

Mother's Visit
by Havoc

“The great gift of family life is to be intimately acquainted with people you might never even introduce yourself to, had life not done it for you.”

- Kendall Hailey

Few things can be as confusing as a bustling airport in the middle of the day. When that airport is San Francisco International Airport, the confusion can be even greater. One of the largest airports in California, and certainly in the United States, hundreds of airplanes flew in and out every day, carrying thousands of passengers to and from locations all over the world. A bustling crowd of humans and furs was constantly walking about, boarding and departing planes and conducting other business within the airport.

Sergeant Mark Jackson, San Francisco Police, kept a tight hold on his daughter's hand. Getting lost in a place as large as this would be an ordeal, and he was as protective as any father would be. The seven-year-old gray tiger kitten's hand was tiny in his, though she was growing like a weed every day. It seemed like only yesterday that she had been born...What a crazy day that had been. Today would probably be just as busy, but thankfully Mark wasn't on duty. He had a few weeks off of work, and he was grateful for it. Summers were the busiest times of the year at the police department.

“Where's grandma?” the little girl asked, looking up at Mark with those huge, sapphire-blue eyes of hers. “Isn't she coming?”

Standing on the other side of Mark, his wife reached behind him to pat the kitten on the head. “Be patient, Nina, darling,” Kitsune said. The brown-furred tigress smiled, looking out the windows of the airport as planes moved about on the runways. She brushed a lock of tawny hair from in front of her eyes, the silver wedding band on her hand catching a sparkle of light. “Your grandmother will be here.” She scratched at the kitten's ears once more and then hooked her arm around her human husband's waist.

“Mmmhm, looks like her flight is still on time,” yet another voice said. Mark glanced over at the gray tabby female who was standing a few feet away, reading the scrolling arrival/departure chart on the wall. The curvy lass was dressed just as provocatively as she always did when she wasn't working, a slinky white sundress hugging her body. She had a similar ring to Kitsune's on her finger. Her name was Tai, and she was Mark's second wife, completing his and Kitsune's unusual family. Cradled in the crook of one of her arms was another kitten with sable fur, barely one-and-a-half years old, whose name was Aiden, and an older black kitten stood next to her with her little palm firmly

clasped in her free hand, Mark and Tai's three-year-old daughter, Lily.

And in a development that had made Mark's head spin when he'd found out two months ago, she was almost imperceptibly pregnant with a third child. If the doctors were correct, that one would be another daughter. That one had been unplanned, but they couldn't do anything about it now and wouldn't have wanted to, anyway. After Aiden had been born, they'd all decided that large families weren't so bad after all.

"Yes, she ought to be landing right about now," Mark agreed. He squeezed Nina's hand a little. "You're excited to meet your grandmother, aren't you Nina?" He chuckled as she nodded her head with that rambunctious enthusiasm that all children seemed to have. None of the children had met their grandmother, Anastasia, in person before since she lived across the country in North Carolina. Strictly speaking, Aiden and Lily weren't her grandchildren at all, since she was Kitsune's mother and not related to Tai, but things worked a little differently as far as feline families were concerned, even feline families headed by a human like Mark.

Kitsune pointed out the window. "I think that's her plane, right there." Sure enough, a large jetliner was making its way off the runway, moving towards the building and pulling up to the terminal directly in front of where the family was waiting.

Mark felt a tremor of anxiety in his stomach. While Anastasia liked him very much, she was still an intimidating woman. A pure-blooded tigress born in Russia, the woman had an air of royalty about her and knew it, and made no attempts to hide it. Mark's mother-in-law was an influential lawyer back in North Carolina, and his first run-in with her had been before he'd met her for the first time as Kitsune's mother. Mark had pulled her over for speeding, back when he'd worked in Raleigh, and had even given her a ticket. Luckily for him, she bore no ill will over the incident and had even apologized to him for the way she'd treated him at the time afterward...though she had taken it to court and gotten the citation dismissed. That was just the way she was.

"Alright, well, everyone gather together now," Mark said. He ruffled the top of Nina's head and gestured to Tai, who walked over with Aiden and Lily. "Make sure we're all together so she sees us right away." Kitsune rested her head on Mark's shoulder, trying to be her usual serene self, but Mark could feel her shaking as she tapped her foot impatiently. She hadn't seen her mother in over seven years, ever since they moved to California, and she was anxious. Mark put his arm around her shoulder and squeezed it.

Before long, the door to the terminal opened and a couple of flight attendants walked out, taking positions next to the exit door. They were followed by a stream of people as passengers began disembarking the plane. Most of them looked like business travelers, obviously first-class in their

expensive suits and light luggage, but a couple well-to-do tourists were mixed in among them. Kitsune scanned the crowd anxiously, looking for her mother in the throng of people. Mark spotted her first, just as the first-class disembarking was about to end. He waved to her, and the elder tigress spotted him immediately, raising a hand in return and heading their way.

Anastasia Migoto was just as regal a figure as ever, even at nearly sixty years old. She looked easily ten years younger than that, and cut quite an attractive image as she weaved her way around the other passengers. Mark's mother-in-law was dressed smartly but casually, wearing a knee-length black skirt and a slightly off-white blouse with a light-fabric black jacket, all of which clashed rather fashionably with her golden-orange fur. She was tall and slender, of ample bust, and she knew exactly how gorgeous she was; it was what made her such an effective lawyer, as she wasn't above using her feminine wiles to disarm opponents in the courtroom. Laden down with her purse, a small carry-on bag, and a rolling suitcase, all well-used, she reached the family.

"Mother!" Kitsune exclaimed happily, stepping forward and embracing her warmly. She looked overjoyed to hug her mother. "It's so good to see you! It's been so long."

"Hello, Kat!" Anastasia replied, dropping one of her bags to hug her back. She had a light Russian accent that over forty years of living in the United States still hadn't managed to completely erase. "My, my, it's been far too long, indeed. How is everything?"

"Wonderful, just perfect!"

Anastasia released her daughter, looking past her to Tai. "And, Tai, darling, how have you been? You look well...And, goodness me, pregnant again already?"

Tai beamed, glancing at Mark fondly. "Mmhm," she said. "It's good to see you, Anastasia."

"Please, dear, I've told you before," Anastasia said, her tone playfully admonishing. "It's 'mother' to you. We're a family, after all. Or if you simply *must* call me something else, call me Tasya." She smiled at the tabby. Anastasia knew that the housecat breeds were the lower class in feline society, but she'd never shown any such feelings towards Tai. To the tigress, Tai had always been a second daughter, even before she'd met Mark when she'd just been Kitsune's best friend at school.

"Grandma!" Nina pulled away from her father's side, running forward on her short legs.

"Oh!" Anastasia stepped aside from Kitsune, dropping to her knees and holding her arms out to the tiger kitten. Nina practically launched herself into her grandmother's arms, clinging to her with childish enthusiasm. The force of her hug rocked Anastasia back. "Goodness, you're a big girl, aren't you? It's so good to finally meet you in person, sweetheart." The elder tigress waved her tail happily as she held her granddaughter for the first time. "I have a present for you, you know."

"Really?" Nina asked, leaning back from her with her eyes wide open, excited. "What is it? Let

me see!”

“Ah, ah, ah,” Anastasia said, teasingly tapping her on the tip of her pink nose with one finger. “You’ll have to wait until we get to your house. Patience is a virtue, little one.”

“What does ‘virtue’ mean?”

Anastasia laughed, rubbing the top of Nina’s head. Then her gaze went past the kitten, looking towards Tai again. “And who’s that hiding there?”

Mark followed her gaze. Clutching her mother’s dress tightly, Lily was peeking out from behind Tai’s legs. The black kitten was acting very shy, and Mark remembered that she’d only ever seen pictures of her grandmother, whereas Nina had spoken with her on the phone many times. Smiling at his younger daughter, Mark stepped over and reached down to put a hand on her back, coaxing her out from her hiding place.

“That’s your grandmother, Lily,” he said gently to her. “Don’t be shy. Say hello and give her a hug.”

The little kitten looked up fearfully at him, but she allowed herself to be pushed gradually towards Anastasia. The tigress waited patiently for her until the three-year-old was standing next to Nina, and then she reached for her. Lily mewled a little as Anastasia gave her a gentle hug with one arm. Anastasia touched the underside of her chin with her other hand, rubbing a little there.

“Hello, child,” she said, speaking very quietly to the fearful kitten. “You have nothing to be afraid of from me.” She squeezed her a little tighter, her eyes sparkling as she looked at Lily. “I have a present for you, too, just like I do for your sister.”

“Present?” Lily said in her small voice. She was a much quieter child than Nina. Finally she put her arms around Anastasia’s neck, hugging her. While she still looked uncertain, she seemed less fearful than a few moments before.

“That’s right,” her grandmother said, laughing a little. *Kids*, she mouthed at Mark. “And that must be little Aiden,” she continued, looking at the kitten in Tai’s arms. “Such a big family, already. I see my girls have kept you busy, Mark.”

“Ah heh...,” Mark said, reddening a little and rubbing the back of his neck. “Yeah, I guess they have, Mrs. Migoto.”

“Tasya, dear, it’s Tasya. I swear, you’re just as bad as Tai. How many times must I tell you?”

“At least a few more,” Mark said, smiling sheepishly. He stepped forward. “Here, let me get your bags.”

“Oh, thank you, dear!” Anastasia said. She straightened up, holding Lily’s hand in one of hers and Nina’s in the other. “We’ll just need to pop by the baggage claim. I have a few more I need to pick

up before we leave.”

“A few more?” Tai asked, blinking in surprise. She giggled, shifting Aiden to her other arm. “You must have packed your entire closet. You’re only here for a week, you know.”

“Yes, well...yes,” Anastasia said. Her expression remained easy, but Kitsune and Mark both thought they saw her smile become just a bit more fixed. “You never know when a few extra changes of clothes will come in handy, dear. Always be prepared, that’s my motto.”

“Right,” Mark said. He picked up the smaller of Anastasia’s bags. As he reached for the rolling suitcase, he caught a glimpse of the name tag on it. In typed, script letters the name on the tag read *Anastasia Volkov*. He looked at Anastasia, but she was talking to Kitsune and Tai and didn’t notice. He knew that “Volkov” was Anastasia’s maiden name, so why would she have that on her luggage instead of her married name?

Well, he thought, her luggage is pretty old. She’s probably had it for a while. Maybe she had it since before she got married, and she just hasn’t bothered to make a new nametag. It is just a nametag, after all...easy to forget. Mark shrugged it off, following the rest of his family as they walked off towards the baggage claim.

Later that evening, after dinner was cleared away, Mark, Kitsune, and Tai sat in the living room of their home with Anastasia. All of them except for Tai were sipping wine; since she was pregnant, she couldn’t have any alcohol. After seven years apart with phone calls being about the only form of communication between them, it was nice to be able to sit down together as a family. While they talked, Tai was nursing Aiden. Nina and Lily were playing together on the floor.

“So, mom,” Kitsune said, taking a sip from her glass of wine. “How’s everything with the firm back home? Doing good business?”

“Oh, yes!” Anastasia said. She was sitting on the couch, her legs drawn up beneath her as she leaned against the armrest. “We’re doing quite well, in fact. Do you know we’re expanding? We opened up an office in Chicago two years ago, and we’re opening another in Sacramento later this month.”

“Really?” Kitsune looked surprised. “I knew about the office in Chicago, but I had no idea your firm was doing that well. California will open up a whole bunch of business for you guys.”

Anastasia nodded, smiling. “Indeed. I’m very excited about it.” She swirled the wine in her glass. “And how has your own work been going? When are you going to go into practice for yourself?”

“Oh, I think I’m a little ways away from that...” Kitsune played with a lock of her tawny hair. “I’ve spent a lot longer with the District Attorney’s office than I thought I would, but I kind of like it. I feel like staying there for a while.”

“Stay there as long as you like,” Mark said, grinning. He looked at Anastasia and winked. “Much better to be putting criminals away than letting them run free, am I right?”

“Oooh, you play rough, Sergeant,” Anastasia purred. “You know as well as I do that innocent people get arrested, too. That’s my job, to make sure the prosecution side of things does their jobs correctly.” She leaned forward. “After all, if my clients are truly guilty, nothing I do ought to get them off, so long as you all have done your duty.”

“Heh...Whatever you say.”

“And how’s your husband doing?” Tai chimed in. Aiden made a small crying noise, and she shushed him, brushing her hand over his furry ears.

“Yes, how is father?” Kitsune said, settling further into her chair. She was tired, and the wine was mellowing her out even more. The brown tigress was giving Mark little playful looks every few moments, most of which he was catching, and all of which told him that he was probably getting laid tonight. “It’s too bad he couldn’t make it for this visit.”

“Ah...yes...your father...” Anastasia contemplated her glass for a minute or two, and then she drained the rest of her drink. She slid her legs off of the couch, setting the empty glass on a coffee table. “About your father...”

Kitsune sat up a little, worry crossing her face. “Is he alright? Nothing happened to him, did it?”

“Oh...No, no...He’s fine.” Anastasia shifted uncomfortably in her seat, and she held up her hand. For the first time, Mark noticed the absence of any rings on her fingers. He knew what she was about to say even before she said it. “We just got a divorce.”

Silence descended on the room, except for the sounds of Nina and Lily playing. Everyone was staring at Anastasia, dumbfounded by the news that had just come out of her mouth. Mark was shocked by the knowledge of the divorce. When he’d first met Kitsune’s parents back in North Carolina, they’d seemed like such a perfect couple. To think that they could have split up threw his mind for a loop.

“You *what!*?” Kitsune shouted. She stood up from her seat so quickly that she dropped her wineglass, and it broke into several pieces on the living room floor.

“Mommy?” Nina said, looking up from where she was sitting, scared and confused by her mother’s outburst.

“Nina, take your sister and go upstairs,” Kitsune said. Nina looked between the adults in the room, hesitating. “*Now, Nina!*” Almost crying now, Nina got up from the floor and grabbed Lily’s hand, pulling her sister up and beating a hasty retreat up the stairs.

“Kat, dear, you didn’t have to yell at the children like that,” Anastasia said calmly.

“When did this happen!?”

Anastasia gave a helpless little shrug, looking away from her daughter. "About six months ago. You knew we were having a rough patch, Kat."

"Yes, but I didn't know it had gone *that* far!" Kitsune exclaimed, throwing her arms up in exasperation. "Why didn't you tell me about this?"

Her mother bristled at that question. "I don't have to discuss every little aspect of my life with you, young lady. I'll remind you that I'm your mother, and I am not a child!" She smoothed her blouse, taking a moment to calm herself down. "Your father and I did not arrive at this decision lightly. We've been discussing it for a few years now."

Kitsune flopped back in her seat, seeming suddenly exhausted. "But why? You and father loved each other, very much. You never fought, never argued too much. I just don't understand..."

"Kat, dear, your father and I still care about each other very much," Anastasia said. "This has nothing to do with us not liking one another. We've just grown apart over the past few years, and we decided this was best for both of us." She brushed a finger back through her hair. "There are other reasons, too, but they're personal."

With nothing else that she could think of to say, Kitsune just bent over and started cleaning up the mess she'd created by dropping her glass. This was an awful lot for her to take in. Her mother and father had been married for almost thirty-five years, and now all that was over. It was like part of her own life had suddenly disappeared and she didn't know what to do. So she just cleaned up, avoiding her mother's eyes and trying not to cry.

While Kitsune busied herself, Tai rested Aiden on her lap and buttoned her shirt back up. "So...What are you going to do now, An-...mother?"

"Well, I was actually glad when you invited me to come visit. I already told you the firm is opening up an office in Sacramento? I'm going to be in charge of it. So I figured I might as well just go ahead and make the move." She fumbled with her hands in her lap. "I hate to ask, but I was hoping I could stay with you until I found a place of my own. It might be a while. I know real estate is at a premium right now out here..."

"You don't need to do that," Mark said. "You can stay with us. We've got a spare room. Right Kat, Tai?"

Tai nodded immediately, but Kitsune didn't respond. She'd scooped up all the glass and was in the kitchen throwing it away. She seemed very involved in this task, and didn't look up.

"Oh, no no no, dear...", Anastasia protested. "That's not necessary. You're a young, productive..." She winked at Mark, making him blush again. "...family, and you need your privacy. If I can just impose on you until I find my own place, that will be just fine."

Everybody came to the decision soon after that it was time to go to bed. Kitsune went upstairs to get ready to sleep, while Tai went to put Aiden to sleep in his room. After Mark showed Anastasia to the guest bedroom on the first floor, he went upstairs to the room that Nina and Lily shared. When he got there, both girls were already dressed for bed. Clearly Tai had made a quick stop at their room before heading to Aiden's. The girls' bedroom was actually supposed to be the master bedroom, but they had it because they had to put two beds in there. Nina and Lily had room to spare, which was lucky for two playful kittens.

Mark went to Lily's bed first, helping her up onto it and tucking her into the covers. Sometimes the little black kitten asked for a bedtime story, but this time she seemed like she just wanted to sleep. Mark couldn't blame her. Between going to the airport and spending the rest of the day visiting with her grandmother, it had been a long afternoon for the three-year-old. He gave her a kiss on the cheek, and then moved over to Nina's bed.

The gray-furred tiger kitten didn't want to go to bed right away. She sat on the edge of her bed, and looked up at her father with wide eyes. "Daddy, why was mommy angry?" she asked him. Her ears and tail were drooping. "Did I do something wrong?" The way she was looking at Mark nearly broke his heart.

"No, sweetheart," Mark said. He sat down on the bed next to Nina, putting his arm around her. "You didn't do anything at all. Your mother got upset because of some news your grandmother told her."

"What was it?"

Mark struggled with thinking of what to say to his daughter, but he decided that the truth was probably the best. "Well, your grandmother and grandfather got something called a divorce a little while ago."

Nina looked confused. "What's a 'divorce'?"

"...Well..." Mark sighed, picking Nina up and pulling her onto his lap. "You know how I'm married to your mother and Tai, right? A divorce is when people decide that they don't want to be married anymore."

"Why didn't they want to be married anymore?"

"I don't know, sweetheart. That's something your grandmother didn't really get specific about. I guess they both just decided it was the best thing for them."

"Oh..." Nina was quiet for a minute, and then she looked up at her father's face. Her lower lip was trembling. "You're... You're not gonna get a divorce, are you, Daddy?"

“Oh, sweetheart...” Mark wrapped Nina up in his arms, hugging her as tight as he could. “Absolutely not. I love you and your sister and your brother too much to do anything like that. I love our family, and I want us to be a family forever.” He let her go, and wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. “And more than anything else, I love your mothers. So don't you worry, alright?”

Nina smiled at him, sniffing a little. “Okay.” Mark stood up, plopping Nina on her bed and getting her under the covers. He tucked her in, gave her a kiss, and then turned out the light. As he left their bedroom, Tai was there waiting for him.

“Eavesdropping?” Mark asked her, once the door was closed.

“Mmhm...I heard the whole thing,” Tai said. She put her hands on his shoulders, standing up on her tiptoes and kissing him firmly on the lips. “Have I ever told you what a good father you are, and how much I love you?”

“I would hope you do,” Mark replied, hugging her curvy body, “since two and one-third of my kids are yours.” He gave her another kiss back. “Ready for bed?”

“Just let me say goodnight to the girls, and I'll be right there.” Tai opened Nina's and Lily's bedroom door, slipping inside.

Smiling to himself, Mark walked down the hall to the bedroom he shared with Kitsune and Tai. Walking inside, he saw that Kitsune was already in bed with a book propped up between her knees. Mark went to the closet and started getting undressed. After a few minutes, he realized he wasn't hearing the sound of any pages turning. A little troubled by the silence in the room, he quickly finished and then went over to the bed, climbing in under the covers next to his first wife. Glancing over at her, about to say something, he was alarmed to see tears pouring down her face as she cried silently.

“Kitten, what...,” Mark gasped. He twisted over towards her, putting his arms around her and pulling her close. She melted against him, breaking down and sobbing pitifully. Completely taken aback, Mark could do little else besides hold her and rub her back. He wasn't used to Kitsune losing control of herself like this. For a long time she just cried.

“I just...I don't understand,” Kitsune said, when finally she could manage to speak. “I don't understand why they had to do this. I thought everything was fine with them...”

“I know,” Mark said, holding her tight. “I thought so, too. I know this is hard for you.”

The tigress leaned back, wiping her face with the back of her hand. “It's worse than hard. It's like...I don't even know how to respond to it. My mother and father are the most important people in my life, and now it's like I'm losing them.”

“I wouldn't go that far. At least your parents are on speaking terms with you.” Mark swallowed, his own throat tightening. “I still haven't spoken with my parents in years. You remember they even

returned the wedding invitation. They've pretty much disowned me at this point.”

Kitsune took his hand, squeezing it. “I'm sorry. I always forget about that.” She managed a little smile. “You must think I'm a wimp, compared to what you've been through.”

“Well...maybe a little.”

Kitsune laughed, sniffing and wiping her eyes a little more. She leaned against Mark, resting the side of her head against his shoulder. “I can be as wimpy as I want, I guess. So long as I have you, love.”

“And don't forget me,” Tai said, settling down on the bed on Mark's other side. Neither of them had heard her come in.

“Never,” Kitsune assured her. She leaned across Mark, giving the gray tabby a tender kiss on the cheek. Her tail swept across as well, twisting around Tai's underneath the sheets.

“Is that all I get?” Tai asked, pouting.

“Oh, you want more?”

“Mm, if you're up to it. We could even let Mark join in...”

Just relieved that Kitsune was cheering up, he put a hand across his forehead in surrender. “You'll get no arguments from me if all I get to do is watch. Though I hope you wouldn't be that cruel.” The devilish looks on his wives' faces gave him all the answer he needed.

Over the next week, Kitsune spent time with her mother, talking and catching up. She also made it a point to give her father a call to talk to him about the divorce as well. Her father seemed more willing to share details than her mother had been, and through speaking with both of them she began to understand better why the divorce had happened. Kitsune was relieved to have it confirmed to her that the divorce had not been one of animosity. Her father explained to her that the two of them were still very much on good terms with each other, but that they had just lost the attraction that had drawn them together when they were younger. Kitsune took this to mean, though neither her mother or father would say it outright, that the intimate relationship had been over for some time, and that this had been the main factor behind the divorce.

Kitsune confided in Mark that knowing that made it somehow easier to accept that her parents were no longer married. While she stopped short of saying that she might react the same way were she presented with a similar situation, she could understand how her parents had arrived at their decision.

Anastasia's visit became much more genial after that, once the family business had been handled and Kitsune was over her initial shock.

Anastasia had been in California for nearly two weeks, and she was still having trouble finding an apartment that she was satisfied enough with to rent. Mark, Kitsune, and Tai were starting to come to the end of the period they'd taken off of work for the visit, and she was getting a little anxious. She felt like if she wasn't moved out by the time they all went back to work, she'd feel like even more of a moocher when the house was empty and she was still staying there, especially since her law office wasn't opening for business for another month. The rest of the family assured her that they didn't care if she spent more time staying with them, but she was steadfastly insistent that she would have her own place to stay before the vacation was up.

One day, Mark was home alone except for the baby, Aiden. Kitsune and Tai had taken Nina and Lily to a park on the other side of the city for the afternoon, and Anastasia had begged off joining them in favor of visiting a few uptown apartments. While they were all gone, Mark was catching up on some much-needed TV time in the main living room, with Aiden nearby in a small crib playing with a small toy. He realized that, owing to his large family, it had been a long time since he'd had a chance to just sit by himself and relax. He hadn't known how much he'd needed a quiet house and some time on his own.

The human was drifting in and out on the couch, even, when he was jolted out of his drowsy reverie by the front door opening. Groggy, he was about to jump up and make a dash for the closet to grab his service weapon when he realized that it was just Anastasia coming in. Sitting up, Mark rubbed his face.

“Ah...Tasya...,” Mark mumbled. “What are you doing back so soon?”

Anastasia stood in the foyer, looking at him with an amused expression on her face. The Russian tigress was resplendent as always in her elegant semi-formal style of dress. “So soon? You should look at a clock.”

Confused, Mark glanced at his watch. He was surprised to see that it was already nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. Apparently he'd been more deeply asleep than he'd realized. “Well...Huh...I guess I really needed a nap.” Yawning, Mark stretched, feeling his back pop. “Any luck with your apartment hunt?”

“Yes, actually,” Tasya said. She shuffled off her jacket, draping it over a chair in the living room and unbuttoning the top button of her blouse. “There was a rather nice penthouse uptown that I liked. Only fifteen hundred square feet, but it was very homelike...I'm seriously considering it.”

Mark snorted a little. “Only” fifteen hundred square feet. “Are you sure you'd be comfortable someplace so small?”

Anastasia took the little dig in stride, laughing lightly. “You think I'm spoiled, dear?”

"I didn't say that," Mark laughed, holding his hands up.

"Mmm, but you were thinking it," his mother-in-law said, her eyes twinkling. She walked past him, chuckling to herself. "Perhaps when Kitsune advances more in her career, you'll see things from my perspective. Well, it's a hot day out, and I desperately need a shower." Anastasia walked back to the guest room, shutting the door behind her. A few minutes later, Mark faintly heard the sound of running water as the shower in the guest bathroom was turned on.

Yawning again, Mark relaxed on the couch, turning his attention to the television. The midday shows were over and an afternoon news program was running. Mark watched with interest; he always liked to keep current on the news. For a change it seemed that little in the way of major crime was going on. Like a lot of cops, Mark was a bit superstitious. He had a feeling that things would start to pick up again as soon as he was back on the job. At least he hadn't started carrying around lucky coins or similar charms, though he did have a certain apprehension when he went to work on a full moon night.

After a while, the sound of the running water cut off. Anastasia emerged from the guest room shortly after and came into the living room, looking very refreshed with a clean white cotton blouse and a pair of tasteful jeans. Mark felt a little warmth on his cheeks. Even at nearly sixty years, Anastasia was a very beautiful woman, showing few signs of her age.

"That is much, much better," she sighed, sitting down on the couch next to Mark. "You know, I think it really is hotter here than back home. You'd think the sea air would cool things down, but it doesn't, does it?"

Mark smirked. "Sometimes it does, but more often not," he agreed. "Try walking around the city with thirty pounds of gear and a bulletproof vest, though, and then talk to me about heat."

"Touché..." Anastasia glanced at the television. "Anything exciting happening in the city today?"

"Not a thing," Mark said, rubbing one eye. "Seems pretty boring."

"Well, I suppose that's...oh!" Just as Anastasia was about to respond, Aiden sat up in his crib and started crying. Rolling his eyes, Mark started to get up to tend to him, but his mother-in-law waved him off. "Oh, let me, dear. I have done it before, after all."

Anastasia got up and went to Aiden's crib, reaching in and picking him up. Cradling him in her arms, she carried him back over to the couch and sat down. Mark watched as she rocked him gently, making quiet cooing purrs. He'd heard Kitsune and Tai make the same sort of sounds, and idly wondered if that was something instinctual with cats. Whatever it was, it seemed to work, as Aiden calmed down. He looked up at Anastasia, seeming slightly confused to see someone other than his

mother or father holding him.

"You know, that's pretty impressive," Mark remarked. He reached over, giving Aiden a little scratch behind one ear. "Usually only Tai can get him to quiet down that quickly. He won't even stop crying for me."

"I just have a way with people," Anastasia said. She rocked her grandson fondly for a few more minutes. "He seems a little tired...Shall I take him up to his room for a nap?" Mark thought that was a good idea, so Anastasia carried the kitten upstairs. When she came back down, she looked very relaxed. "You have a beautiful family, you know that?"

"You're just saying that because your daughter is my wife," Mark joked.

The tigress smirked a little, looked off to one side, and then she nodded good-humoredly. "Well...I suppose that might be true." She sat back down on the couch, a little closer to Mark this time. "But it is a wonderful family, dear. And you all seem so very close. I think my daughter was very lucky to find a man like you." She patted him on the leg, her hand lingering a moment longer than might have been appropriate.

Mark noticed, but he didn't think much of it. "I think I'm the lucky one, actually. I've got two wonderful wives, two daughters and a son...I've got everything I could want."

"Everything?" Anastasia asked. Her hand was rubbing lightly along his leg now.

"Well...Yeah...," Mark replied slowly. He was watching Anastasia curiously. She was looking at him rather intensely, leaning towards him, and he wasn't unaware of her hand on his leg. As a matter of fact, he was starting to get a little uncomfortable. "I don't mean to sound suspicious or anything, but...what are you up to, Tasya?"

Anastasia smiled warmly at him, sliding over until her hip was pressed against his. The tigress curled her tail around his waist. "Hm...Allow me to put it plainly." Before Mark could register what was happening, she had slid her hand from his leg and cupped it firmly over his groin. Pressing her body up against his, she captured his mouth with her muzzle, snaking her tongue between his lips as she kissed him. For a long minute she held him there, her palm squeezing him lightly as her rough tongue played over his smooth one.

When Anastasia leaned back, Mark had to take a second just to get a breath before he could say anything. "Whoa, uh...Tasya..." He just stared at his mother-in-law, his head spinning.

"Was that a good enough answer, dear?" Anastasia purred. She twisted her body, pushing her hefty chest against him. "I'll be frank with you. I haven't had a good fuck in almost three years, and I was *really* hoping you could oblige, Mark."

Mark's eyes went wide. "Excuse me?"

“Trouble with your hearing?” Anastasia tilted her chin up and dragged her tongue around one of his ears. She blew a soft breath of warm air against his ear, then whispered directly into it. “I said I want you to fuck me. I’ve seen you looking at me over the dinner table, so I know you want it. And I *desperately* need it.” As if to prove her point, she traced her finger along the erection that was straining against Mark’s shorts.

“I don’t...I mean, I don’t think I should...” Mark sucked in a sharp breath as Anastasia’s furred hand came up and then slipped down the front of his pants. Her fingers touched his cock directly, sending a shiver up his spine.

“Still need convincing? Well, alright...I can be very persuasive, even when I’m not in a courtroom.” Anastasia shifted off the couch, kneeling on the floor on front of Mark. Smiling softly, she reached for the fastenings of his shorts, unbuttoning them and then dragging the zipper down. Her smile widened as she saw his boxers tent up. “Oh my, you *do* want it, even if you don’t know it quite yet. All in good time.”

Mark bit his lip as the tigress dragged his shorts down his legs, tugging his boxers down with them. He felt her breath hot against his bare skin, and she laid her head against his right thigh, rubbing her cheek against his leg. She flicked her eyes up to look at his face, and she purred as she saw the hazy arousal in his expression, saw him under her power. Her hand came up lazily and wrapped its fingers around his cock. Anastasia rubbed her thumb lightly along the underside of him, taunting him. Mark choked back a gasp of pleasure, the feather touch shocking him with how wonderful it felt.

“Tasya, we shouldn’t be doing this,” he managed to say. “This is bad.” He moved a hand down, meaning to push her away, but she caught it with her own free hand. Her fingers interlocked with his.

“But that’s what makes it so good.” Anastasia purred her satisfaction, and then she put her tongue out, running it along the base of his cock. Mark felt his protests evaporate in his head as her warm tongue bathed him, the roughness dragging along his sensitive flesh.

The elder tigress started off slowly, just barely lapping at him, teasing him and making his erection swell even more. As she licked, her cold, wet nose brushed against him, making him shudder each time. Mark realized that Kitsune and Tai could walk back in with the girls any moment, and he told himself that he should stop Anastasia. But, somehow, the danger made him want to keep going, made it feel even better. His hand went down again, but this time he rested it on top of her head, tangling his fingers in her smooth hair and rubbing at her ears. The human heard her purr grow louder, and in return she slid a hand up underneath his shirt, rubbing at his chest.

Mark’s heart was racing now. Anastasia clearly knew what she was doing, and he vaguely thought to himself that this talent must run in the family. She turned her head to one side, parting her

lips and kissing them around his cock. With tortuous slowness, she moved her mouth up his length, suckling hard at him as she went. Her torture continued right up until she got to the top, and then she locked eyes with him briefly, batting her eyelashes like an innocent schoolgirl. Mark was holding his breath, wondering what she was going to do next. Then Anastasia grinned widely, closed her eyes, and buried his cock deep in her throat.

“Jeeeesus!” Mark hissed, slumping down in his seat. His hands went out to the sides to keep him from falling down completely, a thrill of intense pleasure going through his body. Looking down he saw his mother-in-law’s muzzle pressed right against his lower belly, her eyes shut peacefully.

Anastasia held him in her throat, breathing slowly in and out through her nose. She laughed in the back of her mind. Surely Mark expected her to begin moving soon, but she had other plans for him. Instead she just left her mouth where it was, and let her tongue do all the work. With practiced skill, the older woman swallowed around him, rubbing her tongue along the underside of his thick cock. Moving a hand underneath her chin, she cupped his balls, rolling them gently around in her palm. Purring, she reveled in the sounds of his pleasure, delighting in being able to take him over so completely.

Breathing hard, Mark clenched his fists, lightly pounding the couch cushion beside him. He was very close to cumming, especially with the deep-throat treatment that Anastasia was giving him. His hips raised off the couch slightly as he pushed himself a little deeper, his hand coming down and pressing on the back of her head. She nuzzled herself against him in response, rumbling her purr. Just as Mark felt like he could take no more, she suddenly pulled her head up, licking her lips.

“Mm, well, let’s not be selfish, Mark,” Anastasia said. She stood up, bringing her hands in front of her and unbuttoning the top button of her blouse, working her way down to each successive button in turn. Mark watched her, completely caught up in her spell. Soon her shirt was all the way open, and she shrugged it off of her shoulders. He stared openly as her bare, full breasts were exposed to him. They were every bit as firm and perky as those of a woman forty years her junior.

“...Wow,” Mark said, gulping. It was a really stupid thing to say, and he sounded like some teenage virgin, but he was having problems with verbosity at the moment. He was feeling a little overwhelmed.

Snickering a little, Anastasia sank down onto the couch, kneeling over Mark with one leg on either side of him. She settled down on his lap, and his cock ground against her crotch over the fabric of her jeans. Hooking her hands around the back of his head, she lowered hers to meet him, giving him another long, deep kiss. Fully into it now, Mark put his arms around her back, digging his fingers into her well-groomed orange fur, stroking his hands up and down her spine. He was very cognizant of the fact that his wives and children might be back at any moment, but by this point he didn’t really give a

damn.

After several long minutes of making out, the tigress leaned back from him slightly. Her breasts were sitting tantalizingly close to him, in easy reach. Anastasia saw where his gaze was resting. She brushed her hands down the sides of his face, laying them on his shoulders.

“Touch them,” she breathed. Her voice had a quiet note of command in it. Anastasia arched her back, pushing them closer. Like Kitsune's, they were coated in fur of a lighter shade than the rest of her body, and that shade continued down over her belly. And, presumably, lower where her jeans were covering. But first thing was first. Mark obeyed her, bringing his hands up and cupping the furry orbs. They felt soft, warm, and heavy in his hands.

Experimentally, he gave them a squeeze, causing Anastasia to give a happy sigh. “I have to say, they are pretty nice,” Mark admitted. The fur on her breasts was feathery soft, like down. Unable to resist, Mark rested his head against one, letting the fur caress his cheek.

“Why, thank you, dear,” Anastasia said, sounding pleased. “I'll let you in on a secret of mine. They're not exactly one hundred percent real.” She placed a finger to her lips. “Shh...Don't tell anyone. I had it done ages ago, when Kat was still a little girl.”

“Really?” Mark said, blinking in surprise. He looked up, leaning back from them and taking a closer look. He gave them a firmer squeeze than before, trying to see if they felt any different. He couldn't tell. “I would never have guessed. They feel real to me.”

With that pronouncement, Mark took his own initiative and bent his head to her right breast. Hooking one arm around her back to support her, he cupped the other underneath the furry orb, and drew the nipple into his mouth. Anastasia let her head tip back, her lips parting as she gasped in pleasure. She brought one palm to the back of Mark's head, tangling her fingers in his hair as she held him to her breast like a nursing child. As Mark suckled at her nipple greedily, he lifted one leg, pressing the knee up between her thighs. Anastasia choked back a throaty cry, hunching her shoulders and beginning to saw herself back and forth on him. Mark could feel her warmth through her pants, and he was keenly reminded of her denial of his pleasure only a short while ago.

Taking his attention away from her breasts for a moment, Mark put a hand to the tigress's belly. He brushed it down through the thick, fluffy fur, and his fingertips found the waistline of her jeans. Pushing further, he went underneath, feeling his heart skip a beat when he discovered she wasn't wearing any panties. She'd clearly had plans long before she'd come out from her shower. And as his fingers came between her legs...

“Feel that?” Anastasia whispered. Her voice was shaky with arousal, and husky with her desire. “I'm so wet...You'd just love to fuck me, wouldn't you, Mark?”

“God, yes...,” Mark groaned. His fingers slipped between her nether lips, underneath her pants, and he let her warm wetness coat them. Anastasia pressed down, and his fingers slid inside, into her heat. She wiggled her hips, stirring him around inside of her.

“I really need it...I need you.” She pressed her muzzle to the side of his neck, kissing it tenderly. “Take me to bed...”

With a desperate noise of surrender, Mark abruptly stood up, nearly dumping Anastasia onto the floor. He caught her up in his arms, cradling her with one arm around her back and the other underneath her knees. With a purpose he carried her back towards the guest bedroom. The tigress wrapped her arms around his neck, drawing his head down and kissing him fiercely as he walked. They were both intoxicated with each other, couldn't have stopped even if either of them had wanted to.

When Mark got her to the bedroom, he placed her upon it. He wasted no time in released the button on her jeans, barely remembering to unzip them before he started pulling them down. At the same time Anastasia was tugging his shirt off, accidentally ripping it in the process. They paid it no mind. Finally they were both completely naked, with the tigress laid out on the bed and the human standing over her.

Anastasia crooked a finger towards him, her eyes half-lidded with barely contained lust. “Get down here, you.” She spread her legs, opening herself up to him. She was glistening pink, dripping with arousal, her scent permeating the air in the room.

“Dammit, Tasya,” Mark murmured. He sank down onto the bed, nestling between her thighs. He propped himself up on his arms as he looked down into her eyes. “What are you doing to me?”

“What we both want me to do,” his mother-in-law purred.

She brought her legs up, hooking her ankles together behind his rump. Anastasia pulled him in, and he felt his cock start to sink inside of her sex. They both groaned aloud as he pierced her body deeply, her from the immensely pleasurable sensation of being filled and he from the searing heat and silky wet tightness of her passage.

“God...,” Mark breathed. He let himself lay down against her, smooshing her exquisite breasts between them. For a long time he just let himself feel what it was like inside of her, afraid that if he moved right away it would be over in an instant. The tigress held him tightly against her, her tautly muscled legs stronger than they might otherwise appear.

She kissed him once more, and then she cupped his face in her hands, locking her gaze with his. “Don't you dare go slow. I told you I want you to fuck me, and goddammit you're going to fuck me!” Anastasia placed her hands on his shoulders, squeezing them tightly, her claws nearly piercing his flesh.

Gritting his teeth, Mark raised up from her. "Anything you say, mother dearest," he growled. "But if you're going to get fucked, it's going to be done right!" Giving her no warning at all, he jerked back from her, making her gasp as his cock slipped out. Putting his arms underneath her, he roughly flipped her over, and she shrieked in shock and a small amount of fright. When she was on her belly, Mark got his hands underneath her hips and lifted her rump. As Anastasia finally began to understand, she moaned approvingly, getting her knees beneath her and raising her ass higher. She lifted her tail, curling it over her back and presenting herself to him, as she buried her face in a pillow.

Grabbing her tightly around the waist, Mark drew himself towards her, guiding his cock back inside of her waiting depths. The tigress howled in pleasure as Mark started thrusting brutally in and out of her pussy, making a loud, wet smack each time he bottomed out inside of her. Anastasia's tail was thrashing back and forth, her body jolted with the ferocity of their mating. The bed started creaking, and sweat started beading on Mark's face as he desperately tried to stave off his climax, his body already sorely tested by the female's teasing.

"Oh, gods!" Anastasia cried, her voice sounding somewhere between a passionate scream and an anguished sob. She raised up, placing her hands on the headboard. "Ah, yes...YES! Oh, fuck me!" Her claws grated against the wood, her breasts bouncing back and forth and Mark took her. The headboard pounded against the wall over and over, denting it slightly. After three years of her ex-husband not so much as touching her, she'd almost forgotten what it could be like to be so completely ravished, so taken over by a male.

"Tasya!" Mark gasped. She was so tight, so hot and wet, and all for him. She felt so wonderful around his cock, and all he wanted to do was fuck her for as long as he could hold out. He hunched over her back, putting his mouth to the back of her neck and biting as hard as his human jaws could managed.

"Oh, Mark!" Anastasia moaned. "Baby, don't stop...Keep going, harder!"

The human tried to do as she asked, but he knew he couldn't last at this pace. "I can't...", he hissed, his hands gripping her waist tighter. Her pussy was clamping down around his cock in a sadistic rhythm, pushing his pleasure even higher. "I'm gonna..."

"Gods, yes," the elder tigress whimpered. "Cum in me...Do it! I'm right there with you!"

Rising up, Mark finally let himself go. He drew his hips back one last time and then slammed his member deep within Anastasia's pussy, and he cried out loudly as he erupted inside of her. If he'd ever cum so hard in his life, he couldn't remember it right now. The tigress howled her own pleasure as his human seed flooded her body, a warm rush inside her womb, bathing her depths with his heat as it extinguished her own. Her tail coiled around him, hugging him tightly. A fierce, animal roar escaped

her lips, echoing around the room and vibrating the windows.

After it was all over, Anastasia lost strength in her arms. She collapsed forward, flopping down in the bed, her head sinking into the pillows as she gasped for breath. Mark came down with her, his cock still nestled in her depths as one final, weak spurt of his cum deposited itself inside her. They lay there together for a moment, and then Mark rolled to the side, his cock sliding wetly from her body. A drool of his seed leaked from her pussy, and she sighed happily, knowing she'd be pleasantly sore the next day. They both relaxed, drenched in sweat, thoroughly exhausted.

"My god...," Mark said, when he finally had enough breath to speak. "That was...incredible."

Anastasia mustered all her remaining energy and moved over, draping her body half over his, kissing him tenderly. "Mark...oh, Mark...," she purred between kisses. "You have no idea how much I needed that." The tigress looked into his eyes, and Mark was surprised to see what might have been tears in them. "Now I know how Kitsune and Tai feel. I'm glad you shared it with me, if only this one time."

"Well," Mark said, not sure how to respond to that. "The pleasure was all mine, I guess."

His mother-in-law wrapped her arms around him, hugging him warmly as she nuzzled his chest. "Thank you," she whispered. She held him for a few more moments, and then she rolled back off of him. "Now, I imagine the girls will be home any time now. You should probably take a shower...and I'll probably have one as well before I tidy up a bit. I imagine we both look quite a mess."

"You're probably right," Mark said, laughing weakly. He got up, shaky from his exertions. Walking to the door, gathering his torn shirt as he went, he paused before leaving and looked over his shoulder at her. "Um...Tasya...About this..."

Anastasia sat up. "I won't say a word if you won't, dear." She placed a finger to her lips, winking at him. Mark smiled at her, nodding, and left to go clean himself up.

A few days later at breakfast, Anastasia announced to the family that she'd signed a lease for an apartment of her own and would be moving out that day. Kitsune and Tai were politely dismayed, of course, but everyone knew it was best for her to have her own place to stay. Things were crowded as it was. All that day Anastasia was on the phone, coordinating with stores and delivery services as she placed orders for new furniture for her apartment. When it was time for her to go, just after dinner, she met the family in the foyer to say goodbye. A taxi was waiting outside for her.

"You'll come back and visit, right, grandma?" Nina asked, looking up at her with shining kitten eyes. Anastasia smiled and bent down, ruffling the seven-year-old's ears.

"Of course I will, little one," she assured her. "I'm only a few hours' drive away." The elder

tigress patted Lily's head as well. "I expect both of you to come visit me, in fact!" Lily gave a small smile, still clinging to Tai's leg.

"You'll have a housewarming, won't you, mother?" Kitsune asked. "We'll definitely be over for that."

"Oh, absolutely, dear!" Anastasia said. She straightened, looking at them all. "In fact, you could even stay the night when I do have it." She looked at Mark. "I have the loveliest guest bedroom." She winked at him. Mark swallowed nervously, glancing to the side. Kitsune hadn't caught it, but as he looked at Tai he saw her looking between him and Anastasia curiously. Then her eyes widened, and she turned her gaze to Mark.

You naughty bastard! Tai mouthed at him, an astonished look on her face. But her eyes were shining with a mischievous light, always a sign that she was turned on.

"Well, I hate long goodbyes," Anastasia said. She gave Kitsune and Tai each a kiss on the cheek, and then picked up her bags. "Thank you all for having me in your home. I had a *lovely* time!" Turning, Anastasia walked out the door and to her taxi, a sensual sway to her hips that definitely hadn't been there when she'd gotten off the plane.

Tai closed the door after her, then turned around. "Ahhh...Family."

"Yes, yes," Kitsune said. She clapped her hands. "Now, girls. Bedtime. Off you go." Quieting down the usual protests, the brown tigress ushered Nina and Lily towards the stairs. She stood at the bottom, watching to make sure they went into their bedroom. When she was satisfied that the children were obeying her instructions, she turned back to Tai and Mark. "And how about you two? Ready for bed as well?"

"I am," Tai said. She gave Mark a sidelong glance. "But first...Oh, Kat, dear, can I have your ear for a moment?" She pulled Kitsune to the side, turning their backs to Mark. He watched, shuffling his feet nervously as Tai whispered into her ear.

"What is it?" Kitsune said. She listened for a few seconds, nodding here and there. "Oh? What do you..." Her tail bristled, then smoothed out just as quickly. "Oh, *really* now?" She looked over her shoulder at Mark. He looked at the ceiling, sighing resignedly. He was in for it now. Kitsune started whispering back to Tai.

"Mmhm," Tai said finally. "I think that's perfect." They both turned back to Mark. He was startled to see them both sporting mischievous smirks.

"Oh, geez...What are you two up to?" Mark asked them nervously. "Look, I'm sorry, I didn't mean for it to happen! She was just so insistent, and we got carried away! Please don't be mad with me, Kat!"

“Mad? Oh, I'm not mad,” she said, smiling sweetly. Kitsune took Tai's hand. “Tai and I are just going to head off to bed.” She curled her tail around the gray tabby's, and leaned over to give her a kiss. “We're feeling a bit playful, though, so we'll be up for a little while longer.”

“A *lot* while longer,” Tai corrected her, the same sweet smile on her face. They turned and, hand in hand, started walking up the stairs. Mark stood rooted to the spot for a moment longer.

“Well...wait, what about me?” he called up, confused.

Kitsune stopped and turned. “Oh, you can come, too.” She held up a hand just as Mark was starting to look relieved. “You can come and *watch*, dearest.” Her smile turned slightly evil. “And when we've both decided you're remorseful enough, you can come to bed, too. I think you'll probably be that remorseful in a week or so, don't you?” She blew a kiss to him and then she and Tai continued up the stairs, snickering to themselves.

His heart sinking slightly, Mark watched them disappear up the stairs. He slowly covered his face with one hand, letting out an exasperated sigh.

“I wonder if this is why nobody gets along with their mother-in-law...”

“Mothers are all slightly insane.”

-J.D. Salinger