it going again. He went over to his water bucket and got a drink of water from it to quench his morning thirst.

The thought that he might have visitors was getting him excited. It had crossed his mind that they might possibly be hostile. This was OK with him too. If he was killed by the visitors, he wouldn't be stuck here anymore. It was a morbid thought but he couldn't bring himself to commit suicide. That was completely against his religion and his personal beliefs. It would be OK if he were to die in combat, though. The loneliness of being here without others around him was hard on him.

He poured some water into a wooden basin he had made and began to wash himself as best as possible. He used a piece of soft, absorbent hide to dry off with and he ran his fingers through his mane to straighten it out. One should try to look their best to greet visitors. Especially if they could get him home. He put some water on to make some pine needle tea while he waited for his possible visitors.

###

“I may add **anything** to the playing field?” the younger entity asked, giving the new entity his full attention.

“**Yes, you may add but you cannot take away from the field**” the new entity stated in a formal tone.

“Thank you” the younger entity said cheerily and added 'something' to the playing field. “You will *become my warriors yet!*”

###

Torvald was almost falling asleep again, feeling very full from his breakfast. His mate was leaning against him, purring as she let her food settle some. The two game animals proved to be even more delicious than the mustelid had been. The tigress was just starting to nod off when she sat up and listened carefully.

“Torvald, Sweetheart. I hear something” she whispered, picking up her staff. He instinctively reached for his Dane axe as five very large wild Kalis burst into the clearing. Each one was very big, weighing over 100 pounds apiece. They had a look of wildness that neither warrior had ever seen before. They were a solid gray color with no shade variations that they could see. Their eyes were a silver color that had an unearthly glow to them.

The largest kali faced off and charged the pair. Torvald stood quickly and spun with his axe, slicing the top of it's skull off. Two more of the wild animals charged them, forcing the tigress to strike one of them in the head, knocking it out. As that one fell at her feet, she observed the other one fall with a Francisca embedded in it's skull. The remaining pair began to circle them, trying to find an opening. Victoria picked up her spear and readied herself for whatever the kalis might try. One charged them, trying to jump at the stallion. Torvald fended that one off only to have the kali latch onto his forearm.

Torvald took his dagger and dispatched the kali quickly. As it fell from his arm, he could see that the kali had bitten him very badly, breaking the skin multiple times. The remaining kali slowly circled and charged them only to be skewered by the tigress' spear. She was trying to pull her spear from the kali when she heard her stallion fall down.

She dropped her spear to rush to her fallen mate who was lying on his side, breathing hard. His eyes were rolling up in his head and he was frothing at the mouth. He was trying to say something so she got down close to him.

“P...p...poison...v..ven..nom...” he stuttered out as the venom coursed its way through his body. She could feel his body becoming limp as he lost consciousness and slumped against her. The tigress knew that he would most likely survive this but it would be a matter of time before he would come around. All she could do is wait and pray.

###

“That will change things” the younger entity stated, proud of his addition to the game of turning the pair. “She will turn to my will now.”

“You have made a mistake” the older one pointed out. **“He is immortal. The wild kali bite will only slow them down.”**

“You are wrong” the younger one retorted, rubbing his 'paws' together. *“She has been stabbed in the heart by this. She will turn.”*

“I have never been wrong in matters such as these” the older one stated nonchalantly. **“You will see that you wasted your time.”**

“Don't you have an empire to destroy somewhere?” the younger one said irritably, turning back to watch the pair.

###

Victoria had managed to drag the fallen berserker over to the lean-to and made him as comfortable as possible. She had once witnessed him survive over twenty rattlesnake bites at once. It had taken several hours but he had recovered without no ill effects. This wild kali bite was something different. All she could do would be to wait for him to regain consciousness. She kept the fire going, making short trips to gather more firewood. What they really needed right now was water.

She remembered a pool of water that they had went past just up the mountain. Hoping that he would be safe, she took the thickest of the hide pouches and set out to retrieve some water.

It was a quick trip up to the pool and as she walked into the clearing, several large deer stepped into the shadows. These were most likely not sentient as they walked on all fours. This made her feel better about the water as they had been drinking out of it. She took the pouch and filled it with water to see that it was more or less watertight. She made sure that it was as full as possible and headed back.

Upon her return, she wet her paw and wiped her mate's forehead with it. She could tell that he was running a fever but he had done that with the snake bites. The tigress looked over the bite wounds to see that they were beginning to heal. Now this was a good sign. She sat there and stroked his mane, tears falling from her eyes.

###

Victoria roused to see that it was dark now and the fire was in need of stoking. It was just down to embers and she wasn't sure she could start a fire by herself. She got up and stretched out her body to get the kinks out of it. The tigress put a few pieces of wood on the fire, stirring it to get the wood to catch. Within a few minutes, she had the fire going nicely again. She stepped over to peer down into the valley to see a slight glow in the direction they had been going. There had to be some fur living there.

The tigress sat down and ate a little of another small animal she had caught and cleaned herself. It was late in the evening and the huge stallion hadn't stirred yet. She prayed to her god for his intervention in their plight and lay back down beside the unconscious equine.

Later that evening, the tigress was roused once again by her instincts. Her mate was shivering from the fever, his forehead very hot to the touch. She tried to cool him down by using the water but it seemed to have no effect. She hugged his limp body to hers as she cried tears of anguish over her fallen mate.

After a while, when her tears had run dry and she was just sobbing, she felt her husband move in her arms. She looked to see that he was trying to open his eyes. "Torvald! Are you OK?" she exclaimed as she hugged him even tighter. She was so thankful that he had regained consciousness that she forgot how hard she was squeezing him.

"A little air, please?" he whispered as he finally opened his eyes. "How long have I been out?" he questioned as he pulled the covers off of himself. The stallion was wet all over with sweat from his fever. He got up to a kneeling position and asked "Will you help me take this tunic off? It's soaked with sweat."

As the tigress helped him get his clothes off, she told him how long he had been out. "That was some bad venom" he commented as he wiped his body with the tunic. "I had some really bad nightmares while I was out" he told his mate as he was drying off. "This thing will probably stink in the morning" he stated as he hung his tunic over the lean-to to dry out. After he got a drink of water, the equine laid back down. "I am tired still. Lie down and keep me warm" he said to Victoria, motioning for her to join him under the covers. The tigress didn't need any encouragement, crawling in beside him.

###

The fur had patiently waited all day for the beings to come down off the mountain. He had observed their fire being stoked several times by the smoke coming off of it. He wondered if they had encountered some of those wild kalis as he had heard some sounds that were all too familiar to him. Had one of them gotten bit? That could be bad news as his friend that had come here with him had died that first night from the poisoned bite of one of those canids. He thought about that night, his friend dying in his arms as he watched the life drain from his eyes. What would he tell his friend's wife if he got to go back to his home? The fur had no clue how to tell his friend's wife that he was dead.

He hoped that the beings, whoever they were, would come off the mountain tomorrow. "Yes, maybe tomorrow" he said as he watched the smoke from their fire.

He wandered back inside and sipped on his tea some more. It wasn't the best that he had ever made but at least it was something besides water. If only he had some honey to put into it. "That would make it better" he thought to himself as he poured some more into his hand-made cup to heat it back up. He sat down in his chair and watched out the window in hopes of seeing the beings come down the mountain. "Maybe tomorrow" he said, smiling just a little. "Maybe...tomorrow."

###

"I said I wouldn't but I will say it. You have wasted your time" the older entity stated, crossing his 'arms' as he watched the game unfold. He 'looked' over at the younger entity to 'see' his reaction.

"She will turn to my will and bring him with her" the younger entity replied. "I have not wasted my time. This is careful planning on my part."

"If you say so" the older entity said as he 'shook' his 'head' at this notion.

###

the huge equine woke up when the sun began to hit him in the face. As he roused and sat up, he realized that Victoria must be off hunting again. He got a drink of water and put his tunic and leggings back on. His mate suddenly made her appearance from the underbrush carrying what looked like a small gray rabbit. Where as a lapin would be at least 5' tall, this one was not over 12" in height. It also walked on all fours so maybe it wasn't a sentient being after all.

"I brought something else for you" she said in a cheery tone, reaching into her pouch. She took out a round red object and threw it to him. The equine smelled it, then cut it open with his knife. He smelled it again, realizing it definitely was an apple.

As he tasted it, a smile crossed his muzzle. "This tastes like a Braeburn apple with a hint of cinnamon." He took another bite and really enjoyed the taste and texture in his mouth. "I need to pick more of these" he commented as he got ready to fix her catch. She handed him another apple and more of those roots that looked like carrots for his breakfast. Victoria got the fire going again and began to cook her game.