

The Tiger and the Tabby
by Havoc

“A woman has two smiles that an angel might envy: the smile that accepts a lover before words are uttered, and the smile that lights on the first born babe, and assures it of a mother’s love.”

-Thomas C. Haliburton

The weather did not match the mood that Mark was feeling when he stepped out of the hospital. It was far too sunny outside, too bright and cheerful. He brushed his brown hair back, feeling the hot San Francisco sun of the late afternoon beating down on him, threatening to bring a sunburn to his skin. His green eyes were sheltered behind a pair of dark sunglasses, but even those did not darken the sky to a level that he felt like dwelling in. A sigh made it past his lips, worry weighing down on him.

Soft tapping footsteps caught up to him, a swishing tail brushing against his ankles as a short, curvy gray tabby female, dressed smartly in a neat business suit, stood next to him. “Mark, slow down, love. I can’t keep up with you when you walk that fast.”

Mark blinked and looked beside him, seeing a pair of sharp yellow eyes looking back at him. “Ah...Oh, sorry, Tai...I wasn’t thinking, I guess...”

Tai looked back at him, her expression concerned. She had been a little taken aback by how quickly Mark had left the hospital room. She wouldn’t have thought that he would do something like that, especially considering the circumstances in which they were in right now.

“You barely had a chance to say goodbye,” Tai pressed him, her tone taking on a note of admonishment. “I know you don’t like seeing her that way, but-”

“Tai, just...just don’t, okay?” Mark said, looking away. He put his hands in his pockets, looking down at the sidewalk, tracing the cracks with his eyes. It seemed as though someone before him had been feeling just as nervous as he had. A small pile of cigarette butts was scattered about, like someone had been pacing back and forth, dropping one after another and walking through them. Not so unusual for the sidewalk outside of a hospital, perhaps. “Let’s just go home.”

Tai opened her mouth as if she was going to say something, but then she closed it again, simply nodding her agreement. She looped her arm through his, urging him forward and away from the building towards the parking deck.

The human and feline pair made their way up to the third level of the parking structure, where a silver Mercedes sedan was parked. Tai unlocked the car and Mark got into the passenger's seat, while Tai slid into the driver's seat. She started the car up and drove out of the building, pulling out onto the main thoroughfare outside of the hospital. While they drove, Tai occasionally glanced over at Mark. He

was just staring out of the window, watching the buildings and the other cars fly past without really seeing them.

“Look, Mark...,” Tai said, trying to think of something to say. “It's going to be alright...Kat's strong, you know? I'm sure nothing will...”

Mark looked over at her, giving her a blank look that immediately shut her up. Tai took a deep breath and then looked forward again, staring at the road ahead. For the rest of the ride, they didn't say anything to each other. They just let the road sail by underneath them.

“Kat, I'm home!”

Mark walked in the front door of the small house that he shared with Kitsune, the brown tigress, and Tai, the gray tabby. They had been living in this house for nearly six months now, ever since they moved out to California from North Carolina. The home was much smaller than the one they had lived in before, but less space wasn't much of a concern when you all slept in the same bed, after all. And anyway, Mark would have lived in a one-room apartment if it meant their family would be able to stay together.

He stretched his arms, unhooking his belt and putting it away in the closet. His uniform was still a little stiff, even after three months on the street. The San Francisco Police Department was a lot larger than Raleigh's, and he found that even though San Francisco was a much larger city he wasn't having to work as hard as he was before he moved. There were lots of fellow officers around to spread the work about.

Entering the living room, he broke into a smile as he saw who was waiting for him. Sitting down in a poofy armchair, her feet up on a small ottoman, was the love of his life. Kitsune smiled back at him, her face glowing with that shine that pregnant women always seem to have. The tigress tried to stand up to greet him, but Mark waved her down, going to her instead.

“You just sit,” he said. “You should be off your feet as much as possible.” He sat down on the arm of her chair, looking down at her and taking in the sight of her.

She was just as beautiful as the day that he met her, when they were in school together. She was covered in soft, sleek brown fur lined with black tiger stripes, the result of having a tigress mother and a fox father. Kitsune's hair was tawny, her natural hair color. Once upon a time she'd had it dyed magenta, but she'd allowed it to go back to normal. Usually, Kitsune sported a sleek, thin, athletic runner's body. Now, though she was no less pretty, she had a belly swollen from being nine months pregnant.

“I could smack you!” Kitsune said, teasing him by pretending she was upset. “If I wasn't like

this, I'd smack you so hard!" She shifted in her seat, groaning a little. "I was on my feet all day, too. I don't know why I'm still going to class." Kitsune was currently studying law at the University of California at Hastings, and even though she was so pregnant she was determined not to miss any more classes than she absolutely needed to.

"You're lucky that I think you're cute," Mark said, teasing right back. He leaned down, planting a kiss on her forehead and placing a hand on her belly, rubbing in a circle through her long maternity dress. "I wouldn't let you get away with it otherwise."

Kitsune placed her hand over his, interlocking their fingers. "Mark, I love you. I will spend the rest of my life with you. But if you ever do this to me again, I will strangle you." She leaned to the side, resting her head against his chest.

"I don't believe you, Kat," Mark said. He pressed his palm against her belly. His heart beat harder as he felt a small kick from the child inside. "You're just as excited about it as I am." He slid his fingers out of hers, brushing his hand up her stomach and to her chest, cupping her right breast. At this stage of her pregnancy, her breasts were swelling and heavy with milk in preparation for nursing a kitten. Kitsune sucked in a sharp breath.

"Stop that," she whispered, her shoulders shrugging. "You know they're sensitive right now...and sore..."

"I'll be gentle," Mark promised. He held her breast in his hand, as gentle as his word, and slowly rubbed around in a circle. Caressing her leisurely, taking his time, he draped his other arm over her shoulder. His left hand cupped around her left breast, giving it the same treatment as its twin. Kitsune's muscles gradually relaxed, and she turned her face a little further into his chest, a soft purr starting to rumble in her throat.

"Oh, god...Not fair...I was trying to be angry..." Kitsune put a hand on his arm, rubbing from his elbow up to his shoulder, her fingers wrinkling his shirt sleeve. She hooked the claws from her other hand into his shirt, gently pricking his skin through the fabric. After a moment, she looked up at Mark. "Just...Tai is making dinner in the kitchen. Hurry up..."

Mark smirked at her. "Feeling a little selfish tonight, are we?" He moved a hand to the neck of her dress, slipping it inside and palming her breast directly. "Well, I suppose you deserve a little time for yourself." His fingers searched for and found her nipple, and he tweaked it sharply, earning a sharp moan from Kitsune. Mark chuckled. "So, with the time you have, what can I do for you, kitten?"

Kitsune flicked one ear, her breathing quickening. "You know what I want. Give it to me..."

"Such a demanding woman." Nevertheless, Mark was eager to oblige her. He stood up from the arm of the chair, coming around to the front of Kitsune and kneeling down on the floor. Kitsune looked

down at him over her pregnant belly, still purring as she pinched her dress between two fingers on each hand, pulling the material up and over the crest of her stomach. Mark was treated to a glorious view of his mate's pussy, already swollen and glistening with desire.

Some men didn't enjoy what Mark was planning to do to his tigress, but Mark found it very fun indeed. His joy in sex was giving his partner pleasure, and nothing gave Kitsune more pleasure than being teased by his skilled tongue. With a smile on his face, he lifted her legs up, draping them over his shoulders and sliding her down on the chair slightly.

“Mmm...,” Kitsune murmured, her voice quivering as she felt his breath drift against her sex. “I can't believe you're going to do this in the middle of the living room...What if Tai walks in here?”

“Then we'll ask her to join in,” Mark replied. He put his tongue out, touching it to the bottom of her lips and slowly licking up to her clit. He could hear the sound of leather stretching as Kitsune's hands gripped the arms of the chair. “Besides, you had this all planned out. You always wear panties when you're downstairs.”

“Well...nngh...You have me there...”

Kitsune's soft moan turned to a squeal of delight as Mark truly set in. He knew exactly which buttons to press; after all, he had plenty of practice. He started by teasing her labia, nibbling at her and coaxing them apart. Short gasps of breath and louder purring told him that he was doing everything right. The spicy-sweet fragrance of her nethers carried many memories of their courtship. Mark brought his hands in, spreading her with his fingers. Inside, she was bright pink, shimmering with moisture. He couldn't resist touching a fingertip to her entrance, slowly slipping the digit inside of her vagina.

“Ohhhhh...god...,” Kitsune moaned. “Don't do that...” Her tone suggested that she meant exactly the opposite of what the words would imply. “If you do that, I'm going to...ah...going to have to fuck you for sure...and you know we can't...” Sadly true. For the last three months they'd had to refrain from actually having sex, for the sake of the baby's health. Fortunately, they had become adept in numerous other means of enjoying each others' company.

“Well, that wouldn't be so bad,” Mark said, chuckling a bit. “But I suppose you're right.” He slid his finger out of her, pausing a moment to swirl it around her bud before returning to his oral ministrations.

His tongue delved deeper into the tigress, reaching into her moist warmth to delight in her exotic flavor. Her inner muscles played around him, rhythmically clenching and relaxing as he pleased every millimeter of her nerves. Kitsune was already at her edge, Mark could tell. He had a sneaking suspicion that she might have been warming up before he got home. The human extended his tongue as far as it could go, stretching into the deepest parts he could reach. He played the organ

around her vagina, licking around the walls and caressing the ribbed surface of her canal.

“Oh, that feels so good,” Kitsune gasped. She pulled on the arms of her chair, pressing herself against her lover's face. Her clit ground against his nose, and she stiffened. “Oh...Oh, Mark, I'm going to cum...Don't stop...”

A sharp, growling hiss escaped her as Kitsune felt her climax begin to take hold. Mark slipped his tongue out of her, barely avoiding having it clamped inside as her pussy spasmed uncontrollably. He planted his mouth around her sex, kissing and sucking gently, capturing the copious amounts of sexual juices escaping from her. Mark kept his hands on her legs, keeping her from sliding out of the chair as she lost her grip on the arms.

He looked up at her as she came down from her high, licking his lips with a grin. “I hoped you enjoyed yourself, my dear.” Kitsune was only able to respond with a laughing sigh. Mark stood up, pulling her dress back down to cover her and leaning over to plant a kiss on her cheek.

“Oh, how cute,” an amused voice remarked behind him.

Mark turned his head, looking over his shoulder. Standing in the doorway that led to the kitchen stood an attractive gray tabby female named Tai, an apron tied around her waist and a stirring spoon in her right hand. She had a smirk on her face that suggested she had been watching for some time, and had only just now made her presence known.

“Good evening, Tai,” Mark said, turning around and sitting on the arm of Kitsune's chair once again. “Have a good day at work?”

“Not bad,” Tai replied. She flicked her tongue out of her mouth teasingly. “I wish I could say I'd had as nice a welcome home as you two seem to have had, though.”

Mark grinned at her. “Don't you worry, little tabby. You'll get your turn.”

“I'm sure I will. You'll catch hell from both me *and* Kat if I don't, after all.” She turned around, walking back into the kitchen. Her rear presented a sorely tempting sight to Mark as she went.

“Dinner's ready. Come and get it.”

Mark sat down at the dinner table, looking back at the living room. He knew that he should straighten things up, but right now his heart wasn't in it. The cushions were still on the floor where they'd fallen when Kitsune had stumbled. Mark stared at them for a moment or two and then looked away, unable to handle it anymore. He put both hands on the table, looking at the patterns in the wooden top.

“Here's something.”

Mark glanced up to see Tai holding two plates of something that was steaming. Even feeling the

way that he was, he had to admit that it did smell very good. Tai set one plate down in front of him, taking a seat across from him with her own.

"It's not much," she said, sounding apologetic. "Just a few leftovers I whipped together. But it should be good all the same."

Mark managed to force a slight smile. "I'm sure it is Tai. It smells delicious." He picked up his fork, picking at the food but not taking a bite. Tai watched him, still seeming worried about him.

"Honey, you need to eat something," the tabby said. "I know how you're feeling right now. I feel the same way, but if you're going to be any use you have to keep your strength up."

Mark took a small bite of food, trying to appease Tai. She watched him, her expression becoming that of a mother who was cross with her child. He swallowed, seeing her face, and realized that she was being quite serious. With a weak smile, he started forcing himself to eat, getting through the meal under her watchful eye.

After they were finished eating, Tai took up the plates and carried them over to the sink. While she was cleaning up their meal, Mark got to the depressing task of cleaning up the rest of the house. The easy part was picking up the disturbed cushions and scooping up the broken glass. What was going to be a bit more difficult was cleaning up the blood, and there was no small amount of it. Mark got a can of carpet cleaner from the laundry room and a scrub brush, starting with the dinner plate-sized patch of scarlet on the living room floor. From there he moved down the hall and to the stairs, scrubbing away little drops and splashes here and there, all the way up and to the bedroom. Mark pulled the bloodstained sheets off of the bed, carrying them back down to the laundry room and throwing them in the washing machine. He went back up and then started to scrub the mattress and bed frame, clearing away any evidence that there had ever been any blood there.

When she had finished her own cleaning, Tai wiped her hands off on a towel and walked out to the living room, looking for Mark. Of course he wasn't there, but she did realize that she hadn't changed out of her business suit even when she was making dinner. She sighed.

I'm trying to put on a brave face for Mark, but I guess I'm not as strong as I pretend to be, she thought. The gray tabby made her way to the stairs, unbuttoning her jacket as she went. Tai draped it over her arm, getting to the top of the stairs and to the bedroom door. She paused, her ears pricking up, as she heard the sound of scrubbing. Continuing to the door, she looked inside and saw Mark kneeling on the floor, taking a brush to the last stubborn patch of congealed blood.

"You've already cleaned it all up," Tai said quietly. Mark jumped and turned his head, looking back at her.

"Yeah, well...", Mark said after a few moments, turning back to his cleaning and getting the last

bit of it up. "I mean, we still need to sleep here, after all. Can't just let the blood sit, can I?" He laid towels over the clean, wet spots so they could dry, and stood up. Walking past Tai, he went downstairs to put away the cleaning supplies.

He's just on autopilot. Tai was really worried, now. Mark was upset, understandably so, but she didn't understand why he was letting it show like this. Mark had always been a very strong person. Stress didn't get to him like it did to other people. She still remembered very clearly how he had been such a caring, supportive presence in her recent past. Mark had given up so much to move to California with her, all because he didn't want to break up the family.

Even more troubled than before, Tai crossed the room to the closet and began uneasily getting out of her business clothes. Maybe taking a hot shower would help her think things through.

Mark could almost see steam coming through under the crack at the bottom of the bathroom door, across from where the bed was. He shook his head, a bit amused. Tai loved taking really hot showers; he was almost surprised that she didn't come out as red as a hot dog when she finished. He looked beside him, where Kitsune was quietly reading a book, and could read the exact same thought on her face.

"I weep for our heating bill this month," the tigress remarked, making Mark chuckle.

"Maybe Tai can arrange to get us a bulk discount," Mark said. "She works at the plant, after all."

"Mmm." Kitsune closed her book and placed it on the bedside table. With a wide yawn, showing off her impressive set of predator's teeth, she rolled slightly to the side and draped her arm across Mark's chest. She rested her head on his shoulder, nuzzling him affectionately.

Mark kissed the top of her head. "So, what did the doctor have to say today? You had your appointment, right? Everything going according to schedule?"

"Mmm. Should be any day now." Kitsune lazily rubbed her hand along his side. "She said my blood pressure was a little high, but nothing to be too worried about. I'm going back tomorrow for a few tests."

"That's good."

Inside the bathroom, the water shut off and the sound of the shower curtain being pulled aside was heard. Five minutes later, the bathroom light turned off and the door opened. Tai stepped out, toweling off her hair. In the typical fashion of the absolute tease that she was, she presented herself with not a stitch of clothing on her body. Grinning impishly at the both of them, she let the towel drop on the floor and slid into bed.

“We've been waiting up for you for almost twenty minutes, Tai,” Kitsune said. “You sure do take long showers.”

“Well, what with how Mark pounced me in the living room after dinner, I had a little cleaning up to do,” Tai snickered. “I wouldn't want to leave a mess in my fur, after all.”

“Uh-huh,” Kitsune said, smirking. “Well, how would you like to make a new one, Tai?” She reached down underneath the covers, feeling around for and finding Mark's cock. Maybe she couldn't get fucked, but she sure wouldn't mind being involved in getting her friend laid twice in one night.

“If you put it that way...,” Tai purred. The tabby flicked her tongue out, lowering her head to Mark's chest and rasping at his skin.

Mark groaned. “Girls, girls,” he protested, even as he felt his member stiffening in response. “I appreciate the attention, really I do. But I have to work in the morning and you two have already worn me out.”

Tai laughed. “Do you hear that, Kat? The machine himself says he's too tired.”

“Well, he's only human, my love,” Kitsune replied. “But I suppose we should let him sleep.”

“Oh, alright, if you say so.” Tai relented, returning to her previous position and snuggling up against Mark's side. “But I know you have the weekend off, Mark, so I expect double, understand?”

“Yes, yes,” Mark agreed wearily, putting his head back against his pillow. He reached across Tai to turn the bedside lamp off. “Anything for my cute, pretty, oversexed girls.”

Tai woke up, somehow sensing a feeling that something was missing. It wasn't anything to do with the bed. The covers were just as warm and comforting as ever, scented with the fabric softener that Kitsune used with the laundry. The bed itself was soft and comfortable, and so was the pillow underneath her head. In fact...the bed felt a little softer than usual, as though there wasn't as much weight on it.

Tai rolled over to face Mark, only he wasn't there. She looked beyond the bed, and saw him standing at the bedroom window. He was looking out, gazing silently at the view from the second floor, down the hill that overlooked the rest of the neighborhood and the city beyond. Tai blinked. She hadn't felt him get up.

“Mark? What's the matter?”

Mark looked back at her over his shoulder, then looked back out the window without answering her. Worried, Tai slid out of bed, her feet lighting on the carpet. She padded over to him, but stopped when Mark raised a hand.

“Tai, just...let me be,” he said. “I'm in no mood for talking.”

“You know that's not going to work,” Tai replied, feeling herself beginning to grow angry. “You know I have as much stake in all this as you do. I have the right to talk about it if I want to.” She crossed her arms, staring at the back of his head. “Now tell me what in the hell is the matter with you. I deserve that much.”

Mark's shoulders raised slightly as though he was taking a deep breath, and then they sagged low. He turned his head slightly, then stopped the motion. “Tai, where were you when you heard what had happened?”

Tai blinked again, a little confused by the question. “Well...Well, I was at work, same as you. Why?”

“Work. Yeah, I was at work, too.” Mark placed a hand against the glass, resting his forehead against the window. “I was going to take the day off. I didn't need to work today, it was my regular day off. I should have been at home.”

“Mark...,” Tai said, taking a step forward. “I don't really see what this has to do with-”

“You don't get it, Tai,” Mark said. His voice caught in his throat slightly. “I was supposed to be at home. I shouldn't have been working.” His hand made a tight fist against the glass. “I wasn't there for her, Tai. I wasn't there for her when she needed me. I failed her.”

The tabby took a sharp breath, everything suddenly falling into place. His mood, the way he had been acting all afternoon, made sense now. “Mark...” She moved forward, stepping behind him and wrapping her arms around his body, leaning up against his back. “Oh, sweetheart, it's not your fault. You couldn't have known.”

“Don't say that, Tai,” Mark hissed. He tried to pull away from her, tried to get away from the comforting feel of her soft, furred body against his back, but she held him too tightly. “If I'd been home...There could have...There must have been something I could have done.”

“There was nothing you could have done,” Tai protested. She slid a hand up his chest and to his face, turning his head so he was looking back at her. His cheek felt wet under her fingertips; he was crying. “Love, there was not a thing you could have done. Please don't think otherwise.” Tears began to trace their way down her cheeks as well. “Mark, please. I need you. I need you to be strong for me. If you aren't, I don't...I don't know what I'll do.”

Mark twisted himself around in her arms, placing his hands on her shoulders. He looked down into her face. In her expression he saw a perfect mirror of what he was feeling. He saw every bit of worry, every bit of anger and desperation, every bit of love. Things became a little clearer to him then. Yes, the woman he loved was in trouble, and needed him. But he loved this woman just as much, and right now she needed him, too. And he was in a position to do something about it.

Without any more need for words, Mark brushed his hands along her shoulders and up the sides of her neck, cupping her face. He bent his head down, kissing her fiercely and passionately. Tai gave a stifled cry of need, hooking her arms around his neck and thrusting herself against him, forcing him back against the window. Mark's hands went down to her legs, and he lifted her under her knees, raising her up in the air.

Tai wrapped her thighs around his waist, crossing her ankles together behind his back. She planted kisses all over his face and neck, whining with desperation and desire. If she could have blanketed his entire being with her soul, she would have. It was what she wanted to do right at that very moment. Sometimes it seemed crazy to her that she could love a human as much as she did. They might have been born in the same state, in the same country, on the same continent, on the same planet, but they came from very different worlds. Just a few short decades ago, it would have been considered immoral for her to even be with him like this. A handful of years before that, and it would have been outright illegal. And yet here he was, giving her the love and fulfillment that she needed, that she knew only he could give her.

Maybe Mark never could understand just exactly what he provided her, and what Kitsune provided her as well. Tai was a cat, a tabby. In her culture, she was the lowest of the low. Feline society was tiered in a way that outsiders rarely saw, and would have difficulty understanding. Tigers, like Kitsune and her family, were at the top, the aristocrats. Normal cats like Tai, the plain and ordinary house cats, were at the bottom. They never got to experience the higher functions of their society, the illustrious institutions that were normally reserved for their social betters. Institutions like the polygynous family that she was now a part of. Mark and Kitsune made her feel special, made her feel that she belonged, and made her feel that she was worth something.

So, no, she might not have been able to blanket him with her very soul. But goddammit, she could do her very best to try.

Mark turned around, pressing Tai's back to the window. He lowered her body slowly, easing her down so that her rump rested on the shelf-like windowsill, careful not to cause her to sit on her tail. One hand cradling the back of her head, he leaned close and placed a tender kiss on her lips. His other hand rested on her shoulder, starting to make its way slowly down her gray-furred body. Tai's own hands went to his head, her fingers tangling in his hair as she returned his loving gesture.

The human's hand lighted on her breast, his fingertips tracing around the hardening flesh of her nipple. A soft moan escaped the tabby's lips as he cupped her breast, her chest expanding with each deep breath that she took. Tai would have considered it heaven just for his hand to remain there; it was nirvana when it began to move still lower. Mark stroked his palm across her pleasantly plump belly, the

rumbling vibration of a deep purr sounding as he sank into the fluffy fur there.

When Mark let his hand go even lower, Tai's head fell back against the window as she let out a guttural moan. Mark dug his fingers in between her thighs, silky and feathery gray parting to unveil slippery wet pink. He slid over her moistened folds, teasing apart her vaginal lips and pressing into her feline pussy.

"Ah gah...," Tai gasped, unable to form coherent words through the curtain of pleasure that was draped over her mind. Her own hands fumbled on his body, claws scratching down his chest. As welcome fingers slipped inside her heated vagina, she found her target. *Still so funny even after all this time...Not a bit of fur...*

"Tai...," Mark groaned. His hips bucked slightly as he felt two velvety hands wrap around his stiff cock, squeezing his length. Tai stroked his member, slowly masturbating him as he touched her. It almost felt as if she was pulling him, drawing him in, and he found himself easing his body closer and closer to hers. He didn't need to look down to know that his penis was millimeters away from her needy sex; he could feel her heat on his bare skin. "We need each other so bad right now...I need to be inside you, and..."

Tai finished his sentence for him. "...And I need you inside me...right now...Take me to the bed, lover. Take me, claim me, possess me. It's all I want. All I've ever wanted. To be yours."

"Goddammit," Mark growled heatedly. He picked the tabby up, carrying her back to the bed and laying her down on it. For a moment he just looked down at her. She looked just as sweet and appealing as she always did. Those piercing yellow eyes of hers, framed by the cutest face that anyone could ever hope for. It was this side of Tai that Mark truly loved; the personality that she showed only to him. When all three of them were together, Tai was the wild and adventurous one. When they were alone together, Tai became a much different person, a soft, quiet, and demure companion who only wanted to be loved.

Mark climbed onto the bed, slowly sinking down on top of Tai. He leaned down to kiss her, but Tai raised a hand, pressing two fingers softly to his lips.

"Let me...," she whispered, gently pushing at him. Mark allowed himself to be nudged off of her, rolling over onto his back next to her. She placed a hand on his chest, pushing herself up and lifting a leg over his body, settling down on top of him. Mark gave a soft groan as he felt his cock rub up against her sex, wanting more than anything for it to be in her as soon as possible. Tai smiled, hunching over and kissing him. "Now, sweetie...Just you relax. We've got all night...We can take this as slow or as fast as we want."

She straightened up, leaning back and looking down at where their bodies met, almost joined

together. Mark bit his lip as she lowered a hand to his erection, curling her fingers around it and bringing the tip to her entrance. She teased him for a moment, rubbing him against herself, allowing his skin to taste her warmth and wetness. Then, mercifully, she lifted herself ever so slightly and let him slip into her. Stifling a moan, Tai slid forward, watching with wide eyes as his penis disappeared ever so slowly inside of her.

Tai leaned forward again as Mark placed his hands on her knees, rubbing up along her thighs and to her waist. Purring thunderously, she put her hands over his, lifting them up and placing them on her full breasts. As he gladly squeezed and stroked her furred orbs, she began to move her body.

They had made love many times before, but never before had Mark felt such a need, such a sheer *need* to be one with Tai as he did right now. She felt so good around him as she moved her rear up and down, her walls squeezing him tightly, gripping his shaft. Their mating felt so natural, like their parts were made to fit.

“God, Tai...I love the way you do it...,” Mark groaned, lifting his hips up to meet her, driving himself further inside of her. Tai murmured something back that he didn't catch, her voice altered by the sensations they were giving each other. As she grew wetter and wetter, the sounds of their lovemaking grew more pronounced. The subtle squishing sound every time he sank within her depths. The slick, sliding note that played whenever Tai raised her rump off of him.

The tempo of their sexual song increased as their bodies demanded, the bed rocking with the undulating motions of their bodies. Tai could feel Mark's stomach muscles tensing underneath her fingers, recognizing it as his technique for holding off. She fought back, clenching her vagina around him, making herself tighter on his cock. Nothing made her happier or got her off faster than feeling him cum inside of her. Maybe she was being greedy and selfish, and maybe it was her perverted side making itself known, but right now she wanted him to make an absolute, sinful mess inside of her body.

Grinning, she hunched over towards him until her breasts mooshed against his chest. “You know you want to...,” Tai purred, her voice taking on a singsong tone. Mark groaned, the words having precisely the desired effect on him. He shook his head as though giving a denial of what she was saying. “Oh, but you do. You really do. Because it would feel very, very good to cum inside my hot little cunny, wouldn't it?”

“Ahh, not fair. You never talk dirty...Ngh...”

Mark leaned his head back, his eyes clenching shut and the muscles in his rear bunching up. He jerked his hips up violently, nearly unseating Tai as he cut loose, firing off round after round of hot seed inside of her. Tai's claws sprang out, digging into his skin as she held on tight, her head growing light

as she felt the warmth flooding through her body. She mewled shrilly as he filled her up, grinding her hips around on his cock, now desperate to join him. The tabby pushed herself up, arching her back away from her lover as she tried to cum, too.

The human underneath her wasn't having any of that. He reached up, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her back down against him. Tai gave a whining moan, struggling to get back up. Mark held her tightly and kept her right where she was. His member still pulsing inside of her, he started thrusting roughly up into her, twisting his hips so that he rubbed against her insides just right. Tai's moans of protest turned into sounds of extreme pleasure as she started to cum. Her vagina clenched and rippled, stroking and massaging Mark's shaft and coaxing even more out of him. She meowed lovingly and leaned in to give him a deep kiss, her warm breath flowing into his mouth.

They stayed that way until their bodies finally relaxed, retreating into the warm afterglow of their mating. Tai sighed with contentment, resting her cheek against Mark's throat. He petted her back slowly, pausing every few strokes to scratch between her shoulder blades. Her body vibrated gently with a low, happy purr.

"Feel better?" Tai asked sleepily. Exhaustion was heavy in her voice.

Mark took a moment to reply. "A little bit...yeah..." he said. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I'll feel better when-"

"Shh...I know, love, I know. Sleep now. Think more in the morning..."

"Yeah...Okay..."

When Kitsune woke up, she found that she was the only one in the bed. That was no surprise, since Mark's shift started at six and Tai was always at work early. She rolled over and looked at the clock, receiving a hefty shock.

"Unh...What? Oh my god, it's four in the afternoon! How did...I've never overslept that much! I'm late for my appointment..."

Kitsune sat up in bed and swung her legs over the edge, standing up as fast as her pregnant body would allow her. When she stood up she felt light-headed, and her head was throbbing with a sudden headache. She hoped she wasn't coming down with something. Well, she was going to the doctor today after all, so nothing to worry about. Yawning, she made her way to the bedroom door, grabbing her robe on the way and wrapping it around her body. She started down the stairs, holding onto the banister for support. For some reason, she was very wobbly on her feet, and her stomach hurt a little.

Dehydrated, maybe...I need a glass of water...

She walked to the kitchen and drew a glass of water from the sink. Her head just wouldn't stop

pounding. Kitsune considered taking an aspirin, but the doctor had told her that she should avoid over-the-counter medicines if she could. Still, her head hurt so much. She took a drink of water and went back out of the kitchen. She glanced over at the staircase, and that was when she saw the blood. “Oh God...”

Kitsune looked down. Blood was trickling down her leg, staining her brown fur crimson. The water glass slipped from her fingers and shattered on the floor. A wave of nausea hit her and the pain in her stomach intensified. She grew more dizzy, and she stumbled into the living room. *The phone...I need the phone...* In her panicked state she almost couldn't remember where the telephone was kept, but she saw it on the coffee table. As she reached it, she dropped to her knees, the pain becoming almost unbearable. She grabbed the phone with a trembling hand and dialed a number, the phone feeling like it weighed a hundred pounds as she lifted it to her ear.

“9-1-1 emergency response, what is the nature of your emergency?”

Kitsune had to fight to get words to come out of her mouth. “I'm...I'm pregnant and...Please...I need an ambulance...”

“Please remain calm, ma'am. What's the address of your current location?”

“It's...Ahh...” Kitsune wrapped an arm around her stomach as a fresh wave of pain hit her. She sank to the floor, curling into a ball as she tried to think. “I can't...I can't remember...Please...help...”

“Ma'am, I need to know where to send the ambulance.....Ma'am?.....Ma'am?”

Mark yawned as he pulled his police car into the station. It wasn't particularly late in the day, just after four o'clock, but he had been working for the past three days after all. He felt worn out, and he was looking forward to getting home and enjoying some time off with Kitsune and Tai. He didn't even go inside the station after parking his cruiser; he went straight to his personal car and peeled out of the parking lot.

Twenty minutes to home, and then two straight days of bliss..., Mark thought to himself. He hummed as he drove, weaving his way through the beginnings of rush hour traffic. He managed to reach his street in less than fifteen minutes. Looking forward to what Tai would have for dinner when she got home, Mark rounded the bend that led to his house.

As soon as he got around the bend, he knew that something was wrong. Mark had seen a police car on his street before, but he hadn't ever seen three at the same time. His heart started to beat quickly as he he approached his driveway. When he went to turn in, he saw the ambulance blocking his path.

“Oh, damn...,” Mark breathed. There was a police officer standing at his door, which was wide open. All sorts of thoughts were flashing through his head, none of them good. Mark parked his car on

the street and jumped out, barely remembering to turn it off and shut the door before running towards the house.

The officer at the door didn't do anything to stop him. Mark was still in his uniform and probably just looked like any other officer going about his business. When he got inside, he saw EMTs gathered in the living room, kneeling and standing over something that he couldn't see. He moved a little closer, and then saw exactly what they were doing.

“Kat!? Oh, God, what happened?” The paramedics looked up in shock. Mark rushed at them, shoving one of them out of the way and kneeling beside the tigress' motionless form. He looked for any sign of life, but couldn't see one. “Kat? Come on, Kat, say something to me!”

Strong hands grabbed his shoulders and pulled him back, yanking him away and dragging him across the floor. The paramedic he'd shoved rushed back to his place. Suddenly furious, Mark looked up at whoever had dared to pull him away from his love. He saw the face of a fellow police officer, a sergeant from another precinct who Mark was familiar with.

“Jackson, what the hell are you doing?” the sergeant asked, pulling him up to his feet roughly by his arms. “You can't just get in the way of the medics like that! That girl needs help!”

“Sarge, you don't understand!” Mark growled, still angry. “This is my house! That's my girl!” He looked back to Kitsune. The paramedics were bringing a stretcher in and lifting her onto it. Mark could see the blood on the floor, and his heart started throbbing up in his throat.

“What?” the sergeant said, his face registering surprise. He looked to the stretcher that was being wheeled out of the door, then back at Mark, and then back to the door. “Shit. Okay, follow me.” He grabbed Mark by the arm and pulled him outside. In front of the house, the ambulance was just starting to pull away, maneuvering around the police cars. “Damn, missed it. Come on.”

The sergeant ran down the front lawn, Mark following close on his heels. They got to his patrol car and the sergeant jumped in the driver's seat. Before he could give Mark permission, Mark was in the passenger's seat. A quick flick of a switch turned on the lights and siren, and they were off, pursuing the ambulance as it screamed off towards the hospital.

It was nearly an hour later that Tai ran into the hospital waiting room, almost breathless after having rushed from work. The phone call from Mark had been so frantic that she had barely been able to understand what he was saying. All she had been able to decipher was that something was wrong with Kitsune, and the name of the hospital that Mark was waiting at. The tabby came in, looking around for a familiar face. The room was about half full, and after several seconds of searching she spotted Mark in a corner, leaning back in a chair, looking pale.

“Mark!” she almost yelled, rushing over to him and sitting in the chair next to him. “What's going on? You called and I could barely understand what you were saying! What's...Is something wrong with Kat?”

It took Mark a few seconds to answer her. He swallowed several times, trying to work enough moisture into his mouth to respond. “Tai, I...I got home today and there was an ambulance at the house.” He looked up at the tabby. “Kat...Something happened to her today. The doctor's already been out to speak to me.”

Tai laid a hand on his arm, feeling a slowly growing sense of dread. “So...So what happened?”

“I don't know,” Mark said, leaning forward in his seat and looking at the floor. “I couldn't understand it. Something about her blood pressure spiking, and she had a seizure. The doctor said something about a hemorrhage...But it's bad.”

“Oh-,” Tai croaked, covering her mouth with one hand and clutching her face.

“They just...I don't know...They told me it all depends on the next twelve hours or so.” Mark slumped back again. “The doctor had to force me out of the room. I think I was getting in the way...He told me to go home...He'd call me if anything happened...”

Tai slowly lowered her hand from her face, watching Mark completely deflate. She opened her mouth, taking in a breath as though to speak, but then closing it again. The tabby remained quiet for several minutes, trying to process everything that Mark had told her. Finally she opened her mouth to speak once more, taking on a soft, soothing tone. “Maybe we should just go home, then...”

“What?”

“I mean if there's nothing we can do, then there's nothing to be done,” Tai continued, rubbing his shoulder. “If the doctor will call, then there's no need for you to worry yourself sick at the hospital. We'll go home, I'll make some dinner, and you get some rest. You're worn out, love. I can see it on your face...”

“But I...”

Mark looked at Tai, and then towards the double doors on the other side of the waiting room that led to the intensive care rooms. His face went blank, and without really realizing what he was doing he stood up from his chair. Without a backwards glance he started walking for the exit, leaving Tai staring dumbfounded after him.

A sharp ringing jolted Mark out of his deep sleep, making him sit bolt upright in bed. He looked around wildly, vaguely seeing the early morning light coming in through the window, before he realized that the noise was that of the telephone. Mark threw himself out of bed, barely mindful that Tai

herself was roused awake by his motions. He grabbed for the telephone, lifting it to his ear.

“Hello!?”

He listened for several moments, Tai now sitting up and looking at him, her eyes as wide as saucers. Her expression was questioning and tense, but a wave of the hand from Mark forestalled any questions.

“Yes...Is she.....Right now!?” Mark started for the closet, throwing it open and grabbing clothes one-handed, tossing them towards the bed. “Yes...Yes, I'm leaving right now!” He hung the phone up. “Tai, get dressed. We have to leave right now!”

“I don't understand,” Tai said, still a little groggy. “What's going on? Who was that on the phone?”

“The hospital,” Mark said. He started pulling clothes on as fast as he could, looking over his shoulder. “It's happening.”

The drive back to the hospital was fur-raising for Tai. Mark drove his little Honda as fast as the engine could carry it, tooling through the San Francisco streets at speeds approaching ninety miles an hour. Fortunately, the early hour ensured that few other vehicles were on the road. Regardless, there were a few close calls that made Tai cover her face with both hands and made Mark slow down for a scarce few seconds before speeding up again.

Soon they arrived at the hospital, and Mark parked his car directly in front of the main doors, dashing inside with Tai in close pursuit. Nobody else seemed to be in the waiting room; it wasn't yet the official opening time. Mark looked around for a second, seeing nobody waiting at the front desk, so he continued through the waiting room and through the doors that led to the intensive care ward. Behind those doors, the level of activity was a bit higher than that in the front of the building. There was a good deal of talking and several nurses were bustling about, barking orders to one another.

“Out of the way, please...”

“We're going to need a unit of blood in there, she's-...”

“...too much. Get the doctor down here straight away...”

Mark and Tai followed the hustle and bustle to the central area where it seemed to be congregating: a single hospital room. The door was open, and a large observation window was clear next to the door. Through those, the pair could look inside to see what was going on within. There, on the hospital bed, surrounded by several nurses, was Kitsune. She was awake, lying on her back, and from what they could see of her face she looked as though she was in intense pain. Her face was screwed up, and every few seconds her body gave a jerk as a fresh burst of pain hit her. Two of the

nurses had her by the arms, holding her down on the bed so that she didn't pitch off of it.

"Kat!" Mark yelled, coming around to go through the door. He'd almost made it through when someone grabbed him, keeping him from entering. He struggled against whoever was holding him, but a second pair of hands took hold of him, dragging him back from the door and a little down the hall. "Let go! I need to be in there, I have to!"

He looked to Tai, and she was similarly being pulled back by a hospital guard. Mark looked at the pair of guards who were dragging him, furious that he was being kept away. He was mere seconds away from kicking at them when a doctor came down the hall, heading straight for them.

"Sir," the doctor said. "I need you to calm down. Guys, let go of him for a minute."

The guards, somewhat reluctantly, let go of Mark. The doctor stood before him for a second, looking at Tai until she was let go as well. Tai went to Mark's side, standing next to him, gazing at the doctor expectantly.

"I know what you're going through right now, and I know it isn't easy," the doctor said. "We're doing everything we can to get Ms. Migoto through this, but we can't work if you get in the way." He held up a hand as Mark looked about to protest. "I assure you, she *is* going to be alright. If I have anything to say about it, that is. What I need you to do is go out and wait. It won't be long, and someone will come for you as soon as you can see her. I swear. Now please let me do my job, sir."

With that, the doctor turned around and rushed back down the hall, going into Kitsune's room. Mark and Tai stood there for several minutes, staring after him as though something would happen. But beyond the continued coming and going of hospital staff, nothing did. Finally, Mark took Tai by the hand and they walked together back out of the ward.

An hour or so later, a nurse came out of the double doors and walked across the waiting room to where Mark and Tai sat. She stood before them, a wide smile on her face.

"If you'll come with me, you can see her now," the nurse said.

Mark and Tai immediately rose from their chairs, following the nurse back into the ward. The area was much quieter now, and the staff members who caught sight of the human and the tabby would offer up little smiles that gave them reason to hope. The nurse led them back to Kitsune's room, stopping beside the door which was now closed, the curtain drawn on the observation window.

"She's just inside, sir, resting," the nurse said. "You may go in and see her if you wish. Oh, miss?" The nurse plucked at Tai's elbow, stopping her from going in. "I need you to come with me, if you would? You can come back in just a moment."

Tai looked at Mark, a little confused. Mark didn't know what was going on, either, but he gave

her an encouraging nod. "Go ahead, Tai. I'll be right here." Smiling and nodding back, Tai went with the nurse. Mark took a deep breath and grabbed the doorknob, turning it and pushing the door open.

Kitsune was lying in the hospital bed as she had been before, her head resting on a pillow and her eyes closed. Her tawny hair drawn back in a ponytail, doubtless by one of the nurses to keep it out of the way. The bed seemed to have fresh sheets on it, and she looked as peaceful as though the last few days had not happened at all. A chair was near the foot of the bed, and Mark drew it over beside it, sitting down so that he was near her head. After looking at her for a few minutes, Mark placed his hand near her face, stroking her cheek gently until she gradually came awake. Her jade eyes opened slowly and she turned them towards him, her face coming alight as she saw him.

"Mark...oh, Mark...", she mumbled. The tigresses eyes began to shine as they grew watery. "Oh, love...I'm so sorry...You and Tai must have been so worried..."

Mark could barely believe what he was hearing. "You're apologizing to *me*?" he said. He leaned forward, putting an arm around her and hugging her as best as he could. "Kat, I should be apologizing to *you*...I left you all alone when you needed me."

Kitsune's arms came around his neck, holding his forehead close against hers. They kept silent for a while, just holding each other, thankful that they were together again. After a bit, Mark straightened up again, although he held her hand tightly.

"How are you feeling?"

"Tired...", Kitsune said. "Weak...And pretty sore...I can't remember much of the last day...And I don't think I've ever been more thankful for drugs than right now..." She laughed weakly. "Where's Tai? I thought she would be with you."

"She is, I mean she was," Mark said. "One of the nurses took her, said she was needed elsewhere for a bit. I don't know-..." He paused as a soft knock came at the door. Both of them looked over. "Ah...Come in?"

The door opened, and the nurse from before came in. She seemed to be fighting to keep a grin off of her face. "There is someone here who would like to see you."

Tai walked inside the room. Her face was split with a wide smile, and yet the fur on her cheeks seemed to be streaked with tears. She was carrying some small bundle of a blanket, cradling it with the utmost of care. The tabby came to the bed, sitting down on the edge near Mark and Kitsune. "Kat, love, I...you..." Her voice choked up, and she was trying to speak again when a sharp, shrill mewl sounded. Without another word, Tai handed the bundle to Kitsune, who took it from her.

"Oh-...", Kitsune said, tears starting to pour down her face. Mark leaned closer to her, looking down at what she held in her arms. Nestled in the soft white fabric was the smallest little thing that

Mark had ever seen. A kitten, gray-furred with dark tiger stripes across her little face. Her eyes were still closed, but her mouth was open, small mewling cries issuing forth as her head turned from side to side. Kitsune lifted the kitten, touching her nose to her face and nuzzling her cheek. The kitten's nose twitched and her crying quieted as she sensed the presence of her mother. "Oh, Mark, just look at her...She's beautiful...Our daughter..."

Mark touched a finger to the kitten's face, stroking the downy-soft fur. "She sure is." He felt a lump in his throat, emotion threatening to overwhelm him. "You did it, Kat. She's perfect."

The nurse cleared her throat softly. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'll need to have the birth certificate drawn up. Had you thought of a name before now?"

"Oh...", Kitsune said, tearing her gaze away from the kitten, who was now nuzzling at the front of her hospital gown. "No...I'm afraid we hadn't..." She looked at Mark for a few seconds, and then looked at Tai. The gray tabby was looking down at the kitten, an odd expression of longing on her face. "Tai...What do you think?"

Tai looked up at them both, surprise evident on her face. "M-Me? But...she's your daughter, Kat. I don't..."

"She's your daughter, too, Tai," Mark said, smiling at her. "We're a family. And I bet you can come up with the perfect name for her."

Tai looked touched beyond words. "Well...Well, I'll try..." She was quiet for several minutes, thinking intensely. She gazed at the infant, stroking her cheek with a single finger as Kitsune cradled her. "Well...I don't know what you think, but I've always thought that Nina was a nice name for a girl." She looked back up at Kitsune and Mark, seeking approval.

"Nina...", Kitsune said. She kissed the kitten on the cheek. "I think so, Mark, yes?" Mark simply nodded, kissing Kitsune's cheek in turn.

The nurse smiled. "Nina, then. What a lovely name. I'll go let the staff in the Records Department know." She left the room, leaving the family alone.

Mark sighed, leaning back in his chair. Kitsune rocked Nina happily, purring softly. Tai rose from the bedside, going to Mark and sitting in his lap, placing her arms about his neck and resting her head on his shoulder. "So, another addition to the family. We seem to be growing nicely, hm?"

"Mmhm," Tai purred. She looked up at Mark, a cheeky grin coming to her face. "So, when do I get mine, lover?"

"Eh...What?"

"You heard me. Kat gets a kitten, but what about me? When are you going to knock me up, huh?"

Mark gave her a bemused expression. “Well, it's certainly not for lack of trying, is it? Can't we wait a little while before going through all this again?” He looked between Tai and Kitsune, and noted the devilish looks they were giving him. He finally smiled. “Oh, fine...It is my day off, after all. Guess I have nothing better to do...”

“We must not deprive those whom we love. Or even those to whom we are married.”

-Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Blue Carbuncle*