

"Uneasy Alliances"
A Forever Knight / Kung-Fu: The Legend Continues Crossover

By

Present story: Debbie Roche and Anna Sawitzky
Flashbacks: Debbie Roche, Anna Sawitzky, and Trudy Gould

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1974: SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE - REBEL CAMP

Kermit Griffin glanced around as he followed Roger Blake into the cave that served the group of guerrillas and rebels as an infirmary. It was just past twilight; one of the safest times for members of Blake's group to be out.

"I'd like you to meet some other members of our little band," Blake was saying as they entered, his English accent sounding unusual in the middle of a South American Jungle.

Kermit just nodded and glanced around.

Whoever had set the cave up had done a remarkably good job, he noticed. The furniture, while allowing easy access now, looked as though it could be rearranged on a moment's notice to serve as a barricade; and based on what he'd seen so far on the efficiency of Blake's group, there was undoubtedly a concealed exit in the back.

"So, how many doctors do you have?" he asked, as Blake led him through the first group of tables.

"Just one at the moment; our other doctor was killed last week," Blake replied calmly. "He is, however, quite good; in the five months since he's joined our cause we've had less deaths than usual due to problems with the medical supplies that we can, or can't as the case may be, get here."

"Well, I'm impressed," Kermit began. He was about to add something, but was interrupted by a voice from up ahead.

"Just lie still," a man was saying, his tone commanding, as Blake and Kermit rounded the last set of hanging cloths.

"Can't you do this any faster?" the slender, brown-haired man sitting on the bed right in front of them demanded. Another man, his curly blond hair almost glowing in the lamplight, was bent over the left arm of the first.

"Doctor, Nick," Blake said, acknowledging them both.

Both the doctor and his patient glanced up, and Kermit had to suppress a grin. He recognized the patient immediately; they'd last seen each other only three months ago, in Angola, just before everything had blown up; and he felt a sense of relief to realize that the other was still his irrepressible self.

"Griffin," Blake continued, "I'd like you to meet Nick Kopolevski, and Doctor Michaelson. Nick, Doctor, this is Kermit Griffin; he's the one who has agreed to provide us with the guns we're going to need to succeed."

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The blond doctor nodded. "Pleased to meet you," he said in an absentminded tone, returning his attention to Kopolevski's arm, which appeared torn and bloody.

Kermit heard a slight accent in the doctor's voice, and frowned to himself. It wasn't one he recognized, which was more than a little unusual.

His attention then went to the man introduced as Nick Kopolevski, and a smile flickered across his face. "Hey, Nicky!" he said, the smile becoming a grin when Kopolevski matched it.

"Hiya, Kermit," Kopolevski replied. "Still wearing those sunglasses, I see."

"You know me, I never take'em off."

"Except when you go to bed, right?"

Kermit nodded and replied, "Never let'em see the whites of your eyes. That's my motto. If they can't see your eyes they can't read you."

"Yep. When Blake told me we had a new arms supplier, I was wondering if you'd gotten involved."

"Oh yeah," Kermit said, moving closer. "What the hell happened to your arm?" he added.

"I caught a bullet," Kopolevski answered, sighing and glancing at Michaelson with a certain amount of exasperation.

Michaelson finished washing his arm, making it look a lot better than Kermit had first thought, and picked up a pair of medical tweezers.

Kermit had to suppress another grin at the thought of Nicky reaching up to catch a bullet barehanded. "You caught a bullet? Looks like you missed it and it caught you!" he countered.

"Funny, Griffin. Just wait until -- ow!" Kopolevski exclaimed as Michaelson removed the bullet.

"If you'd held still like I suggested," Michaelson declared, "then you wouldn't have felt a thing." His voice was calm as he opened a small packet of gauze.

"C'mon, doc," came the reply. "I've had bullets in me before. And it hurts like hell to get them taken out again."

The doctor didn't bother to answer; he just placed the gauze against the wound, and then turned to Blake. "Is there anyone else out there that..." he started to inquire.

"No," Blake cut in, "He was the last of the group." Blake looked between Kermit and Kopolevski. "You two know each other?"

"Oh, yeah" both Kermit and Kopolevski stated.

Michaelson started cleaning things up as Kopolevski continued, "Kermit and I have met a couple of times; we're in the same sort of business, after all."

"Speaking of which, how on earth did you end up getting shot?" Kermit demanded. "You're usually so careful..."

Kopolevski shrugged and cocked an eyebrow. "I guess my luck ran out," he replied, his tone disgusted.

The doctor snorted as he turned back to face them. "You got ambushed," he corrected. "Whoever's replaced General Andreas..."

"Who?" Kermit asked.

"He was *El Presidente*, Villarreal's tactician," Blake replied.

"Yes. As I was saying..." Michaelson continued. "Whoever replaced him is better than Andreas ever was; maybe even a tactical genius. We've had more setbacks over the past two weeks than we had in all the time Andreas was in charge."

Kermit glanced curiously at the doctor, wondering how Michaelson knew as much as his comments seemed to indicate about tactics. Maybe he's army, or navy, the young mercenary thought to himself, trying to unobtrusively study the one called Michaelson.

In the lamplight, the young doctor's face appeared almost angelic: pale skin, curly golden hair, and light blue eyes.

It was Michaelson's eyes that suddenly caught Kermit's attention. He felt a shiver run down his spine as his instincts abruptly kicked him in the face. There was a darkness in those eyes that told Kermit that this doctor might just be the most dangerous man in the room.

He didn't get a chance to wonder about it, however, as a sudden commotion outside the cave resolved into another group of people, with a number of wounded among them.

Michaelson instantly seemed to be everywhere at once, giving orders and arranging the wounded according to severity of wounds; although there was one guy, whimpering piteously in the corner, that everyone seemed to be ignoring.

Blake turned to one of the non-wounded among the group and asked, pointing toward the whimpering man, "What's with Phila?"

"Phila?" Kermit chimed in. "That's an unusual name."

Blake looked at Kermit and added, "Oh, like Kermit isn't?"

"Touche," the mercenary replied.

"I'll fill you in on the story behind his name later," Blake added.

"Can't wait to hear it," Kermit stated.

Blake turned back to the other man. "Well?" he demanded.

The dark-haired man standing next to them sighed. "Cali hit him in hand-to-hand practice," he replied. "It's just luck that we arrived here at the same time as the patrol."

At that point, Michaelson came up to them. "Bad luck," the doctor said firmly. "Kerr, get Phila out of here; I'll deal with him after I get done with the patrol's wounded. Blake, since you're here give me a hand."

As Kerr headed over to the whimpering one, Kermit found himself reconsidering. Maybe he was wrong about Michaelson, or maybe the darkness in the other man was there because of all the wounded that he saw, probably every day. Kermit had known a few other doctors like that...

"Hey, doc, can I get out of here now?" Kopolevski demanded.

Michaelson turned to look at him, and then nodded. "Go ahead."

Kopolevski got up and started to drag Kermit away.

"Just make sure to keep the gauze clean," Michaelson added, calling after the retreating Kopolevski.

As they left the cave, Kermit could hear Dr. Michaelson saying, "Okay, Blake, you hold his arms down..."

A few minutes later, Kopolevski led Kermit into a small tent hidden near the edge of the rebel encampment.

"Would you like something to drink?" Kopolevski asked.

"Sure," Kermit replied, sitting on the bedroll. "Listen, what are you doing here anyway? I thought you were supposed to take some time off, after what happened in Angola..."

Kopolevski shrugged. "I got bored," he replied, his tone careless. "I mean, I hadn't even been shot at in over seven weeks..."

"Well, that isn't true anymore," Kermit pointed out, taking a drink from the canteen the other man held out. "What exactly happened?"

"As the doc said, we ran into an ambush," Kopolevski replied. "Before any of us realized what was going on, we were in the middle of a hail of bullets. I got winged while trying to take cover."

"That doctor seems to know a lot about tactics," Kermit said, his tone casual.

Kopolevski raised his eyebrows, and Kermit found himself remembering their first encounter; he hadn't been at all impressed by the - apparently - ordinary man - until he had seen him in action. That had been something of a shock. Kopolevski just appeared so... average, that you didn't realize how dangerous he was until you'd actually seen him in action. And by then, for most people, it was already too late.

"Yeah, well, Doc Michaelson's come on a couple of our raids," Kopolevski declared. "He's pretty good."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. He seems to be an expert at spotting ambushes," came the reply. "Unfortunately, he had other things he had to do earlier, so he wasn't with us when this," he gestured at his left arm, "happened."

Kermit mumbled something and took another drink.

"So, what have you been up to since Angola?"

But, before he could respond, Kermit felt a presence enter the tent. He whirled around but no one was there. Then just as he was about to brush it off, he heard a voice say, "Kermit, just the man I was looking for!" Kermit was confused. There was no one around. Yet, somehow, he recognized the voice calling him. He knew the voice and the one it belonged to. The voice belonged to someone who was not supposed to be here. He didn't belong here. Kermit

racked his brain. Then the name that went with the voice came to him. Caine. Detective Peter Caine.

1994: 101ST DIVISION

Detective Peter Caine was standing in front of Detective Kermit Griffin, who was standing beside the coffee machine. Peter wasn't sure if Kermit had heard him. In fact Kermit seemed to be miles away, but Peter couldn't be sure of it as Kermit's ever present sunglasses were covering his eyes.

"Kermit? Did you hear me?" Peter asked.

Kermit had indeed heard Peter. He looked at him and said suspiciously, "Whatever it is Pete, the answer is no."

"You haven't even heard me out yet," protested Peter.

Kermit turned away and walked towards his office. The thoughts were racing through his mind. 'Why South America? Why now, after all these years? What could it mean?'

Peter was tagging along behind him. As they were entering the office, Kermit took a drink from his cup and said, "Don't have to."

"Yes, you do." Peter said insistently, shutting the door to Kermit's office after they'd both entered.

Peter leaned against a cabinet in the office as Kermit sat at his desk. "Kelly can't make it to dinner at Mom's on Saturday."

Kermit looked at Peter. "I thought you and Kelly weren't..."

"Not that Kelly, my sister Kelly." Peter stated, clarifying it for Kermit.

'Oh of course, how stupid of me.' Kermit thought and wondered just what the kid wanted from him.

"So," continued Peter, "I thought of you. She wants to talk with you since Paul... mentioned you a lot. I think she wants to get to know you."

Kermit never really liked family gatherings, and he didn't want to get involved. He figured it would only make Blaisdell's absence more felt. Something Annie could probably do without. He already missed him enough; he didn't need this. "Definitely not!" he said.

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Peter wasn't about to give up. "Kermit... I didn't want to have to do this. You know we're friends. But..." Peter walked over to Kermit's desk.

Kermit didn't like the look he was seeing in Peter's eyes. "But what?" Kermit asked suspiciously. He had the feeling that, whatever Peter was about to say, he wasn't going to like it. Not at all. And he was right.

Peter leaned in over Kermit's desk, and in a soft voice said, "Remember last Friday night at the Agrippa Club?"

Kermit considered for a moment, then panic set in. He remembered all too well what had happened that night. It was a night he wished he could erase.

Peter could see that Kermit knew what he meant. "I'd just love to tell Captain Simms. She'd probably get a real kick out of it. Unless..." Peter could tell he had Kermit right where he wanted him.

Kermit knew he was defeated. He also knew that Karen would never understand the whole story about that night. "Okay, okay! You win. I'll be there. What time?"

Peter was jubilantly ecstatic, "7:00," he said flashing a smile. Then he turned and headed out of the office.

Kermit rose from his desk and said, "Not so fast. I want all the pictures. All of them. And the negatives!"

Peter flashed Kermit a smile. "But of course," he said. They shook hands and Peter exited the office. Kermit returned to his desk and sat back down. His mind returned to the images that had flooded it a short while ago.

'South America? ... There's only one reason I would be thinking of it now. A flashback to some past event, usually means that someone related to that event will re-enter your life. Or that something will happen now that mirrors what happened then. ... Or that I've completely lost it, and all it means is that I've been spending far too much time with Caine and all his supernatural hype. Shambala, Sing Wah, when will it end!'

7:00PM: SATURDAY - BLAISDELL'S HOUSE

Saturday night at exactly 7:00, the front door bell at the Blaisdell's house rang. Peter went to the door and opened it. It was Kermit. He'd brought a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a box of Annie Blaisdell's favorite chocolates.

"Kermit's here!" Peter announced, so that the rest of the house could hear him.

"I'm gonna get you for this, Pete." Kermit said through clenched teeth with a forced smile on his face.

"Come on in," Peter said, smiling as Kermit entered the house. Peter closed the door.

Kermit removed his coat and handed it to Peter. Then they both headed to the kitchen.

Upon arriving in the kitchen, Kermit walked over to Annie. He held out the flowers. "These flowers are for you... but I'm afraid their beauty pales in comparison to yours." Kermit handed her the flowers and gave her a peck on the cheek.

"Thank you, Detective Griffin," Annie replied as she inhaled the fragrance of the flowers.

"Please, call me Kermit," he said.

Annie smiled and said, "Okay. Kermit." Then, looking in Peter's direction, she added, "Peter, could you please put these in a vase?"

Peter walked over to her and said, "Sure, Mom." He took the flowers from her and went to find a vase.

Kermit took Annie's hands again and placed the box of chocolates in them. "Paul once said that these were your favorite chocolates."

Annie smiled sadly. It had been a long time since Paul had left. First he'd been framed for the murder of an old colleague, then he'd discovered that it had been two other men, who had once been 'allies', though not necessarily friends of his, who had been responsible. Paul had left town, promising to return. He never told her where he was going; just that he would be back when the time was right.

So far, he hadn't returned. She hoped that tonight would be the night. And if he wasn't going to be home, she knew he would at least call; tonight was special. She knew he wouldn't forget it.

"Thank you, Kermit. Please, let's go into the living room," she said. Kermit gently placed her hand on his arm. Annie tightened her grip, and they left the kitchen.

Upon arriving in the living room, Kermit noticed a photo on the corner table. It was Paul and Annie's wedding photo.

Then the date clicked. Today was their anniversary.

Annie sat in her chair, and Kermit sat beside Peter on the couch. Kermit took a deep breath then looked at Annie.

"I'm sure Paul's all right. I know how much he loves you, and how much you mean to him. ... I'm sure he'll call; tonight of all nights."

Annie smiled. "Paul has mentioned you many times, Kermit. Tell me, how did you meet?"

Kermit shot a glance to Peter and then took a deep breath.

After dinner, they all returned to the living room. They were in the middle of a reminiscence of Paul, when the phone rang. Annie rose from her chair, "Excuse me," and went over to the phone. She picked it up. "Hello?"

"Happy Anniversary, darling," said a gruff and very familiar voice.

"Paul!?! " At Annie's exclamation, both Kermit and Peter straightened up and looked toward Annie. "Where are you?"

"Toronto."

"Canada?"

"Yes. How are you? Has Peter been looking after you?"

"I'm fine. And yes, he has. He drops by all the time."

"That's good."

"In fact, he's here right now."

"He is?"

"Yes."

"Could I speak to him for a moment? I promise it won't be for long, dear."

"Sure. Hang on." Annie looked over to where she knew Peter was. "Peter," she called.

Peter started to rise from the couch. Kermit followed.

Annie put the receiver back to her ear and said, "Oh, by the way, Kermit's here too."

"Kermit? He's there? At the house? How'd Peter manage that?"

"I'm not sure. When I asked, Peter just said: Don't ask! You want to talk to him too?"

"Yeah. Put them on."

Annie handed Peter the phone and led Kermit to the extension in the kitchen.

"Did I hear Mom correctly, you're in Canada?"

"Yes, son. That's correct."

"What are you doing up there?"

"Yeah," chimed in Kermit, "What are you doing up there?"

"Can you come up?" said Paul, his statement was directed to Kermit.

"What's going on, Paul?" Peter asked.

"Do you remember, Kerr?" Paul asked, ignoring Peter's question.

"Oh yeah," Kermit said grimly.

"Well, I think I saw him. I need you to verify it."

"Paul," Peter cut in, "are you in trouble? I have some time off owing to me; I could come up and help."

"I appreciate that, son," Paul said, "But, this could be much too dangerous. I don't want you to get involved. Kermit, can you... get away?"

Kermit raised an eyebrow and cracked a smile. "For this?" he said. "Oh, yeah. I can be there next Monday. Where are you staying?"

"The Royal York Hotel, 100 Front Street West, Toronto. Room 757." Kermit wrote it down.

"Now," said Paul, "give me back to my wife."

Peter put the receiver down and went to get Annie.

"See ya in nine days Paul." Kermit said.

"Nine days," replied Paul.

Kermit hung up the extension and made his way back to the living room.

Annie was picking up the receiver, as Kermit passed her.

Kermit saw Peter waiting on the couch. He could tell the kid was full of questions. He didn't know if he could, or should, answer them. Kermit sat on the couch, beside Peter, waiting for the inquisition to start. It didn't take long.

Peter turned to Kermit, his eyes full of questions and concern. "I don't care what he says, Kermit. I want to help."

Kermit looked at him. "No way kid! Kerr is not the sort of guy you want to mess with. He..."

Peter grabbed Kermit. "Dammit Kermit! I owe him."

Kermit glared at Peter. The effect would have been more potent if Kermit's ever present shades were not covering his eyes. Kermit knew Peter was acting like any son would if their father were in trouble. But this situation could get really out of hand. Peter had never seen the mercenary side of Blaisdell.

Peter held Kermit for a few seconds longer, then let him go. Kermit shook himself, straightening his jacket.

Peter continued, "Paul came into my life when it really needed focusing. I was a kid who had lost everything, Kermit... My father, my home, my life, everything... He put some meaning back into my life. Gave me something to live for. I owe him a lot more than I can ever repay. I'm going with you, and there's nothing you can do to stop me."

Kermit saw the determination in Peter's eyes. It was a look he himself used to get a lot in the past. He knew there would be no stopping Peter. If he didn't take Peter with him, Peter would just go on his own. And he'd get himself into a lot of trouble on his own. 'I don't care how much Peter thinks he can handle himself, Kerr's out of his league. Way out.' Kermit thought to himself. 'But I'm pretty sure he wrote down the address too. And knowing Peter, he'll take off for Toronto tonight. If I don't stop him.'

"Now," Peter stated, "you can either fill me in and we can do this together, or..."

Kermit relented. "Okay. Okay. But if Paul asks I didn't tell you anything, and we didn't go up together. You just followed me. Deal?"

Peter flashed him a smile and said, "Deal."

Kermit gave a quick look to Annie, he didn't want her to overhear any of this conversation. He knew that she'd be on the phone for a while. He just hoped it would long enough to fill Peter in. He'd decided he would tell Peter only what he thought Peter should know, nothing more.

"It began in South America, in 1974..." Kermit began.

LATER

"... and that's it." Kermit's concluded.

"That's it? That's the whole story?" Peter asked. "You're not holding out on me are you?"

Before Kermit could answer, Annie called to Peter. "Peter, Paul wants to talk to you."

"Be right there Mom," he said, then to Kermit he added, "This conversation isn't over!"

"I know." Kermit said. Peter got off the couch and turned to leave. Kermit grabbed his arm, and added. "Just don't let Paul know that you know what you know. Understand?"

Peter raised an eyebrow. "You're beginning to sound like my father."

"What can I say?" Kermit smiled and shrugged his shoulders "He kind of grows on you." He added as he gave Peter the standard Shaolin greeting. (Open right hand over closed left fist.)

Peter laughed and headed to the phone.

Kermit watched as Peter took it from Annie. 'So, this is what the flashback meant!' he thought.

Annie headed over to Kermit and sat in the chair she'd been sitting in earlier.

Kermit looked to her and said, "See, I told you he would call."

"That you did detect... Kermit," Annie stated with a smile.

While Peter had been talking to Paul, catching up on everything, Annie had been trying to learn more about the mysterious Kermit Griffin. Being blind, she could sense that there was something more to this man. Something that apparently no one else seemed to know.

After Peter had hung up the phone, he'd returned to his mom and Kermit, and they'd talked a little bit longer.

When the time came for them to go, Annie saw them to the door. "It was a pleasure meeting you, Kermit. Take care of yourself."

Kermit kissed her cheek. "You too, ma'am."

Peter leaned over, kissed her cheek and said, "See ya later, Mom."

With that, Peter and Kermit exited the house and walked to their cars. In silence. Kermit had given Peter a lot to think about.

TORONTO: KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

"Man oh man oh man oh man, I really hate winter." Detective Donald Schanke said, as he exited the lift into the loft of his partner Detective Nicholas Knight.

Both Schanke and Knight were cops. Homicide cops. They worked for The Metropolitan Toronto Police Force, and were currently assigned to the 96th Precinct. They had been partners for roughly 3 years.

Nick Knight was about 5'11" with short blond wavy hair. He was clean-shaven and had chiseled features. He was harboring a secret that few, if any, living people knew. The secret was that he was a vampire, and had been since 1228.

Schanke, had short black hair, brown eyes, and a slightly pudgy, trusting face. Tonight he was wearing a brown suit and tie with a tan overcoat. It seemed that he was never at home unless he was wearing a suit. Schanke had no idea what the man he called his partner really was. Who knows what would happen if he ever found out. Would he be able to live with the fact that his partner was a blood-drinking immortal?

Schanke was clutching a coffee cup as a dying man would clutch a life preserver. Who knows? Maybe for him it was one.

Nick was seated comfortably on his couch, and upon Schanke's entrance, he abruptly sat up straight. "Okay, Schank, now that I know it's cold outside, what have you got?" Nick said.

"About the case? Nada, niente, zip. The reason I came over is... is because... I have an extra, primo ticket for tomorrow's Maple Leafs game."

"I thought you were supposed to be working tomorrow night?" Nick questioned.

Schanke settled into the black leather chair, sighing gratefully. He was very happy to take a load off his poor, over-worked feet. "I am," he said, "That's why I'm offering it to you, partner."

Nick was wearing a dark blue shirt and belted black pants. "What's the catch?" he sighed, resignedly.

Don shuffled in his seat, uncomfortably aware of Nick's gaze. "Well... I... Myra's friend... Marie... has the other one. You'll like her Nick. Really. She has a terrific personality... and..." he trailed off.

Nick stared implacably at him. "Myra put you up to this didn't she?" Schanke nodded miserably. "No, Schank. I'm sorry."

Nick knew he had to think quickly. He needed a way to get of this. But what? Lately Schanke and his wife, Myra, had been trying to set him up with almost every woman in the city. It was like Schanke was trying to push him into a relationship. He just wished Schanke would leave him alone. Schanke would never understand that a relationship is the last thing that Nick Knight needed at the moment. It was bad enough that LaCroix was always hovering over him. Speaking to him through that damned radio show of his. It seemed that every show was always directed towards him. Something he was doing or not doing. Some case he was working on. Nick wondered if anyone ever noticed that? He was pretty sure they hadn't but one day someone might. For now, though, he had to get Schanke off his back. Then suddenly, and without warning, inspiration struck him. "Nat's coming over." Schanke immediately looked intrigued. "We're watching some movies together," continued Nick.

"What's going on between you two, anyway?" questioned Schanke with a raised eyebrow. "Something I should know about? Hmm partner?"

Nick immediately back peddled. "No, no. Just two friends getting together to watch some movies, that's all."

"Right Knight. Friends," he said sarcastically. "And I'm the Pope."

7:00PM: 9 DAYS LATER (MONDAY) - ROYAL YORK HOTEL - TORONTO

Peter and Kermit had driven up separately. They figured if they'd've arrived in one car Paul wouldn't buy the story of Peter following Kermit.

INSIDE HOTEL

When they arrived at The Royal York Hotel, they went directly to the elevators.

7TH FLOOR

Peter and Kermit exited the elevator and then headed for room 757.

Upon reaching it, Peter knocked on the door. "Paul... It's us.... Open the door," he said.

There was no answer. Kermit tried, "Paul... are you in there?"

Peter was about to draw his gun and kick in the door, but Kermit stopped him. "Wait... Let's see if he left a message at the front desk first. If not, then we can request a key and come back up." Peter put his gun away, and they headed for the lobby.

LOBBY

Once there, they walked up to front desk. The clerk behind the counter walked over to Peter, smiled at him, and said, "Can I help you?"

Peter smiled back, "I hope so," he said, and after a brief pause added, "Could you check and see if someone left a message for us?"

The clerk said, "Sure, what room are you in?"

Kermit jumped in. "We're not staying at this hotel. Our friend wa... is..."

The clerk looked disappointed "Oh. ... Can I have your names then?"

Peter quickly replied, "Peter Caine, and Kermit Griffin."

The clerk smiled at Peter and said, "Be right back."

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She walked over to the message desk, and then returned to Peter and Kermit with a slip of paper. "Sorry, Mr. Caine..."

Peter leaned over onto the counter and smiled. "It's Peter."

Kermit rolled his eyes and buried his head in his hands. 'Of all the times to be flirting! Geez, you can't take this kid anywhere.' Kermit thought.

The clerk smiled back again, "Peter."

There was a short pause while Peter and the clerk just stared at each other.

Kermit broke the silence. "Excuse me..."

The clerk broke her stare. "Oh, sorry, Mr. Griffin. Here, this is for you."

Kermit took it and said, "Thanks." He turned to leave and noticed Peter wasn't moving. "Pete, come on. Don't want to keep your father waiting." Then he added under his breath, "wherever he is."

Peter stood up, smiled at the clerk and said, "Maybe I'll see ya around."

"I hope so," she replied.

"Come on, Petey..." called Kermit.

"Bye," Peter said and turned to leave.

"Bye," she replied.

Kermit waited for Peter. When Peter was beside him, he opened the note and read it. It said, "Gone to meet a friend. Should be back by 7:00. If not, this is his address. Paul. P.S.: I've left permission for the hotel to issue you a key to my room. You can leave your stuff there."

Peter noticed the map and address on the bottom of the note. Peter looked to Kermit and said, "There's an address and a map. We'll take my car, let's go."

OUTSIDE HOTEL

Peter and Kermit left the hotel and headed for Peter's car.

7:25PM

Paul Blaisdell and his friend Gord Anthony were walking south down Bay Street, on the way to the Royal York.

They had spent the afternoon trying to learn if Kerr was indeed in town. They'd called every contact they had, and nothing had turned up. Nobody knew anything. The last time anyone had seen Kerr was in 1984, and then they weren't even sure if it was him. Paul was hoping that Kermit might know someone or someway to track Kerr down. To see if it had indeed been him he'd seen last week.

They'd just passed Adelaide, when two men hurriedly exited a purplish-blue Dodge Stealth. One of them started to walk closely behind Paul and Gord. The other walked in front of them.

Paul turned to Gord and said, "I was supposed to meet Kermit at the hotel at 7:00. By now he's probably got my message. We'll probably run into him on the way"

Gord looked at him, "Are you sure he'll help? Can he help?"

But, before he could answer, the front man whirled around, brought up a gun, and shot Gord through the head. The man behind Paul viciously cracked the butt of his gun over Paul's head, causing him to fall and loose consciousness. The man managed to catch Paul before he hit the ground, and he and his friend maneuvered Paul into the car.

7:30PM

Peter and Kermit arrived at the corner as a speeding car was turning of a side street. Peter slammed on the brakes to avoid being hit. Peter was so distracted with not hitting anything, that he never noticed that the car was an exact match for his.

"Damn it!" Peter cursed. "Just what the hell does that guy think he's doing, he nearly..."

Kermit, who had had his eyes closed, thinking, was jolted awake as as Peter slammed on the brakes. After bracing himself, he glanced out the window, and noticed something on the sidewalk of the street the car had turned off of. "Pete," he stated, cutting off Peter, "over there."

Peter followed Kermit's finger, and turned the car onto the side street. He drove over to where Kermit had pointed. It was a body. Peter pulled over and stopped the car. They got out of the car, and went over to the body.

(CONTINUED)

They were crouched over the corpse of Gord Anthony, with guns drawn, when a slightly accented voice called out, from directly behind Peter, "Freeze! Metro Homicide. Stand very still."

Another man approached from along side Kermit; his gun was also drawn and pointed at them "Easy partner," he said. "I've got them covered."

The first man put his gun away, and walked carefully to Peter and Kermit. He relieved them of their guns and frisked them.

The second man, upon seeing Kermit's gun as his partner took it, said, "That's some elephant hunting gun you've got there, Mister. I hope you got a permit for it."

Kermit's *elephant gun* as the man had called it had in fact saved Peter's life at least once, when Peter and some friends had to rescue Caine and the Dalai Lama.

As the first man frisked them, he found their police badges. He turned to the other and said, "They're cops, Schank."

The one called Schank looked stunned, "Cops? You sure, Knight?"

Knight read the badges. "Yeah. Detectives Peter Caine and Kermit Griffin." As he said Kermit's name, he looked at him. 'Why does that name sound familiar? Where have I heard it before? When have I heard it before?' Nick wondered.

Schanke got a crazed grin on his face, "Kermit? Knight, you sure you're reading that right? He doesn't look like a talking green frog to me."

Peter looked at Kermit. "Your badge actually says Kermit on it?"

Kermit smiled sardonically, "Oh, yeah."

Peter didn't believe them, he always wondered if Kermit was a nickname, or his friend's real name. "Lemme see that," he said as he went to grab the badge from Nick.

Nick caught his hand in a vise-like grasp, and said, "Later, Detective. First, there is the matter of the deceased. Did either of you know him?"

Both Kermit and Peter shook their heads negatively. Nick looked at Schanke. "Call this in. I can handle these two on my own till you get back." Schanke turned to leave. "Oh and get Forensics down here too," Nick added.

As Schanke left, Nick could hear him muttering under his breath about how bossy Nick was getting lately; Schank do this, Schank do that. Nick stifled a chuckle, and then focused his attention on Peter, because the one called Kermit was wearing sunglasses. 'Why would the guy be wearing shades at night?' Nick thought, then out loud he suggested to Peter, "Okay, so let's have your story."

"You," Peter said belligerently, "haven't read us our rights, Detective..."

"Knight. Nick Knight," Nick supplied. "And you're right, I haven't. Besides you're not under arrest." Yet, he added silently. "So what happened? Why..."

Just then Schanke returned, with an Asian businessman in tow. "Knight," he began, "Mr. Soo here says he eyeballed the perps car, as it took off. His description seems to match this baby right here." Schanke said as patted the hood of Peter's car.

Nick noticed the look that was exchanged between Kermit and Peter. "I take it this car belongs to you two?" Nick said.

Peter fumbled out his reply. "Yeah. It's mine, but we haven't been in town long. Just got in a while ago actually. And...."

Nick cut Peter off, and looked to Mr. Soo. "Did you manage to get the license plate number?" Nick asked him.

Mr. Soo looked at Peter's car, then at Nick. "I'm sorry, Detective. It was dark and these eyes can't read as good as they used to."

Nick looked both relieved and upset. He looked to Mr. Soo and said, "But the color and make are the same?"

"Yes. Same color. Same type." Mr Soo replied.

"Okay. Thank you." Nick turned to Schanke. "Take his statement," then turned back to Peter and Kermit and added, "looks like you'll have a trip downtown to the station after all, gentlemen."

Kermit looked at Nick. "It wasn't us. We're on your side. Pete's plate isn't even a local plate. You should have asked your witness if it was a local plate."

"Schank, take these two down to the station. I'll meet you there. I'm gonna wait here for Natalie."

Schanke went over to the car, with Peter and Kermit. Schanke opened the rear door and motioned for them to get in. But they decided to be uncooperative.

Kermit grinned at Peter and said, ever so politely, "After you, kid." Peter smiled at Kermit, shook his head, and replied, "No, really, after you." Kermit shook his finger at Peter. "My friend, how kind. But I insist." Kermit motioned like a chauffeur for Peter to get in. Peter smiled and said, "No, I insist. Please. Age before beauty."

Schanke rolled his eyes in disgust, 'It's gonna be one of those nights. First Nick. Now these two.' With that thought, Schanke grabbed Peter and said, "Just get in."

Peter got in. Kermit followed.

It had taken the better part of ten minutes to get them into the car. So, once they were in, Schanke cuffed them together so they wouldn't give him any more trouble.

7:45PM

"Well, Nat?" Nick asked Dr. Lambert.

The weather was not the nicest, and she was feeling just a bit cold. "Yeah, considering I haven't even had dinner yet."

He gave her a strange look and said, "Yeah? Yeah what...?"

She elaborated. "Yeah I'm well... It was a joke Nick... Oh, never mind. Forget it." She decided to get serious, and continued, "I suppose the bullet could've come from -- what'd you say his name was -- Kermit?" He nodded approvingly. "His gun. A ballistics test will tell us more... You said this Kermit guy's a cop?" she asked incredulously.

"Yeah," he stated, "he had a badge. They both did."

She smiled and said, "Well I guess they'll let just about anyone be a cop these days, won't they Nick?"

"Boy you're in a good mood tonight, aren't you Nat?"

"Oh, yeah," she said. "Must be all the caffeine I've had."

"Their badges say they're from Sloanville." he added.

"Sloanville? Where's that?"

"The USA. I was there once." He paused, as if about to drift off, but snapped out of it. "Look," he continued, "I have to get to the station. I'll drop by the lab later and you can tell me what you find." Turning to her, he briefly hugged her and kissed her cheek. "I had fun the other night. Thanks for bailing me out," he said. Then, with a funny look on his face, he added, "But next time... no more of those Hammer Dracula movies, huh?" It was more of a plea than a question. "They're just... not realistic enough," he stated, with a slight hint of sarcasm.

She'd thought they were appropriate, considering she was spending the evening with an 800-year-old vampire. But it was obvious that he didn't think so. 'Oh, well. I guess a vampire would know if a vampire-flick was *out-of-character* or *not realistic*', she thought. "Okay," she stated out loud, "you pick the movies next time."

When he flashed her that brilliant smile, she thought, 'Oh no! What have I done? I'm going to regret saying that. I know I will.'

8:30PM: 96TH PRECINCT

As Schanke brought them into the station, he was still steaming over the remark that Kermit had made about his driving: "Where did you learn to drive, Detective? The demolition derby, or the Indy 500?"

He placed Peter and Kermit in separate "interview" rooms. He hated that new term. 'Why did we ever stop calling them interrogation rooms?' he thought. He returned to the main room to get himself a cup of coffee. He had just finished pouring it when Nick arrived.

He looked at Nick, "You can question Caine; I want Kermit."

If this was any other case, Nick would insist on dealing with Kermit, since Kermit seemed the more dangerous of the two. But Nick just couldn't shake the feeling that he somehow knew Kermit. He just couldn't remember how, or from where, yet. And if he did know him, that meant that Kermit knew him too. And he'd rather Kermit not remember him until he knew who he was, and how he knew him. It would be easier to deal with Kermit if Nick knew the circumstances surrounding the how he knew him from.

"Sure. Where is he?"

Schanke was half expecting Knight to fight him on this one, and was taken aback by how easily Nick had agreed. "Room 2."

Nick walked off in the direction of room 2 and entered. Schanke took his coffee to room 1.

8:45PM: ROOM 2

Nick sat directly across the table from Peter. He turned on the tape recorder on the desk, and started to question Peter. "Okay, Detective Caine, let's..."

"Please," cut in Peter, "call me Peter. After all we are on the same side, even if you don't know it yet."

"Peter." Nick stated. "What are you doing in Toronto? We haven't received word from your department that..." he added after a momentary pause.

"We're not here on police business."

"Oh? So why did you come to Toronto?"

"We came up to visit my foster father."

"His name?"

"Paul Blaisdell. He's staying at the Royal York. We were suppose to meet him for dinner at 7:00 at the hotel, but he wasn't there."

The mention of Blaisdell's name struck a chord of recognition in Nick. But again, he couldn't place the name.

"If you were meeting at the hotel, what were you doing at..."

"Like I said, Paul wasn't there. He left the address of a friend of his, and we were going to see if he was still there."

"So, what made you stop?"

"We were traveling north, when this car pulled off a side street at warp speed. It almost hit us. I slammed on the brakes, and that's when Kermit noticed the body. Our natural reaction, I guess, was to pull our guns. Although my father hates it. He thinks guns are not the answer. He believes in reasoning..."

"Your father... Blaisdell?"

"No, my real father. He's a Shaolin priest. 'Come to Chinatown, ask for Caine, he will help you'."

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Nick arched his eyebrow and repeated, "Caine?" There was a hint of recognition in his voice. Peter's mind must have been elsewhere because he didn't pick-up on the tone in Nick's voice.

"Kwai Chang Caine." Peter stated.

"Kwai Chang Caine, is your father?" Nick asked.

This time Peter heard the tone. "You know him, detective?"

"Not personally." Nick lied. "You were saying..."

Peter decided not to push the matter. 'Easy Pete. You don't know this guy. It wouldn't help matters to start quizzing him. At least, not now,' Peter thought. "Right. We got out of the car and went over to investigate. I had just checked for a pulse and was about to straighten up when..."

"When we showed up. Any idea who..."

"None."

"What made you get out of the car? For all you knew, he might have been a..."

"Instinct, Detective. Instinct. We saw the body, and instinctively went to check it out." As soon as he'd said it, he thought, 'Now I'm beginning to sound like my father.'

Nick was not liking this night. Too many people from his past were coming together in the same place at the same time. And, he was having trouble remembering where he knew most of them from. 'This isn't good. Not good at all. First it was Kermit, then Blaisdell, and now Kwai Chang Caine. At least Caine I remember. He's not the sort of guy you meet and easily forget. ... Who else is going to turn up tonight? Will my cover be blown? Will I have to move on and leave Toronto?'

9:00PM: ROOM 1

Next door, Schanke was having problems of his own. "All right, Kermit, if that really is your name, why were you crouching over the body?" Schanke was pacing the room, agitated. Talking to him was like talking to a wall. He didn't answer, and when he did it was cryptic.

Kermit was reclined in his chair, his head supported by his interlaced fingers. He would've put his feet up on the table, only Schanke had roughly jerked them from that position twice already, and besides, he didn't quite feel

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like it anyway. Inwardly he seethed at the way this cop was handling him, so smiled to infuriate him. It was working, too. Kermit just kept wondering when his partner was going to come in and play good cop.

"I was doing some deep knee bends. It was a long drive up. I needed some exercise to loosen up." His reply was both reasonable-sounding and sarcastic.

Schanke rolled his eyes heavenward, as if entreating the gods to, just this once, smile on Donald G. Schanke.

9:30PM: 25 KIRKHAM STREET

Paul Blaisdell awoke. It took him a few minutes to open his eyes because of the splitting headache he had, courtesy of the thug who'd brained him. He cautiously sat up. When his head no longer threatened to fall off, he carefully looked around.

The contents of the room surprised him. 'This can't be real? Aside from the fact that there appears to be no windows, or a telephone, this place looks like a one-room apartment. Not a prison cell. Who would kidnap me and place me a room like this? It's as if they want me to feel at home. That's it, they want me to be comfortable so I'll co-operate and do whatever it is they want me to do.'

He noticed a glass of water and a bottle of extra strength Tylenol, centered on the table. He also noticed that there was a video monitor in one corner of the room. He went over to it. It was switched on. He saw a man sitting behind a desk with a computer prominently placed on top. He could see everything but the man's face. Something about this man seemed familiar somehow. He tried to take in what he could see of the man's appearance: he had short dark hair, with bangs, and was dressed impeccably in a black pin-stripe suit, with a snow-white shirt.

Paul tried to think but couldn't. His head was killing him. He glanced again at the water and Tylenol.

Just then the man on the monitor spoke. "It's perfectly safe. I assure you. It was placed there to alleviate any headache you might have." The man had a strong English accent one that Paul recognized. They'd worked together in the past.

"Kerr!" he stated. "What's the meaning of this?!"

"I thought that was self-evident, Blaisdell. When I learned you were in town, I wished to enjoy your company. So I

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dispatched a couple of men to see to it. Unfortunately, they were, how should I say -- a touch over-zealous. I am truly sorry about Gord; rest assured, they have been dealt with. ... Please feel free to use anything in the room available to you. I regret that we will not be meeting face-to-face. Nor will you have access to a telephone. However... you will have access to many fine books, wines, and gourmet meals."

"I demand to speak to Blake. He..."

"Blake? ..." Kerr cut in dismissively, "That fool was severely wounded years ago, on our last raid. He was taken to a sympathetic hospital; but, when it was safe to go, he just disappeared... We searched the area, of course, but all of our leads turned out to be worthless."

"So why am I here, enjoying your company? What..."

"Why, to be bait, of course!"

"Bait? For what? For who?"

"I thought you'd have figured it out by now."

"Kermit!" Paul stated, understanding.

"Yes, Griffin," Kerr answered venomously. "Did you really imagine that I'd forgotten about him?"

"It was a long time ago, Kerr." Paul said wearily. "Does it still matter so much? ... She wouldn't have wanted this... You know that."

"Her death was all his fault," Kerr pronounced with utter conviction.

9:45PM: 96TH PRECINCT

Nick and Schanke were outside the "interview" rooms when Detective Sam Hunt approached them.

"There's a lady at your desk, Nick. Her name is Jean Dickson. We got lucky; she witnessed the entire thing."

"Thanks." Nick stated.

Detective Hunt was about to walk away, when Nick called him, "Oh Sam!" Detective Hunt looked back at Nick. "Prepare a line-up with Caine and Griffin."

"Right, Nick," said Hunt, and off he went.

Nick turned to Schanke. "C'mon, let's go talk to her."

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Nick and Schanke headed for their desks.

When they approached, Jean Dickson stood up. Jean was about 5'4". She had a Rubenesque figure. Her hair was short and mostly black, with a few grey hairs around the temple. She was wearing a black, full-length winter coat, black walking boots, and black pants. She also had on a bright red v-neck sweater, with a blue shirt peeking through, and fingerless gloves. One pair of glasses, were propped on her head, and another, were perched firmly on her nose. She thrust her hand out to Nick. "Detective Knight?"

"Please, call me Nick," he invited, while shaking her hand. "This is my partner, Don Schanke." Jean let go of Nick's hand and shook Schanke's. "Detective Hunt said that, you're a witness..." he trailed off, inviting her to finish the sentence.

"... to the murder and kidnapping earlier, yes, that's right" Jean said.

"Wait, kidnapping? What kidnapping?" chimed in Nick and Schanke.

"There were two men walking down the street; the dead guy, and his friend. A car pulled up and two men got out. One shot the dead guy, the other knocked out the friend. Then they put the guy in the car, and took off. I went and called 911, and the operator told me a unit had already been dispatched."

Schanke was already scribbling down notes. He looked at Jean and said, "Would you mind describing the car for us ma'am?"

"Call me, Jean," she said. Her description of the car also matched Peter's car. Unfortunately she hadn't gotten the license plate number either.

"Was the plate an Ontario plate? Or another province? Maybe even the US?" Nick asked

"I'm not 100% certain, but... I think it was a local plate. All I remember was that the plate was white," replied Jean.

"Do you feel up to looking at a line-up tonight," Nick asked.

"Sure! Anything I can do to help."

"Schank, go see if that line-up is ready."

"Whatever you say, partner." Schanke grumbled.

"Would you care for something to drink while you wait?"

"Actually, I am kinda thirsty now that you mention it."

"I'll take you to the cafeteria while my partner sets up the line-up. Come on." Nick and Jean left the room, heading for the cafeteria.

A short while later Nick, Schanke, and Jean were in the room, looking at the line-up. Peter and Kermit were numbers 2 and 5 respectively. 1 and 3 were suspects in a variety store robbery, and 4 and 6 were undercover cops.

To Nick, both Peter and Kermit seemed calm, maybe to calm. Well, they are cops, I'm sure they've been in line-ups before. They've probably also conducted line-ups before. They'll know everything we're going to do before we do it.

Schanke asked each man to step forward, waited 10 seconds, and then asked them to step back. At the end of it, Jean had failed to identify any of them.

Nick asked Schanke to bring Caine and Kermit to his desk, while he brought Jean over to the police artist, Detective Cat Rocher.

When Nick returned to his desk, Kermit looked at him and asked, "Well? Are you convinced that we didn't do it yet?"

"Our witness is with Detective Rocher right now working on a composite of the two men she saw. She couldn't ID you in the line-up. She also said that the man who was killed, wasn't alone. The man who was with him was..."

Just then an explosive "Dammit!!!!" cut off Nick's sentence. Nick looked to where the scream had come from. It was Detective Cat Rocher.

Nick looked back to Peter and Kermit, "Just a minute. I'll be right back." Nick walked over to Cat.

Cat was staring at a blank computer screen. Nick walked up to her, and placed his hands on her shoulders. "What's wrong, Cat?"

Cat leaned back in her chair, so that the back of her chair, and her neck, were touching Nick. "This damn computer. That's 3 times this week, and it's only Monday. If it crashes one more time, I'll..." She made an angry fist and shook it at the computer.

Nick tried rubbing her shoulders to calm her down. "Easy. It's probably just the weather. You know how the cold weather affects the computer."

Nick's touch had a soothing affect on Cat. She felt safe around Nick. It was no secret she had a crush on him. A lot of women did. But she saw the way he acted around Doctor Lambert. And the talk around the station was that Nick and Nat were more than friends. Cat had, on occasion questioned Schanke about it, and Schanke always said the same thing, They're only friends. Schanke had also told her about Janette DuCharme. He admitted not knowing what Nick's real relationship with her was, only that, at times they can't seem to keep their hands off each other, and others... Cat had seen Janette once, when she came to the station. She had to admit, Janette was gorgeous. Every man's ideal woman. Natalie and Janette were complete opposites.

Cat wished she could just escape with Nick. 'If I could get him alone, away from the precinct, away from Natalie, I know I could get him to like me. Sure, I'm no Janette, but I know I could make him happy.'

Right now, part of her was surrendering to the sensations Nick's touch was bringing out in her. The other part, the cop part, knew that Nick didn't mean anything romantic in the touch. The cop part won, and she tried to focus on what she was doing. She calmed down and said, "I know, it's just that..."

Schanke, Peter, and Kermit arrived. Kermit leaned in over the desk, and looked from the computer screen to Cat. Then he said, "What seems to be the problem?"

Cat looked at Kermit. "Who are you?"

Kermit looked at her. Nick introduced them. "Detective Cat Rocher, Detectives Kermit Griffin, and Peter Caine. They're from Sloanville."

Cat looked at them. "Sloanville? Really? I have a few friends down there."

Peter smiled, and jumped in, "Maybe we can talk later, then."

Cat smiled at Peter, "In fact there is one person who I e-mail regularly."

"Oh really?" Kermit asked with a raised eyebrow "Maybe I know them?" he added questioningly.

"I doubt it," Cat replied. "He doesn't sound like the sort of person you'd associate with. His handle is Robin Hood"

Kermit gave her a playful look and waggled his eyebrows. "Nice to meet you, Aphrodite."

Cat's face went blood red as she thought of all those messages she'd sent him. She would have slid off the chair, and gone under the desk, had Nick not been holding her shoulders so tightly. Some of the messages had been pretty hot. In fact, one could say that the modem had overheated more than once, and taken days to cool down. When she composed herself, she looked at Kermit and said, "You're a cop?!"

Nick looked lost. He glanced at Schanke, and seeing the way his partner was looking at him, realized he was still holding Cat's shoulders. He also realized Schanke was probably reading more into it than he had intended. He released his grip on Cat's shoulders. Cat straightened up in her chair.

Kermit turned to Peter and said, "Why does everyone keep asking me that?"

Peter shrugged his shoulders, "Maybe you need more PR. I'll give Sandra Mason at Channel 3 Action News a call when we get back. She'll help you. Besides, it'll get her off of my back for a while."

Nick and Schanke exchanged a completely puzzled look. They were wondering what a TV news reporter had to do with anything.

Kermit looked at Peter and replied, "Oh, yeah. Sure. I really don't think so, Pete."

Peter responded with, "Why not?"

Kermit decided to return to the problem at hand. He turned to Cat and said, "So, what..."

At that moment the computer came back to life. While booting up, it started displaying a million errors. Some of which were:

\WINDOWS Damaged Directory.

\WINDOWS\flock.bmp invalid cluster.

\WINDOWS\getstart.rec invalid cluster.

\WINDOWS\groups.b\$\$ invalid cluster.

\WINDOWS\help.ico invalid cluster.

\WINDOWS\helphk.dll invalid cluster.

\WINDOWS\honey.bmp invalid cluster.

\WINDOWS\mouse.ini invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\msd.pif invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\msd.ini invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\msworks.ann invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\msworks.ini invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\mwbackup.ini invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\pifedit.pif invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\progman.ini invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\redbrick.bmp invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\rivets.bmp invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\service.rec invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\shed.ini invalid cluster.
\WINDOWS\SYSTEM\latinwd0.ttf cross-linked at cluster 78.
\DOS\keyboard.sys cross-linked at cluster 78.
\DOS\msbackup.exe cross-linked at cluster 805..
\DOS\mwbackup.hlp cross-linked at cluster 688.
\DOS\qbasic.exe cross-linked at cluster 178.
\DOS\wntools.grp cross-linked at cluster 944.
\MSWORKS\msworks.hlp cross-linked at cluster 6,138.
Lost cluster chain at cluster 29,446, 1 cluster long.

The errors scrolled by so fast that the only ones Cat could read were the ones that were on the screen when it stopped scrolling.

When the last message appeared, the computer prompted, "Do you wish to convert the lost chains into files? (Y/N)" Cat just stared at the screen and muttered, "Great, just great."

Kermit looked at her and said, "Here, let me."

Cat got out of her chair, and said, "Be my guest."

Kermit sat down and interlocked his fingers, then stretched them. It was his warm-up exercise. Then, his fingers just flew across the keyboard.

The first thing he typed, was the letter 'N'. Then the dos prompt appeared on the screen. He typed "dir *.*" at the prompt, and the computer listed all the directories that were on the C drive. Kermit was looking for a certain directory, NORTON. And he found it. So, he typed cd Norton, which changed the directory from the root directory to the Norton directory. Then he typed 'nnd c:'. The computer executed the command, and entered the Norton Disk Doctor program. When the menu appeared he selected option 1: Diagnose Disk. Then he hit enter, and enter again. The computer started analyzing the disk. While analyzing the disk, the computer asked him if he wanted to correct errors as it found them. He kept saying yes. When that was done, another menu came up. He selected the 'thorough test' option and hit enter. The computer again analyzed the disk. Cluster by cluster. Whenever it found an invalid cluster it asked Kermit if he wanted to move it to a valid cluster. Kermit always said yes.

While the computer was analyzing the surface of the disk, Peter turned to ask Nick a question.

"Nick..." Peter began.

Nick turned to him.

"What were you saying about the man who was with the dead guy?" he continued.

"Jean said he was kidnapped."

Peter looked at Jean, wondering if the other man could have been Paul. After all the murder did happen pretty close to the address Paul had written in the note. "Can you describe him?"

Jean started to describe the man who was kidnapped. He did indeed sound like Paul. Peter took out his wallet, and removed a picture.

"Is this him?" he asked, as he handed her the picture.

"Yes. That's him." Jean replied.

Peter looked to Kermit, "Well, whatever Paul wanted you up here for, it just got worse."

Kermit looked to Cat. "Have you run Norton before?"

Cat looked at him and replied "Of course."

Kermit smiled. "Good. Then I'll leave it to you, sweetcakes. When you exit, all the problems should be gone. Try running a defrag and a check-disk on the 'c' drive when you return to the dos prompt, just to be certain."

Kermit rose, and Cat took her chair back. "Thanks, honeybunch."

Kermit then pointed his finger at her, in a gun position and made a clicking noise as he pretended to shoot her. "Modem ya later, Aphrodite."

"See ya in Cyberspace, Robin," said Cat as she returned her attention to Jean.

Schanke looked from Peter to Kermit, "Wait... Wait... Are you saying that the guy who was kidnapped was the guy you two were meeting?"

Peter and Kermit exchanged a look and then nodded. "Yeah, my foster father, Paul Blaisdell." Peter declared.

Again, Nick couldn't shake the feeling that he should know Blaisdell, and Kermit. But how...? From where...? From when...? "Maybe you guys should file a missing persons report. Tell us what we need to know. Like..."

Kermit looked at Nick, and cut in. "Can we go somewhere quieter to talk?"

Nick looked at Schanke, then Kermit. "Sure."

Nick, Schanke, Peter and Kermit all headed for an "interview" room. It was the quietest place they could go to, to talk.

Jean looked to Cat. "You know that guy?"

Cat looked at her questioningly "Which one?"

"Kermit."

"Yeah. We met on an Internet computer-tech chat line. He never mentioned he was a cop. Then again, I never told him I was one either."

"So, Kermit, is a computer-whiz?"

"Yeah."

"I guess it got boring talking computer lingo all the time."

"We didn't."

"What?"

"I said we *met*, on a compu-tech chat line. Then we started corresponding with each other about lots of other stuff."

"Oh, like what?"

Cat took a deep breath, but before she could answer, the computer came back to life. Cat entered the composite program.

"Okay, so why don't you start describing the suspects to me?"

Jean started to describe the suspects.

Cat had a feeling that the two detectives, Peter and, what was his name -- Kermit? -- Might want a copy of the suspects as well. 'Maybe they might recognize them. She thought. I can't believe Kermit is Robin Hood! He's nothing like I pictured him. Peter on the other hand, kind of reminds me of Nick. I wonder...'

Jean described the first suspect, as being 6'2", about 220 lbs, with short dark hair. The second was about 5'10", beefy, approx. 250 lbs, very long blond hair, a mustache, two scars on his face and one across his neck.

They had just finished printing the composite of the last suspect, when Nick, Schanke, Peter, and Kermit, exited the "interview" room.

Jean noticed them leaving the room. She looked to Cat, "Are we done now?"

Cat turned to her, "Yep. You're free to go."

Jean stood up, "Thanks."

Cat smiled at her, "No problem."

Jean walked over to Nick and gang, who were headed in her direction.

She looked at Nick, "Detective Rocher is finished with me. Is there anything else you need me for?"

He looked at her and said, "Not right now. Thank you for coming in tonight. You were a big help. If we need you, we'll call."

Jean smiled and said, "Okay. Good night Detectives."

"Good night," said Nick, Schanke, Peter, and Kermit.

Jean walked off, and Peter looked at Nick. "Can we go now, Detective?"

Nick looked at him, "Sure, just leave the address where you'll be, in case we need to get in touch with you."

Peter grabbed a pen and a piece of paper, and wrote down: The Royal York Hotel. Room 757. Then he and Kermit turned and headed out.

As they passed Cat's desk, she called out. "Peter?" she said, wanting to avoid Kermit, for now.

Peter stopped and looked at her, "Yeah?"

She smiled at him and motioned him to come over, by waving her finger, "C'mere. I have something for you."

Kermit gave Peter a raised eyebrow and softly said to him, "Go see what she wants, but remember: Aphrodite is the goddess of love."

Peter just smiled at Kermit and said, "Yeah, yeah, and she was in love with Ares. I know my mythology, Kermit. But tell me, why Robin Hood?"

Kermit gave him a look and said, "I'll let you think about that kid."

Peter thought about it but didn't have a clue.

"I'm going to catch up to Jean, I'll meet you outside." Kermit said.

Peter nodded and said, "Okay."

Kermit headed for the exit. Peter headed for Cat. 'I wonder who her Ares is? Or if there is one!' Peter thought to himself as he made his way to Cat's desk. Upon reaching Cat, he leaned on the top of her computer monitor. "You beckoned."

Cat handed him a manila envelope. "Here's a copy of the composites Jean gave us. I thought you might want them."

Peter smiled, took the envelope, and said, "Thanks"

Cat looked at him and said, "I'm sorry about your father. But don't worry, Nick's the best. He hasn't missed one yet."

That statement raised Peter's curiosity. 'No cop is perfect. We all miss one every now and then. I wonder what his secret is?' Peter thought and shot a glance at Nick.

'Maybe he's got some sort of secret weapon. Like me. I have the insights my training from the temple gave me, and now I have my father too. I wonder what his is?'

Peter returned his glance to Cat. He smiled at her and said, "Thanks again." He was about to head out, but turned back and said, "Did he ever tell you why he chose Robin Hood?"

"Not really. He said something about, how Robin was an outlaw, but also a good guy. I guess he was comparing himself to him. But, after learning his name, I can see an obvious connection."

"Oh?" Peter questioned. "What?"

"Well, Kermit the Frog is green, right?"

Peter nods, and replies questioningly, "Yeah?"

"The Robin Hood of legend supposedly wore green."

"Oh!" replied an enlightened Peter. Then, changing the subject, he said "Maybe I'll get your e-mail address from him, and we can talk."

Cat smiled at him. "I'd like that."

Peter turned and headed out after Kermit. She watched him walk off. 'I'd like that a lot,' she thought.

OUTSIDE STATION

Jean was heading to her car, when Kermit called her name. "Miss Dickson?"

Jean stopped and looked at him. "Yes, Detective?"

Kermit walked up to her, and stopped. "I hear it's pretty dangerous around here at this time of night," he said, as he smiled and took his glasses off briefly, to make eye contact. "Can I walk you to your car?"

"Where's your friend?" Jean inquired.

"He's coming." Kermit said, putting his shades back on.

At that moment he heard Peter yell, "Kermit! Wait up."

"See, I told ya," Kermit continued. Peter ran over.

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"Sure, I suppose you could. Besides people would think twice about mugging me, with you beside me." Jean said as she flashed Kermit a smile.

Peter arrived as Jean said 'you beside me...' and gave Kermit a raised eyebrow.

Kermit looked at Peter, "We're gonna walk her to her car."

Peter looked at him, "Oh." They started to walk off when Peter remembered something, and stopped.

Kermit looked at him. "What is it?" he said.

"My car." Peter stated. "It's still at the corner of Bay and Adelaide."

Jean saw the look of concern on Peter's face and said, "I can give you guys a lift. I'm going that way anyway. I live near there."

Both Kermit and Peter looked at Jean and simultaneously said, "Thanks."

INSIDE STATION

Nick was watching the three of them through the window. Schanke had gone to the coffee machine. Nick saw them get into Jean's car, and he returned to his desk.

"Sunglasses, at night. I wonder if he ever takes those things off?" Schanke was saying as he returned to his desk.

"I was thinking the same thing." Nick replied. 'I knew someone once who always wore sunglasses. He... Wait. That's it. That's where I know him from.' Nick thought as he sat down at his desk; the memories of the past flooding back.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: NICK'S)

Nick looked around and heaved a sigh. This was the fourth group to have run into an ambush in the last two days; and this time Andre Ramirez, one of the lower-ranking members of Blake's 'War Council', had been captured.

Whoever Villarreal's new tactician was, he had to be a genius. While Roger Blake's methods were often haphazard, he had some very good people working for him -- like Kopolevski -- and they had accomplished quite a bit before General Andreas' mysterious death.

Which is another question. How exactly did Andreas die? None of Blake's group were responsible, and no one in the government seems to have done it. But the damage the report said he'd taken was so considerable that he must have been pushed; and even that can't account for the severity of his injur...

He was abruptly distracted by the sound of arguing just outside the infirmary.

"I don't care what you think, Griffin; I do the..."

"I'm the one who's providing the weapons, Kerr..."

"But that doesn't give you..."

"Stop it, the two of you!" Blake's voice exclaimed, loudly, as the group entered the infirmary.

Nick studied them as they approached. Blake was in the lead, a worried expression on his face; following him were Cali, Kerr, and Zelda -- Cali's twin sister; following them were Griffin and Kopolevski. Griffin was still wearing those damned sunglasses of his, and he and Kerr were glaring at each other furiously.

"What's wrong?" Nick asked.

"Have you got the casualty report for us, Doctor?" Blake demanded.

Nick took a deep breath. "Yeah," he replied. "And it's not good."

Blake ran his hand through his hair and sighed heavily. "When is a casualty report ever good?" he inquired rhetorically.

"How do you mean, Nicholas?" Cali asked, right on the heels of Blake's question.

Nick cringed slightly at the name; he didn't care to be reminded of LaCroix -- especially not now, considering what he was doing. He could almost hear his master's scorn.

Then he remembered that Blake was waiting for an answer and pushed all thought of LaCroix to the back of his mind. "I've just finished preliminary surgery on the latest patrol; we've got some very serious injuries among them, I'm afraid. Tarrant's all right -- just barely -- but a bullet nicked Laurie's lung, and Joe Greene got his leg shattered..."

"What about Andre?" Blake demanded.

Nick glanced away, not wanting to be the one to tell them; but evidently no one else had mentioned it. "Andre... was captured," he said reluctantly. "According to Tarrant, the group of soldiers that ambushed them were apparently looking to take prisoners."

96TH PRECINCT

Nick was abruptly brought back to the present as Schanke was finishing a sentence. "... partner!" was all that Nick had heard of Schanke's sentence.

"What?" Nick said, returning to the present.

"I was just saying 'wakey-wakey, partner!' Boy, you sure pick the weirdest times to zone out on me, Nick. Where were you this time? Or do I want to know"

"Sorry, I was just thinking about the case."

'Like where I knew Kermit from,' Nick thought. 'And now that I know. How am I gonna keep him from remembering me?'

JEAN'S CAR

Jean dropped Kermit and Peter off at Peter's car. Peter asked Jean for her phone number in case they needed it. Jean gave Peter a business card and drove off. Peter and Kermit got into Peter's car, and returned to the hotel.

11:30PM: THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - OUTSIDE

Peter and Kermit arrived at the hotel. Peter took his luggage out of his car, and Kermit got his luggage from his car.

THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - LOBBY

They entered the hotel, and asked the front desk clerk for an extra key to room 757, since Paul's note had said that he'd left permission to supply Kermit with one, should he ask. The clerk, the same one as before, gave them one -- after verifying that Kermit was who he said he was.

THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - 7TH FLOOR

They went up to room 757. Peter inserted the electronic key into the slot and they entered the room.

THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

He flicked on the lights. There were two beds in the room. One near the window, and one near the closet. Kermit placed his laptop on the bed near the closet. Peter noticed that Paul's suitcase was neatly packed and in a corner.

"Looks, like Paul wasn't planning on staying much longer", he said.

"What makes you say that?" Kermit asked.

"His case is packed," stated Peter.

"Oh, that," Kermit said dismissively. "Doesn't mean a thing. It's SMOP."

"It's what?" asked a confused Peter.

"S.M.O.P." reiterated Kermit. Seeing the confused, blank stare on Peter's face, he added, "Standard Mercenary Operating Procedure. You must be ready to leave at a moments notice."

Kermit started to hang up his clothes in the closet. Peter noticed that each hanger contained an identical outfit as the one Kermit was currently wearing.

"Ummm, Kermit?" Peter inquired.

"Hmm?" Kermit grunted.

"Why do you have so many identical outfits?"

"It works for me," he replied flippantly. "I find a style I like, I stick to it. It also means I don't have to decide what to wear in the morning," he continued. "Which bed do you want?"

Seeing that Kermit had already claimed the one by the closet with his laptop, Peter said, "The one by the window."

Kermit grinned briefly and said, "Good choice." Kermit finished unpacking.

Peter went over to his bed and laid down on it, staring at the ceiling, thinking. He thought of something to say, and

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was turning over to say it to Kermit, when he saw him remove a small green frog clock and place it on the night table. Peter raised an eyebrow, and stopped saying whatever it was he was going to say. Kermit looked up at him.

"It adds a personal touch, doncha think?"

Peter just said, "Whatever."

Kermit sat on the bed.

"I'm gonna order dinner, want something?" Peter asked Kermit.

"Dinner? It's 11:30 at night, Pete."

"I know, but I haven't eaten since," Peter paused as he tried to remember just when the last time he ate was. "I don't know... before we got to town. And I'm starved."

"The kitchen is closed." Kermit replied as he laid on the bed, his hands interlocked under his head, supporting it.

"Then we'll get something delivered." Peter went over to the phone and opened the booklet that listed all the restaurants that delivered to the hotel. "What are you in the mood for?"

Kermit didn't answer.

"Kermit? ... Are you there? Kermit?"

"What...?" Kermit asked, snapping to attention.

"I said... What would you like to eat?" repeated Peter.

"Whatever you're having is fine with me."

Peter searched the book and then placed the call. Kermit drifted off into the past...

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: KERMIT'S)

"What about Andre?" Blake demanded.

Michaelson glanced away, momentarily. "Andre... was captured," he replied reluctantly. "According to Tarrant, the group of soldiers that ambushed them were apparently looking to take prisoners."

Kermit's mouth tightened as Michaelson mentioned Andre's capture. He'd become fairly good friends with the communications man during his time here, and he hated to think of the gentle man in the hands of Villarreal's security police.

"We ought to make a frontal assault, get him out of there," Kopolevski said from beside him.

Kermit grimaced in sympathy. He would have preferred a frontal assault as well. 'But that will only get us killed, particularly with a strategist as good as Villarreal's new general seems to be,' he thought to himself. 'And while Nicky's a good man to have at your back -- I'd rather have him at my back than anyone else here -- he does have the bad habit of going for the straightforward response, rather than the subtle one.'

"Hmmm. That's a possibility," Blake said.

Kermit stared at the rebel leader in disbelief. Oh, he'd realized in his first week here that Blake was a fanatic, and so not the best at making good strategic decisions -- at least not on a small scale. Blake was good at the overall larger picture, he just had a problem with the minor details. This would be an absolute disaster!

In front of him, he saw Dr. Michaelson wince as well; which brought to mind some of the unanswered questions about the doctor who seemed to know so much, too much, about tactics...

But he didn't have time to ponder that; what he had to do was figure out a way to save Blake from making the biggest single mistake that could be made.

'Blaisdell', Kermit thought abruptly; 'I could call in Paul. Surely Blake would listen to him!'

ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

The sound of Peter's voice and the smell of food returned Kermit to the present. "Dinner's ready," Peter called.

Peter and Kermit ate dinner. During dinner they discussed Paul's disappearance and what his connection to the dead guy, whoever he was, was. Kermit knew the dead man, despite his statement to the contrary, earlier. He decided he wasn't going to tell Peter. At least, not yet.

The discussion then turned to the two investigating detectives: Nick Knight and Don Schanke. At the mention of Nick, Peter remembered the envelope Cat had given him. He opened the envelope. Peter and Kermit looked at the pictures.

The more Kermit thought about Nick, the more he felt he knew him. He kept getting this nagging feeling that they had met before. Somewhere. Sometime. He just couldn't remember where.

'It will come to me eventually. I hardly ever forget a face, or a name,' he thought. And the fact that he hadn't placed Nick yet, was really, really, starting to bother him.

After dinner, Kermit worked on his computer, while Peter watched the movie *Interview with the Vampire*.

Kermit searched though every database he could access, looking for information on Roger Blake and his team.

It turned out that Blake had disappeared shortly after they'd overthrown that dictator. Kerr apparently searched for Blake for a few years, but no trace was found. Phila had stayed with Kerr searching for Blake. There was no trace of any of them after 1981.

Kermit smiled grimly. It didn't surprise him. After all, they were both computer geniuses.

Peter went to bed around 1:00am. Kermit was so totally engrossed by his search that he didn't notice -- until, he turned to asked Peter something, "Pete, I..." and noticed the kid was fast asleep.

Kermit continued his search till almost 5:00am. Then, turned off the computer, and got ready for bed. He put on his pyjama's, which of course were green, and went to sleep. He slept fitfully.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - HOTEL LOBBY (FLASHBACK: KERMIT'S)

Kermit glanced around as he entered the lobby of the cheap hotel, noticing a commotion near the front desk. As he got a bit closer, he heard a girl's voice shouting in pidgin Spanish, "My friend, he is here! I know he is! Look at book, tell me which room!"

Off to one side, Kermit saw Kopolevski leaning ever-so-casually against the wall, grinning slightly as he watched the show. Kermit raised one eyebrow questioningly, and Kopolevski gave him a slight nod and gestured toward the commotion with a grin.

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'Oh, yeah. Nice diversion, Nicky. That should keep the secret police -- or any other interested parties -- occupied while I make the call... I hope. ... I wonder where he found her?'

He entered the small phone booth, and deposited enough coins for an international call. He then dialed Blaisdell's number, waited as it went through the cut-out that would keep the call from being traced, and then tapped his fingers impatiently as he waited for Paul to answer.

"Hello?" came his friend's voice, finally.

"Hi, boss; Tadpole here. Nice to talk to you," he declared. "You got those season tickets for soccer yet?"

There was a pause, and Kermit grinned slightly as he waited. Blaisdell hated soccer.

Then came the slight click on the line that said that Blaisdell had secured it.

"Yeah I've got them," Blaisdell replied. "But surely you didn't call to just ask me that. What's up?"

Kermit shot a glance at Kopolevski, who shook his head slightly.

'No one paying attention to me so far,' he thought.

"I thought you might want in on the fun," he answered. "You remember what I told you about my new job? Well, this friend of mine seems to be in over his head, and could really use your talents."

Blaisdell's voice took on a thoughtful tone. "I should be able to," he replied. "Just give me a few days to tie things up here, and I'll see you in five, okay?"

"Sure, that'll do just fine. Thanks, bossman," Kermit added irreverently, feeling a sense of relief go through him.

9:00AM TUESDAY: THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

Kermit woke with a start. 'What? Where?' went through his mind. Then he realized he was in the hotel room, with Peter. He glanced at the clock. It read 9:00am. Since Paul had mentioned Kerr, he hadn't been able to sleep much. His memories wouldn't let him. He got out of bed, and headed for the shower.

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As he was shaving, he remembered the poisoned bullets, and that he was one of the few who'd survived. He shivered, thinking of those who died. He could so easily have been one of them. If not for Doctor -- what was his name?

"You're slipping Kermit. That makes two people whose names you can't remember..." Kermit mumbled to himself as he looked in the mirror.

The dead haunted his dreams at night, now, more than ever. But, he figured it was a small price to pay: Restless nights in exchange for life. Though, he admitted to himself, sometimes he wished that he'd just died. It was a deeply buried thought and it rarely, if ever, found its way to the surface.

He left the bathroom, and started to get dressed.

PETER'S DREAM -- THE SHAOLIN TEMPLE -- 1975

Peter was walking through the temple when he heard what sounded like some sort of wildcat, growling. He followed the growls. He knew he was getting closer, because the growling was getting louder.

As Peter approached the room where the growls were coming from, he felt this overwhelming power come over him. A power that seemed to be telling him not to open that door. Peter could hear voices behind the door.

He recognized some of them: his father, Khan, Ping Hi, and the stranger; the one who'd arrived a few days ago, the one Ping Hi addressed as Old One. A name which seemed rather odd to Peter as the man did not appear to be very old. He looked no more than 30.

Peter could not make out what they were saying, as they were speaking a language he did not know.

Peter slowly walked up to the door, and opened it, just a crack. He couldn't believe what he saw. The Old One was strapped to a table and his father, Khan, Ping Hi, and two other monks, were standing around him. The Old One was the source of the wildcat growls.

Peter was watching for about a second, when the Old One turned and glared at him. His eyes were blood red, and his canine teeth had protruded into fangs. 'A vampire?' Peter thought.

Peter's eyes locked with the Old One's, and he felt the man calling him, drawing him to him. The spell was broken when Caine turned to see what had captivated the Old One's attention.

"Peter!" Caine yelled. "Leave us. At Once."

Peter closed the door and ran down the hall.

THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

Kermit looking over at the still sleeping Peter, called out, "Rise and shine, kid. Time to get to work. We've got to find Kerr."

He picked up a pillow to throw at Peter, when Peter suddenly jumped out of bed.

"My god!!! He's vampire!!!" Peter exclaimed.

"What?"

"Nick Knight. He's a vampire."

"What makes..."

"I saw him, Kermit. Years ago. At the temple."

"Pete, I...."

"I must have buried the memory."

"Or your imagination is on overdrive. It was a dream, kid. You fell asleep watching *Interview with the Vampire*, last night, and your mind made it up."

"But, it seemed so real Kermit."

"Did it feel like a memory?"

"Well, no, not really."

"Then it wasn't. It was a dream. Besides why would a vampire be in a temple?"

Peter had to admit that Kermit was making sense.

3:30PM: KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

Nick was sitting on the black leather couch, his coffee table was covered with police files and paperwork. He was reading through one file when the elevator door opened and Natalie entered.

"Brrr. Am I losing it, or is it actually colder in here than it is outside?" she said, wrapping her arms around herself, rubbing her shoulders.

Nick looked up from the file he was reading and said. "Hmm? Sorry. I didn't notice." Nick went over to the thermostat.

As he passed her, she looked to him and said, "I'm going to make myself a cup a coffee. I'd ask if you wanted one but... Wait, isn't it time for your..."

"... low cal, no taste, gross color, protein drink. Yeah. It is."

After plugging in the kettle, she brought his protein drink over to him and said, "What do you mean gross color? It's the same color as your Caddy!"

He elaborated, "On my car, it looks fine. For my drink... well..." he pulled a face, "let's just say I prefer red."

"That could be arranged you know," she stated.

Nick looked at her.

"A little red food coloring would do the trick."

"It wouldn't be the same Nat."

She shook her head, then went back to the kitchen and finished making her coffee. Once it was ready, she brought the cup back to the sofa and sat beside him.

She sipped her coffee as he talked about his latest case. His arm was around her, trying to help her to warm up. She appreciated the sentiment, although she seriously doubted it would work -- his body temperature tended to be on the low side. "Nick?"

"Hmmm?"

"Were those two cops involved in the killing last night?"

He looked at her, "No. They were just the first on the scene. Coincidence, that's all."

"I'm glad. I hate to think of cops going bad"

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"Mmm," he agreed. "Did I tell you that tonight wasn't the first time I met Detective Kermit Griffin?"

"Oh?" Nat inquired, her eyebrow arching.

"When I met him before he wasn't a cop."

"What? Wait... Just when was the first time you met him?"

"It was a long time ago."

"How long ago? 100? 200 years?"

"Not that long, after all he is a mortal."

Natalie wasn't sure she liked the way he said that word, *mortal*. She couldn't be sure if he meant it as a compliment or an insult.

"I met him in 1974," he continued. "And it wasn't only him. The kidnapping victim, Paul Blaisdell, he was also there."

"Tell me about it?"

Nick took a deep breath, and ventured off into his past. "Well, it began in South America..."

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: NICK'S)

Nick grimaced as he heard the sound of arguing from outside the small tent, where he was working on an antidote to the poison some of the secret police used in their bullets. 'Kermit and Kerr. Again?' he thought, and strode to the door of the tent.

It was indeed Kermit and Kerr; they were facing off in the middle of the clearing in front of the infirmary cave, exchanging what sounded like sarcastic insults.

'Damn it,' Nick thought, glancing up.

It was late afternoon, which meant that he couldn't leave the tent quite yet; and it appeared that the entire camp was about to get involved. Kopolevski was cheering Griffin -- and jeering at Kerr; Juan Sanchez was bristling at every word Griffin said; and even Blake looked like he was about to get involved.

This situation is getting way too serious, Nick reflected, snarling to himself. He could almost smell the tension in the air. And he couldn't do a damn thing about it, not right now.

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'The problem is that they're going to tear the camp apa...'

His thought was interrupted as one of the sentries suddenly appeared in the clearing, waving his arm for Blake.

"Blake! We got someone coming in!" the sentry called; and Nick relaxed as the tension level lowered. It didn't disappear fully, but at least the sentry seemed to have distracted the rebels enough to prevent a fight.

"Who?" Blake demanded, breaking away from the circle around Kermit and Kerr.

"Dunno, never seen him before. He looks Americano, though."

"He? Just one man?" Blake asked, and Nick saw Kermit move up behind the rebel leader.

"What does he look like?" the mercenary asked.

"Uh, black hair, with a bit of grey... tall... he's dressed in tourist clothing, tan... he's got two big duffels..."

"That's probably Paul Blaisdell, the friend I told you about," Kermit declared, moving forward. "I'll go back with you, check it out."

"Right," Blake said. "Come on."

Nick was relieved that the confrontation between Griffin and Kerr had been averted, for the moment at least, and returned his attention to his work.

An hour later, the sun was just setting and Nick had just finished brewing the fourth, and last, vial of antidote, when he heard the sound of voices approaching.

"...the problem between you and Kerr?" came a new voice.

"Personality conflict," Kermit declared, as they entered the small tent. "I have one, and he doesn't..."

"Oh, doc," the mercenary added, seeing Nick there, "I didn't realize you were in here."

"It's all right," Nick replied, getting up from the chair he'd been sitting in. He glanced curiously at Kermit's companion.

"Doc, this is Paul Blaisdell," Kermit declared. "Paul, this is Doc Michaelson; he handles all the wounded this group gets in."

Nick eyed Blaisdell, wondering exactly why Kermit had called the other mercenary here.

"What were you doing in here, anyway, doc?" Kermit added, wrinkling his nose in distaste. "It really stinks!"

Nick shrugged. "The secret police sometimes use poisoned bullets," he replied. "I've been experimenting all day, and I think that I finally found an antidote."

"I don't know how you can stand the stench!" Kermit exclaimed, shaking his head.

"You get used to it after a while," Nick replied. Certainly it helps disguise the scent of blood... His nostrils flared at the thought; but the smell of the other herbs he'd been trying out overpowered the smell of the two mercenaries' blood.

"Griffin!" came the call from outside the tent, and Kermit grimaced.

"My turn for sentry duty," he muttered. "At least I don't have to share it with Kerr..." he added, as he left the tent.

Nick watched him go, and then turned to find Blaisdell looking at him curiously. "Do you know what the problem between Kermit and this Kerr is?" the mercenary asked.

"Well..." Nick considered for a moment. "First of all, Kerr doesn't really get along with anyone, except maybe Cali Norau; but Griffin and Kerr seem to have just hit it off wrong. Unfortunately," he added, grimacing, "they've started to drag the entire camp into it. Your arrival was very well-timed; the sentry who came to tell us you had arrived appeared just before the camp would have broken out in a wide-scale fight."

"That's good," Blaisdell replied. "It looks like I'll have my work cut out for me, trying to keep them apart..."

"I doubt that's the reason Griffin asked you here," Nick countered, starting to pick up some of the small vials of antidote. "When he talked Blake into letting you come, he mentioned that you had some very useful talents; what are they? Mine are medicinal, of course, and Blake has people skills..."

"Intelligence and Organization," Blaisdell answered after a moment. "Planning and carrying out an operation to its successful conclusion."

Nick felt a surge of relief. "Excellent!" he declared. "General Andreas was assassinated several weeks ago. We don't know by whom. And the newest member of Villarreal's tactical staff is a strategic genius. We've been losing people steadily since he, whoever he is, took over the reins; and Blake has no strategic skills whatsoever." After a short pause, he continued, recalling the immediate need, "And, the secret police have captured a member of..."

He was cut off by the sudden shout from outside the tent, "Doctor! Doctor Michaelson!"

Nick hurried out, knowing what he'd find.

Coming into the clearing were the remnants of the twenty-man patrol that had set out at dusk; there were only four of them, and three of those were bleeding profusely.

Nick stiffened for a moment as the scent of fresh, warm, blood hit him. But only for a moment. He managed to push his hunger down and strode forward rapidly, letting the urgency of the situation take over his mind.

As he started to help Kessel into the infirmary, he could hear Cali asking, "Where's Zelda? ... Kerr, where is she?"

Kerr's reply was equally audible to Nick's vampiric hearing. "They got her, Cal. She's been captured."

KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

"So what happened then," Nat, her curiosity piqued, was very intrigued.

"I ran into someone in the palace. Someone I hadn't expected to be there."

"Let me guess, LaCroix, right?" she hazarded a guess.

Nick looked at her. "How'd you know?"

"You always get that tone in your voice when you're referring to him."

Nick smiled, and then added, "But he wasn't alone. Janette was with him."

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - PALACE (FLASHBACK: NICK'S)

It had taken them over two hours to reach Villarreal's palace.

'Palace?' Nick thought incredulously, as he studied the fortified mansion through a pair of binoculars, 'I've seen houses that were bigger than this...'

It was nearly midnight by the time they got the charges placed.

Behind him, Nick could hear Kermit and Kerr having a whispered, last minute argument about their roles in the raid; but it had nothing to do with him, so he tuned it out and concentrated on sensing exactly where the perimeter guards were.

A moment later, he felt a hand against his shoulder, and he turned his head to see Kopolevski crouched beside him.

"We're all ready to go in," the mortal said quietly. "The charges are set to blow in five minutes, so we'd better get into position."

"Right," Nick replied, equally quietly, and wriggled back into the underbrush.

Kerr, Cali and Kermit were just leaving; Blaisdell was crouched about three meters away, his eyes on the back door straight ahead.

Nick lay on his stomach, counting the seconds as he eyed the perimeter fence. With luck, when the generator blew, the two guards that he could see standing there would run over to the side of the house to see what was going on.

"Five... four... three... two... one..." Kopolevski said quietly from beside him; Nick could hear the mortal's heart racing with the rush of adrenalin flooding his bloodstream.

As the count reached one, Nick looked down at the ground and shut his eyes tightly; just in time to protect them from the light of the explosion.

"Isn't she beautiful?" Kopolevski asked excitedly.

Nick shot him a look of absolute disbelief, and then all three of them were up and running for the fence.

Nick scrutinized the area around the back door of the Palace warily; he couldn't see anything wrong, but something was making him feel uncomfortable.

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Kopolevski glanced at them, giving a quick shake of his head before backing carefully away from the door. 'Nothing there, then.' Nick thought.

Blaisdell nodded, walked forward, and then pushed firmly on the door.

Nick intercepted him, and, reaching for the knob, gave the door a shove with the full force of his vampiric strength behind it. It popped open easily, and Nick just hoped that neither of them would notice the ruin he'd made of the lock.

The three of them slipped in and glanced around the small anteroom.

Blaisdell nodded in evident satisfaction. He pointed at Kopolevski, and then at the door that led to the servants' quarters; then made a gesture for Nick to take the dining and drawing rooms, and indicated that he would take the meeting rooms and the command center.

Nick saw Kopolevski give a two-fingered salute, and walk stealthily through the smaller door; when Blaisdell turned to him, he merely nodded and made his way through the main door.

As soon as Blaisdell had gone down the other corridor, Nick stopped in the middle of the hall and listened intently.

The only heartbeats he could hear came from the guardpost around the corner, but Nick had a slightly uncomfortable feeling that it might be a very good idea to check the drawing room. That little voice that some mortals referred to as intuition, was signaling a major red alert.

He strode over to the door and opened it as carefully as he could, relieved that there was no squeaking from the hinges; then he started to walk in, but stopped abruptly when he saw the occupants of the room.

There was a fire blazing in the hearth; relaxing in a chair in front of it, but keeping a wary eye on the flames, was Janette, dressed in a smart black evening gown. LaCroix was seated opposite her, holding a wineglass of blood in one hand, an expression of pleasure on his face.

As Nick stood there, frozen in the doorway, all the unusual events of the past several weeks came to mind.

This explained the number of broken bones Andreas got when he fell; LaCroix must have dropped him while flying. It explained so much about all the ambushes.

"Ah, Nicholas, how nice to see you again," LaCroix said abruptly, turning to look at him. "I was starting to wonder when you'd show up."

Nick stared at him for a moment. "You knew I was here?" he asked, taken aback by LaCroix's statement.

LaCroix heaved a tired sigh. "Nicholas, Nicholas," he said, shaking his head, "How many times must I tell you, I always know where you are." He paused, looking at the look on Nick's face for a moment, and then continued, "Of course, the explosion of the backup generator did fairly scream your presence. As well as your intentions."

'Oh no. If LaCroix knew I was here -- and he obviously knows what I've been doing -- then he must know why I'm here now!' Nick thought.

"Very good, Nicholas," LaCroix declared. "Yes, I know exactly why you're here. ... Why do you think I gave the order to take prisoners? It certainly wasn't to keep the torturers amused."

Nick glared at him.

LaCroix raised his glass of blood to his lips, then paused, and glanced in Janette's direction. Why, Nick wasn't quite sure, but LaCroix's attention only wavered for a second. He took a sip of his drink, then turned back to Nick.

"Your little raid will fail, you know," his master continued, a smile crossing his face. "We've been very busy, you see, preparing for your visit."

Nick glanced at Janette for a moment; but she stared back at him impassively -- he wouldn't get any help from her, not this time.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, hoping that if LaCroix told him, he could still manage to save his friends.

LaCroix's smile grew wider as he replied, "You will see, Nicholas. You will see."

Nick stared at him for a moment longer, and then turned around and ran out of the room, frantic; he had to find the others, tell them it was a trap.

KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

"And... ?" Nat prompted, when Nick fell silent.

"And, the raid was a failure," Nick said despondently, thinking of the death toll. With an effort, he stood up. "I have to get ready for work."

Nat stood too. "Nick, it wasn't your fault."

"I could have done something. I could have told them to turn back, warned them, even made them retreat. Anything."

"You couldn't have known they were there." She placed a reassuring arm on his shoulder.

"That's the point Nat. I should have. There's an unbreakable bond between the three of us. One I can sense. Because I didn't, a lot of people died needlessly."

She hugged him tightly, not knowing what else to do, but feeling the need to do something. Wordlessly they parted. As she exited, she glanced at him once more. Her heart ached, longing to help him somehow.

5:00PM: 25 KIRKHAM STREET: PAUL'S ROOM/CELL

Blaisdell was awake and resting on the bed. He'd eaten the breakfast he'd found, showered, shaved, and was now trying to read a book he'd found on the bookcase in the far corner of the room.

Kerr had supplied books on all subjects: Science Fiction, Fantasy, War, Action, Drama, Biographies, Mythology, you name it, it was there. It had taken him the better part of 45 minutes to select the book he had selected.

He'd thought that the book would occupy his mind, give it something to think about besides what it was thinking about -- Kermit. And what Kerr was going to do to him. Ever since he'd gotten here all he'd thought about was South America, and the mission Kermit had coerced him into participating in. The mission he wished he'd never accepted. Thinking about that mission made him think about things, and people, he hadn't thought about in over 20 years. Paul had learned something on that mission. Something few, if any, people would believe if he told them.

He'd read about 15 pages when he realized that it wasn't working. He couldn't concentrate on the book. His mind drifted back to South America once again.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: PAUL'S)

Paul had studied Dr. Michaelson when they'd met earlier, wondering about him. There was something, unusual, about this particular rebel; he couldn't quite define it, but it was definitely there. He had the strong feeling that medicine wasn't the only talent that Dr. Michaelson brought to the rebels. He remembered Michaelson's comment earlier about Blake having no strategic skills. 'How did a doctor come to know about such things, especially one so young?' Blaisdell thought, but didn't ask aloud.

Paul looked at Michaelson curiously. "Do you know what the problem between Kermit and this Kerr is?" the mercenary asked.

"Well... first of all, Kerr doesn't really get along with anyone, except maybe Cali Norau; but Griffin and Kerr seem to have just hit it off wrong. Unfortunately," he added, grimacing, "they've started to drag the entire camp into it. Your arrival was very well-timed; the sentry who came to tell us you had arrived appeared just before the camp would have broken out in a wide-scale fight."

"That's good," Paul replied. "It looks like I'll have my work cut out for me, trying to keep them apart..."

"I doubt that's the reason Griffin asked you here," Michaelson countered, starting to pick up some small vials. "When he talked Blake into letting you come, he mentioned that you had some very useful talents; what are they? Mine are medicinal, of course, and Blake has people skills..."

"Intelligence and Organization," Paul answered after a moment. "Planning and carrying out an operation to its successful conclusion."

A flicker of relief crossed the doctor's face. "Excellent!" Michaelson declared. "General Andreas was assassinated several weeks ago. We don't know by whom. And the newest member of Villarreal's tactical staff is a strategic genius. We've been losing people steadily since he, whoever he is, took over the reins; and Blake has no strategic skills whatsoever." Michaelson paused for a moment, then he continued, "And, the secret police have captured a member of..."

"Doctor! Doctor Michaelson!" came the sudden shout from outside the tent, and Paul followed the doctor out... and stopped short in horror.

Coming into the clearing were the remnants of the twenty-man patrol that had set out at dusk; there were only four of them, and three of those were bleeding profusely.

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Beside him, he sensed Michaelson stiffen for a moment, but didn't know why; and then the man was hurrying over, getting some of the others in the camp to help carry the wounded into the cave that Kermit had told him was their infirmary. Blaisdell followed, to see if there was anything he could do to help.

Before they reached the cave, however, a young woman -- Kermit had introduced her as Cali Norau, Paul recalled; the woman whom Michaelson had mentioned Kerr getting along with -- came running up, and stopped in front of the man who was bleeding the least.

"Where's Zelda? ... Kerr where is she?" she demanded, sounding frantic.

The wounded man glanced away. "They got her, Cal." he replied quietly. "She's been captured."

(4 DAYS LATER)

In the four days since he'd arrived, he'd learned a great deal about all of the rebels; with the single exception of Dr. Michaelson. All that Paul knew about him was that he had a number of allergies, including a violent one to sunlight; he was an excellent doctor -- the job he'd done on Kopolevski's arm was nothing short of miraculous; and he was unusually knowledgeable about strategy and tactics.

Paul pulled back the camo-cloth covering the entrance to the infirmary. "Doc?" he called, striding toward the back. "You in here?"

"Yeah," came Dr. Michaelson's voice, from the very back of the cave, where the rebels' generator and the medical cooler were kept.

Paul pushed the last hanging cloth out of his way, and then stopped, studying Michaelson.

The doctor was dressed in the same sort of matte-black night-suit as Paul, with camo paint covering his pale face. There was a small black bag at his feet -- probably for medical supplies, Paul figured -- and he was holding a glass of what appeared to be red wine in one hand. Paul frowned. 'I would have thought that he'd know better than to drink just before a mission.'

Noticing the direction of his gaze, Michaelson put the glass down on a table.

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"What is it?" the doctor asked, drawing Paul's attention away from the half-full wineglass. "Surely we're not leaving already!"

"No; we're not quite ready yet. Kermit and Nick are still prepping the charges to blow out the generator," Paul replied.

"Good," Michaelson replied, picking up his bag and placing it on the table next to the wineglass. He then shot a quick glance around the area. "I don't want to take the vials out of the cooler until we're just about to go," he added; "the antidote's effectiveness starts decreasing the moment it's exposed to temperatures of over 20 degrees Celsius."

"I see," Paul replied. "Anyway, what I came in to tell you, is that you, Nick and I will be going in the back, and Cali, Kerr, and Kermit will be going in the front."

Michaelson blinked in surprise, absently picking up the wineglass and taking a sip. "Whose bright idea was that?" he demanded.

"Blake's," Paul replied with a sigh, surreptitiously studying the doctor's face. 'He doesn't look as though he's getting drunk... And that liquid does look a little bit too... thick... to be wine.'

"So you can't override it," Michaelson added, echoing Paul's sigh.

"Exactly."

Michaelson followed Paul's gaze, and quickly put his wineglass back down again. "Well, with luck, this raid'll prove to be the exception to the rule," he commented.

"Rule?" Paul inquired curiously.

"The one that states that no battle plan survives contact with the enemy," Michaelson answered with a tight grin. "Especially if Griffin and Kerr are teamed together on this."

Paul nodded. He definitely knows more than a doctor should about strategy and tactics.

"Unfortunately," Paul began, "it's very unlikely; you were right about this new guy's strategic ability. From what I've seen of what he's doing, I'd say that he's better than anyone else I've ever met."

Michaelson grimaced slightly and reached again for the glass; and Paul's frown deepened somewhat. 'He already put it down twice, when he noticed I was paying attention to it. So why does he keep picking it up again? Is he some sort of addict or something? ... But how could an addict be as excellent a doctor as Michaelson is? There has to be an explanation, and I will figure it out. But for now...' Paul's thought was broken as he heard Nick call suddenly.

"Doc! Blaisdell!"

Paul looked up and saw the younger man hurrying in, carrying a black knapsack, and looking extremely eager.

"C'mon, we're off!"

Michaelson quickly opened his bag and pulled out a box.

Paul saw Michaelson take the box out, and hurried over to the cooler to get the vials.

Opening it, he glanced in and froze in surprise.

There were four shelves inside; and the top shelf was filled with what appeared to be bottles of the same liquid that Michaelson had been drinking. 'Red wine?' Paul wondered again, 'I thought you weren't suppose to refrigerate red wine.' He started to reach in to take a closer look at one of the bottles, when he heard Michaelson's voice behind him.

"I need the two vials at the front of the second shelf."

Paul could hear a definite note of anxiety in the doctor's voice.

"Right," he replied, shifting his attention to the second shelf and ignoring the undertone of Michaelson's statement. He'd figure out what was in those bottles later.

He took out the designated vials, handing them backward as he closed the cooler; and was surprised at the coolness of Michaelson's hands.

Admittedly, he's spent all day here in the cave, but still...

"Well, c'mon!" Nick exclaimed impatiently as Paul turned around. "Let's go!"

25 KIRKHAM STREET: PAUL'S ROOM/CELL

"Nicholas! I wonder where he is today?" Paul thought aloud. Then laughed at himself. "I wonder what Caine would say about him?"

6:00PM: THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

Peter entered the hotel room. Kermit was still hunched over the laptop. In fact, Peter was prepared to swear that Kermit was sitting in exactly the same position that he had been sitting in when Peter had left several hours earlier.

They'd ordered breakfast from room service and then Peter had hit the streets, going through City Hall records, while Kermit searched through databases and surfed the 'Net.

He walked over to Kermit and looking at the screen, asked "Any luck?"

Kermit, startled, jerked. He mentally kicked himself, 'Where's your training going Griffin? You should have been able to sense Peter approaching. Either I'm losing it, or Peter's getting more and more like his father. That's got to be it. I didn't sense him approach, because he didn't make any noise.' He rubbed his aching back. "No," he answered curtly, after logging off the computer, and turning it off. "You?"

"Nope. Nothing. It's like the guy doesn't exist."

"Like he's a ghost," Kermit mused. "Maybe you should call your father. I bet he'd have an insight into this."

"My father? You forget, Kermit, the mighty Caine does not possess a phone."

"You could call Skalany? Ask her to deliver a message to him."

Peter just looked at Kermit.

"Or you could try calling him telepathically. He always senses when you need him, doesn't he?"

"Can we try to solve just one case without dragging my father into it? It seems every time I turn around, he's getting involved. We got along fine before he re-entered my life. Then, he shows up and gets involved in every case! You notice how many mystic cases we've had since he came back? Then, just when I get used to his interference, learn to expect it, he ups and leaves. So, what do I do? I return to

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good old police logic and tactics. No mystic stuff. Then he returns. Do I tell him how to do what he does? Do I interfere in Shambala matters? Do I tell him how a Shambala master should act? No!! So let's just try to do our jobs without his help. Just this once. Can we, Kermit? Do you think we can?"

"Calm down, Pete. I know you don't mean all that. You're just upset because Paul's missing."

"I'm sorry Kermit. You're right."

Kermit paused, then removed his shades, and rubbed his eyes. "I need a cup of coffee, did you happen to see a coffee place on your trek around town today?"

"As a matter of fact I did. You'll never guess where."

Kermit raised an eyebrow, giving Peter a tell me look.

"Chinatown. C'mon, grab your coat and let's go."

Kermit splashed some cold water on his face, and then they split.

7:00PM: COFFEE HOUSE - CHINATOWN

Peter and Kermit entered the quaint little coffee house, and sat in a booth near the front door. They had only barely sat down when a young Chinese woman approached them.

"Good evening gentlemen, may I take your order?" She asked them, in perfect English.

Peter looked at her and smiled. He had been in here earlier, and recognized the dialect of Chinese spoken as one he knew. "Yes. My friend and I would like two coffees," he said to her in perfect Chinese.

She smiled at him, impressed, and spoke to him in Chinese. "I am impressed, sir. You speak our tongue like a native."

"My father taught me as a boy."

"You speak it very well."

"Thank you."

"I will go get your coffees."

With that she walked off. Kermit had been staring at the two of them the whole time, since the entire conversation had been in Chinese. Peter watched her walk off, then turned to Kermit and noticed the way he was looking at him.

"What?" Peter said.

"Nothing, kid." Kermit said as he shook his head.

"I was thinking... once we finish here, we should head to the 96th. Knight and Schanke should be there by then. Maybe they'll have learned something."

"Sure, why not. It couldn't hurt."

At that moment the waitress returned with their coffees.

"Here you go, gentlemen," she stated in perfect English.

"Thank you," Peter said to her in Chinese.

"Thanks," Kermit stated in English.

"Will there be anything else?" she asked.

"Not for now." Peter replied.

Neither Peter nor Kermit noticed the man sitting across the room. He was intently studying them, listening to their every word. And, when Peter and Kermit exited the coffee house, he went to a phone and placed a call.

"They're hanging out at the 96th," he said and hung up the phone.

8:00PM: 96TH PRECINCT

"... no computer records, no nothing! It's like the guy doesn't exist, partner." Schanke finished.

Captain Cohen left her office and walked over to their desks. "I've been talking to Captain Simms at the 101st. I want you to extend every courtesy to Detectives Peter Caine, and Kermit Griffin. ... I want you to work with them. Oh, and Knight ... bring them into my office when they get here. I'd like to meet them."

"Sure, Captain." Nick said.

"That's all gentlemen," she said as she walked away, her mind already returning to the administrative side of her career.

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As Cohen entered her office, the two aforementioned detectives, entered via the main doors. They passed Detective Rocher at her desk. She smiled a 'hello' to them, and they acknowledged it, and then continued to Knight and Schanke.

"I'm telling ya kid, that waitress was definitely giving you the eye," Kermit said as they approached Nick and Schanke.

"No. You're wrong Kermit. Anyway, why would she give me the eye? I'm nothing spectacular."

"Modest too. I'm telling ya, Pete..." He broke off as Nick stood up. "Evening Knight, Schanke."

"Kermit," they replied in unison, and then looked at each other bemused. "Peter," they did it again.

"The Captain would like to meet you," Nick said, after glaring at Schanke. "Come with me."

Nick led Peter and Kermit towards Cohen's office.

COHEN'S OFFICE

Cohen was sitting behind her desk, in her office, writing in a file, when there was a knock on the door. "Enter," she said.

The door opened, and Nick, Peter, and Kermit entered the office. She stood up as they entered.

"Captain," Nick began, "Detectives Peter Caine, and Kermit Griffin. Peter, Kermit, this is our Captain, Amanda Cohen."

Cohen thought Peter was quite handsome, but she was more intrigued by Kermit. Captain Simms had told her quite a bit about him. She gave him the once-over. Thinking about what Simms had told her about him. She didn't notice the look Peter gave her.

She had enjoyed her talk with Karen, after their conversation they were on a first name basis. They'd exchanged their viewpoints on achieving captaincy of a precinct, working in a traditionally male job, and the enormous pressure they were made to feel because of it. Karen had described Peter as a young, hotheaded cop, who would stop at nothing to solve a case. She also said that Peter tended to rely more on instinct than facts, and was very impulsive. Amanda, had told Karen that the impulsiveness and instinctiveness reminded her of one her

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detectives -- Nicholas B Knight. She told Karen that Peter and Nick should get along perfectly. Kermit, on the other hand, was described as a loner, the man spent more time with his computer than anything else. Kermit reminded Amanda of Det. Rocher. But Karen also told her that the man had a dark side to him. He could be dangerous. He also seemed to have lived longer than his years indicated. When Karen had said that Amanda had again thought of Nick. Nick's file said he was born in 1957. But sometimes she felt that he knew more of life than he should. Karen said that Kermit was an ex-mercenary. This had intrigued the ex-fed in her, and Amanda couldn't wait to meet this Kermit.

"Nice to meet you," she said as she exchanged handshakes with the two detectives. "Please, sit down, gentlemen."

Peter, and Kermit sat directly in front of the desk; Nick leaned against a file cabinet by the door.

"I've been in touch with Captain Simms, she had a lot of things to say about you." Cohen stated.

"All good I hope," Peter said.

They talked for a while, Cohen giving them the lowdown on procedures, and the like. She concluded the discussion with "You'll be working along side of Knight and Schanke, if you have any questions, ask them. That's all gentlemen." Then, as an afterthought, she added, "Good luck."

KNIGHT & SCHANKE'S DESKS

They left her office and returned to their desks. Cohen had arranged for the desks adjacent to Knight's and Schanke's to be used by Peter and Kermit. Peter had noticed the way Captain Cohen had been looking at Kermit. 'It's payback time, Kermit. For all the times you've said *she wants you, kid!* This time it's you, pal.' Peter thought.

Once Peter and Kermit were settled in, Peter said conspiratorially. "You know, Kermit. The Captain was giving you the once-over."

"Ah, get outta here."

"No, Kermit, I mean it. She was checking you out."

Kermit leaned forward. "I'm telling you, she wasn't."

Peter smiled. "And I'm telling you she was."

Kermit held up his hands as if to ward off another onslaught. "Okay, okay. Even if you are right, which, by the way, I'm not admitting you are, did you notice the picture on her desk?" Peter shook his head negatively. "She's married, Pete."

"So?" Peter questioned.

Kermit paused, and then said, "Okay, Romeo, I propose a little wager. Just to make life interesting."

"Oh? What would that be?"

"I'll bet you a C-note that the next woman who stops and talks to us, checks you over first. Deal?"

"American or Canadian?"

"The woman or the money?"

Peter thought about that, "Both," he replied.

"Canadian. Both," Kermit said decisively.

"Deal." Peter and Kermit shook hands.

Nick nodded his head back and forth, and picked up his phone. He started to dial a number.

9:00PM: CORONER'S OFFICE

Natalie had just finished up the last of the paperwork on the John Doe pulled from the Don River earlier that day, when her eyes happened to notice the two police composites on the side of her desk. She picked them up.

She was looking at the second suspect, and noticed a striking resemblance to the corpse she had just finished working on.

"Oh my god!" she exclaimed. "It's him."

She picked up the composite and went over to the stiff. She compared him to the picture. Sure enough, they did look alike. She was on her way over to her desk to call Nick, when the phone rang.

"Nat's Bed and Breakfast," she said into the receiver.

"Nat, it's me," Nick's voice said from the other end.

She perked up, hearing his voice. "I was just going to call you."

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"Well, whatever it is, it's gonna have to wait. Can you get away, and come up here?"

"Sure. Why?" she said with a hint of curiosity in her voice.

"You've finished your report on the gun shot victim from last night, right?"

"Yeah."

"Good. Because the Captain wants you to go over it with the four of us."

"Four?"

"She's insisted that Caine and Griffin assist in the investigation."

"I'm on my way." Nat said, and then hung up the phone. Forgetting all about the John Doe and wanting to tell Nick she matched one of the composites.

10:00PM: 96TH PRECINCT

"Well, well, well. Looks like we might have a winner in our little contest," Kermit commented as Natalie approached their desks.

As she approached them, Natalie took them both in. She wondered which one was Kermit.

When she approached the desks, Nick introduced her. "Natalie Lambert, I'd like you to meet Peter Caine," he paused as Nat shook Peter's hand.

"Hi," Nat said. She had to admit, he was cute.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," enthused Peter.

"And Kermit Griffin," Nick continued.

Nat kind of starred at him while shaking his hand, trying to imagine this guy as the Kermit that Nick told her about last night.

Peter couldn't help but notice, and chortled, "Ha! You owe me, Kermit!"

Nat did a double take. "Owe him? For what?"

Kermit mumbled. "Just a stupid bet we made. It's nothing."

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"Oh. Okay. Well, Det. Knight phoned me and asked me to fill you in on my report."

"Report?" Peter and Kermit said unison.

"Yes. I'm the M.E.," she stated.

Peter stood up and held a chair for her, "Well, you're a lot prettier than Nicky."

Nat looked at Nick with a 'what's that supposed to mean?' look.

"No, not him. Nicky Elder. The coroner we work with." Peter added.

"Thank you," Natalie said as she sat in the chair.

Peter promptly sat down again.

Nat found him to be very handsome, and had to force herself to concentrate on the subject at hand. "Gordon Anthony. Age 56. He was killed instantly by a bullet through his heart. But, it wouldn't have mattered where he was hit. The bullet was laced with some sort of poison. He would have died instantly anyway."

"I'm glad he didn't suffer," Kermit said.

Peter was surprised, Kermit sounded like he knew the guy. "What? You knew him?"

Kermit realized he'd slipped. It was time to come clean. At least about Gord, anyway. "Oh, yeah. He was one of the best. In fact, one time in Angola..." he trailed off, "Well, let's just say that Blaisdell and I would've been with the angels if he hadn't been there."

Nat raised an eyebrow. She was really starting to get curious about Kermit now. "Oh? I'd like to hear that story some time."

"Last night you denied knowing him." Nick pointed out.

"What else have you lied to us about?" Schanke added.

"Nothing." Kermit's attention returned to Natalie. He looked at her, appraised her with a glance, and stated, "The story would be too rough for you, sweetcakes."

Nat's mouth quirked, "Sweetcakes?" she questioned. "That went out a long time ago, dude."

Kermit just smiled. Then said, "Is there anything else in your report?"

"Uh-huh. The weapon used was a Desert Eagle." Kermit and Peter exchanged glances. "He must have been killed just moments before you arrived at the scene."

Nick looked to Natalie, "Has ballistics run the test on Det. Griffin's gun?"

"Yes," Nat stated, "it came back negative. The gun wasn't his."

Nick noticed the way Kermit was looking at Natalie. He leaned over to Schanke, and said, "Schank, I think that when you go investigating Paul Blaisdell's last known movements, you should bring one of our new friends with you."

"I was thinking the same thing."

Schanke got up, went over and tapped Peter on the shoulder. "Come on, kid, we're outta here." He chose Peter, because he wanted to get him away from Nat. He felt that, even if they didn't want to admit it, Nat and Nick belonged together. And Peter was just the sort of guy who could come between that.

"Where are we going?"

"Back-tracking your foster father. Come on. I haven't got all night."

"Okay." He stood up. "We'll take my car."

Schanke smiled, remembering what a beauty it was. "Only if I can drive it."

"What? No. No way. I've seen the way you drive, and..." They were still arguing when they left the building.

"Well, I guess that leaves you and me," Nat said. She was hoping to get Kermit alone. Maybe she could see if he suspected anything about Nick.

"It sure does," Kermit replied.

Her stomach rumbled. "Whoa, looks like someone's hungry. Want to have dinner with me? It's that time of night."

Kermit thought about it. Maybe he could get more information if he did go with her; she did seem to be hiding something. And, she seemed real close to Knight. "Sure. Just let me check with Knight to..."

Nick, overhearing them, walked over and said, "Go ahead. Just check in here afterwards. If I get any leads I'll have you paged."

"How? I don't have a pager, and you don't even know where we're going." Kermit declared.

"Nat has a pager. And, if I not mistaken, she's going to," Nick thought for a moment, "The Rock 'N' Diner, right?"

She smiled. "You know me so well Nick. You know I can't resist it."

"See," he addressed Kermit.

So, he was right, there was something between Knight and Doctor Lambert. What, he wasn't sure.

Nat turned to Kermit. "It's one of the only late night diners whose kitchen stays open til 1:00am." Natalie was gathering up her report, when she noticed the composites on Nick's desk.

"Oh, that reminds me," she exclaimed. "I know where you can find one of those suspects."

"Where?" Nick and Kermit asked in unison.

"In the lab. They fished him out of the Don River this afternoon. You might want to call that witness -- what was her name?"

"Jean Dickson," Kermit stated before Nick had a chance to say it.

"Right. Have her come to the lab and see if he is indeed one of the men she saw."

"I will." Nick stated. "Is there anyone down there right now?"

"Yeah, Grace is."

"Okay. I'll send her straight to the lab."

Nick picked up his phone and started to dial Jean's number, as Kermit and Natalie headed out.

96TH PRECINCT - OUTSIDE

Once outside the station, Kermit turned to Natalie and said, "Do you think it would be possible to stop by the lab before we go to the diner, Dr. Lambert?"

"Sure. I don't see why not."

10:45PM: CORONER'S OFFICE - LAB

Kermit was looking at the corpse, when he noticed two tattoos on the left arm, and one on the right arm. Kermit recognized all three of them.

The two on the left arm were Mercenary Allegiance Tattoos, aka MAT's, and the one on the right arm was a Navy Seal tattoo.

Kermit inspected the two MAT's. They both had a banner under them that stated years of 'allegiance'. The first one said: 70-75. The second one said: 81-___. There was no end date on the second tattoo which meant he was still with that group. The tattoo's themselves, were the symbol of the leader; the one to whom they had pledged allegiance. The first one was Blake's and the second was Kerr's. Kermit's attention settled on Blake's tattoo and the years of allegiance.

'70-75. That means he would have been with Blake in South America.' Kermit thought. 'I wonder who he is?'

Suddenly, inspiration struck. He went to the phone and dialed a number.

"96th," said the voice on the other end.

"Aphrodite; Robin," Kermit stated.

Natalie's curiosity was peaked and she arched an eyebrow. Robin? I thought he said his name was Kermit? And who's Aphrodite?

"What can I do for you, Kermit?" Cat asked, using his real name.

"I'm in Dr. Lambert's lab, and I was wondering... Can I access the composite program from her terminal?"

"No you can't sorry. It's only on my system -- not the network."

"Damn!" Kermit stated. "Can I ask you for a favor then?"

(CONTINUED)

"You can ask."

"Could you re-do the composite of suspect two?"

"Sure. Any changes you wanted?"

"Yeah. Remove the scars, shorten the hair, make it... like a crew cut."

"Is that all?"

"No, also run the de-aging function and make him 20 years younger."

"Okay. Will you be in the lab?"

"For a while, yeah."

"I'll print it off, then run it down."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome."

Kermit hung up the phone and found Natalie staring at him.

"Robin?" she asked. "I thought your name was Kermit?"

"It is. Robin's just my cybername."

"Cybername?"

"Yeah, you know, my Internet persona."

"So, who's Aphrodite?"

"Cat Rocher."

"Cat? The Greek goddess of love?!" Natalie started to laugh.

"What's so funny?"

"Obviously you don't know Cat!"

"Not personally. But we've corresponded on the 'net for years."

"Well, I..."

Natalie's sentence was interrupted when a woman entered the room.

"Excuse me, I'm..."

Kermit recognized her from the other night. "Miss Dickson."

"Detective Griffin, isn't it?" Jean asked.

"Yes." He stated. "And this is Doctor Lambert."

Jean nodded a hello to Natalie, then said, "Detective Knight asked me to come down here to look at a body?"

"Yes. Right over here." Kermit took Jean over to body. "We just need to know if this is one of the guys from last night."

Jean looked at man and nodded her head. "Yes. Yes. He's the one who shot that man."

"Thank you again, Miss Dickson. We appreciate your coming down." Kermit said.

"Glad I could help."

Jean turned to leave and was walking out the door as Cat was walking in. Cat walked right up to Kermit and handed him the printout.

"Here you go," Cat said.

Kermit took the printout and looked at the new face. He recognized it. "Tarrant," Kermit muttered.

"What was that?" Natalie asked.

"Tarrant," Kermit repeated.

"You know him?" Natalie replied.

"I did. Years ago."

"I'll go tell Nick that we have a name for our John Doe." Cat stated.

"While you're at it, tell him that Miss Dickson ID'd him as the one who shot Gord Anthony."

"Okay."

"See ya in cyberspace, Aphrodite!" Kermit said with a hint of seduction in his voice.

"In cyberspace, Robin Hood." Cat replied, as she exited the lab.

'Robin Hood?' Natalie thought. 'Well I guess it makes sense. Robin was considered an outlaw by some and a hero by others. And Kermit, well he's an ex-mercenary who gave up the life to become a cop.' Natalie was finishing her thought as her stomach rumbled again.

"Well," Kermit injected, "I guess we'd better get you something to eat."

Natalie smirked and said, "I guess so."

Kermit gave her an after-you motion and they left the lab.

11:00PM: 96TH PRECINCT

Cat approached Nick's desk and handed him a copy of the revised composite. "Ker... Detective Griffin asked me to tell you that Miss Dickson ID'd the John Doe in the lab as the one who shot Gord Anthony."

"That's great." Nick stated. Then, pointing to the composite, "What's this?"

"He asked me to make a few changes to the composite of suspect two. And he recognized the man in this composite as Tarrant. Apparently they knew each other a long time ago."

"Thanks Cat." Nick said, as he stared at the picture.

"Tarrant," Nick muttered. 'That's a name I haven't heard in over 20 years,' he thought as Cat walked back to her desk. Nick realized that if Kermit started to think about South America, it would only be a matter of time before he'd remember Dr. Michaelson, and start putting two-and-two together.

11:30PM: THE ROCK 'N' DINER

Nat and Kermit had ordered mozzarella sticks for an appetizer and were now enjoying them. Nat looked to Kermit and asked, "So, how did you go from being a mercenary to becoming a cop?"

'Now how did she know that?' He thought. 'Knight, damn it! Knight must know me. He sent her out to see if I remembered him! But why? Only one way to find out. Play along. Maybe she'll slip again.'

"Just luck," he smiled. "What made you become a coroner?"

"No fair. You haven't answered my question yet."

With a raised eyebrow, he stated, "Haven't I?"

"No. You haven't."

"Okay. ... Paul Blaisdell helped."

"Blaisdell, that's Peter's foster father, right? The one that was kidnapped?"

"Yeah." Kermit replied, and then paused before continuing, "I owe him a debt. Now I'm trying to repay it. Satisfied?"

She held up her hands. "Sorry. I've obviously hit a sore point." She paused, then added, "Friends again?"

"Sure." Kermit replied.

"Okay. Now, fair is fair. I'll answer your question." She paused for a moment, and then continued, "When I was in medical school, I found I could keep my professional detachment better when my patients were already dead. Voila, one coroner."

At that moment, the waiter, Edward, arrived with their main course. Natalie knew Edward. He always seemed to be working when she came in. Nick had once told her that he suspected Edward had a crush on her.

Edward was tall, about 5'11", painfully thin, with very, very thick, bushy, brown hair. In other words, a typical University student. Edward gave them their meals then left.

A few minutes after Edward had left, Nat ventured, "If you don't want to talk about it, I understand, but, I have to admit, I'm curious. How did you meet him?"

'Meet who?' Kermit thought. He was silent just long enough for her to start worrying. 'She must mean Blaisdell; he's the only one I've mentioned.' He looked at her and said, "I was a green kid. Blaisdell was the leader of my first mission. We instantly connected. When I was re-evaluating my life, he offered me a job."

"I guess you've traveled quite a bit."

"Oh yeah. Afghanistan, Chile, Angola, South America, all the hot spots."

"Were you in South America when President Villarreal was deposed?"

He nodded. He remembered the people he worked with on that mission: Kerr, Cali, Paul, Dr. Michaelson, Bl... Dr.

Michaelson. That was why Nick looked so familiar. He was Dr. Michaelson. 'Damn! Why didn't I realize that before?' he thought. I wonder what Natalie's interest in all this is. Let me throw out some names and see what she says.

"After that mission, I never saw Blake, or Kerr, again," he said, carefully choosing his words.

"Blake, the rebel leader, right?"

'How would she know that? How could she have come to that conclusion? She couldn't have been more than 10 or 12 at the time. Besides it was a top-secret mission. Their names were never released. The only ones who would know the names of the people on the mission, would be the people on the mission. Knight must have confided in her. I knew it. He sent her to pump me for information. To see if I remembered him. Because for some reason he's hiding from his past. I have to find out why? Stay cool, Kermit. Don't let her know you know.'

"Yeah. I never found out what happened to Blake. He just seemed to disappear. Right off the face of the Earth. Some say he died during the raid. Others..." he paused for a moment "well, can you really believe he would become an even worse dictator?" He looked at Nat, who seemed to be intrigued. "Not me," he continued, "I prefer to imagine that... he got away and is living incognito somewhere. Maybe even involved in government work. You know CIA, FBI, that sort of thing." He paused again, then added, "But, nobody really knows for sure." He sat back, and remembered.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - PALACE (FLASHBACK: KERMIT'S)

Kermit crouched at the edge of the jungle, his night glasses focused on the perimeter fence 100 meters away. There were three guards patrolling the area that they would have to cross to get to the palace. 'One for each of us,' he thought grimly, 'if none of them get distracted by the explosion.'

"What's taking so long?" Kerr hissed from behind him.

Cali was beside Kerr. She too looked a little anxious. 'And she should be, it's her sister that's in there.' Kermit thought. 'If I was in her shoes, I'd...' Kermit stopped, not daring to finish that thought.

Kermit's mouth tightened; but he'd promised Paul, that for the sake of the mission, he would try to avoid fighting with Kerr. So, he answered Kerr in as civil a manner as he could.

(CONTINUED)

"Nicky set the charges to blow in..." he glanced at his watch, "20 seconds. You know what to do?"

"I know the plan!" Kerr snapped. "I'm not an idiot, Griffin. Don't treat me like one."

Kermit took a deep breath, and then let it out in a low sigh. "I wasn't," he replied, as calmly as he could manage. "I always like to review a plan just before going in... But it's too late now," he added, turning away from the palace and hiding his eyes, as the explosion they were waiting for went off.

As soon as it was over, the three of them got up and ran for the fence.

Only one guard hadn't gone to investigate the explosion, which was bad news for the guard. Kerr slid up behind him, and with a swift move, slit his throat.

Once they'd got into the palace itself, without running into any other guards, the three of them split up; they would search the front area of the first floor thoroughly -- the back being Paul, Nick, and Michaelson's responsibility -- and then meet at the stairs leading down to the dungeons.

LATER

Kermit peered around the corner, and saw Cali standing, well crouching, by the stairs leading to the dungeons. He did a quick check of the area, and, not seeing any guards, hurried to her.

"Where's Kerr?" he whispered in her ear.

Cali gave him an 'I don't know' shrug that Kermit barely saw in the dimness of the corridor.

He put his hand on her shoulder, telling her to stay there, and hurried over to the other end of the corridor. He carefully looked around the corner; but there was no sign of either Kerr or any guards. Kermit gave a silent sigh, and headed back to Cali.

"I can't see Kerr anywhere. We can't afford to wait; we'll have to go down without him," he whispered.

Cali nodded in acknowledgment, and the two of them began walking down the stairs.

ROCK 'N' DINER

Natalie had digested what Kermit had said, and noticed that his mind seemed to be somewhere else. 'He has that same look on his face that Nick gets every time he...' Natalie cut off her thought and tried to get Kermit back to the present.

"Kermit?"

"What?" Kermit said, returning to the present.

"Are you okay?"

"Fine. I'm sorry if I..."

"That's okay. I'm used to it."

Kermit wondered what Natalie meant by that but wasn't going to press it. Natalie decided to return to questioning Kermit.

"So, what do you think happened to Kerr?"

Kermit was about to ask how she knew what he was thinking, but then figured she probably meant what happened to him after the mission -- like where he was now.

"I think he's alive. And, I think he's got Blaisdell." Kermit paused for a moment.

"Why would you think..." Natalie started but was cut off by Kermit.

"When Blaisdell called last week, he mentioned he'd thought he'd seen Kerr."

"The way you say his name, sounds like you hate him?"

"We've got unfinished business." Kermit said. Like, exactly what had happened that night so long ago, he thought.

"Like what?"

"I believe he thinks I'm responsible for the death of someone he loved."

"Were you?"

Kermit raised his eyebrows. "What do you think?"

Nat said slowly, "I think that you can be very dangerous. If the situation warranted it. I believe that, yes, you could kill. But, I don't know what that particular situation was like. So, sorry, I don't know if you were responsible."

(CONTINUED)

"Well I wasn't. Not for that, anyway."

Silence hung between them. It was broken by Edward's return.

"Would you care for some coffee or desert, Dr. Lambert?" Edward asked.

"I'll have a cup of coffee, thanks."

"So'll I." Kermit said.

"Is the chocolate mousse layer cake available tonight?" Nat asked.

"Yep, it certainly is Dr. Lambert," he earnestly assured her.

"I'll have a slice of that, please."

Edward finished writing, then left.

"I'll be right back," Nat said, as she rose. "I just have to powder my nose."

She made her way down to the washroom.

Once there, she used a pay phone to call Nick. She wanted to warn him that she thought Kermit had realized he was Dr. Michaelson.

Kermit waited for Nat's return, gazing into his coffee as he stirred it, his mind drifting off again.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - PALACE (FLASHBACK: KERMIT'S)

Kermit and Cali had just managed to get Andre and Zelda out, when the guards hidden in the other cells opened fire. Andre was hit immediately, and fell into a hail of bullets; Kermit pulled Zelda down to the floor as Cali ducked behind an open cell door.

"We've got to get out of here," Kermit said; it was too late to care about stealth. This was obviously an ambush; they'd evidently known they were coming. 'Probably that new general of his...'

"I...." Cali began, and then gasped in pain as a stray bullet hit her.

Kermit lifted his gun and began firing towards the area the bullets were coming from; if he got lucky, he'd kill off enough of the guards to let the four -- No make that three.... Andre's dead, came the stray thought -- of us to get out.

Then a bullet ricocheted from the wall and pierced through Kermit's leg; he gritted his teeth and fired again.

A moment later, a hand came down on his shoulder. Kermit tried to twist around, starting to bring his gun up, and then he heard a whisper.

"Don't move!"

It was Michaelson; and as Kermit listened, he heard the number of guns that were firing lessen. "What..." he began, but was cut off.

"Blaisdell, Kopolevski and Kerr are taking care of them," the doctor replied, and Kermit heard the sound of ripping cloth. "We've got to take care of your leg..."

"Cali," Kermit managed to gasp out, feeling his vision start to grey. "She's been shot..."

"Don't try to move," Michaelson said firmly, ignoring him.

Kermit started to fall into blackness, passed out.

ROCK 'N' DINER

Kermit stopped stirring then gulped down the remainder of his coffee. He was sure now that Det. Knight and Dr. Michaelson were one-and-the-same person. But how to prove it? That was the burning question on his mind.

Natalie returned and ate her dessert. "Well, thanks for having dinner with me."

As Kermit went for his wallet, Natalie spoke, "No, it's my treat. You lost that bet because of me. It's the least I can do," she insisted.

He shrugged, and then smiled. "Thank you. It was my pleasure."

When the Edward came with their bill, she paid it, along with a generous tip. She remembered what it was like to be a poor university student.

"Thanks, Doctor Lambert. Say hi to Detective Knight for me." Nat heard that tone in Edward's voice that said who is this guy you're with? I thought Detective Knight was your boyfriend?

"I will Edward. Night."

"Night."

Kermit and Natalie left. Kermit was now thoroughly convinced that Knight had asked Natalie to pump him for information. It was just the why he still couldn't understand.

MIDNIGHT: 25 KIRKHAM STREET - PAUL'S ROOM/CELL

Paul walked over to the radio and turned it on. He surfed the dial trying to find a station he liked. He paused when the radio tuned to CERK.

"A lot of people you once called friends have gathered here in this city tonight..." the voice said.

'That voice. I know that voice.' Paul thought. 'It's not a voice I'll easily forget.'

Paul sat on the chair beside the radio, and drifted back to South America.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - PALACE (FLASHBACK: PAUL'S)

Blaisdell frowned as he came out of the second meeting room; according to the information that Kermit had collected, there should have been something going on in at least one of those rooms when the generator blew. But there was no sign that anyone had been in either of them before the explosion.

Then he heard the sound of voices, and frowned as he came up to another door.

'This leads to the drawing room', he thought, recalling Kermit's map, 'Hasn't Michaelson checked in there yet?'

He cracked the door open carefully, and then stared in surprise.

There were three people in the room; a tall and sinister looking man and a beautiful young woman were seated by the fireplace, and standing by the door, with a look of utter shock on his face, was Doctor Michaelson.

(CONTINUED)

Blaisdell's attention was drawn to the wineglass the man was holding. The liquid it contained seemed to be the same stuff he'd seen Michaelson drinking earlier.

"Very good, Nicholas," the seated man declared. "Yes, I know exactly why you're here. ... Why do you think I gave the order to take prisoners? It certainly wasn't to keep the torturers amused."

Michaelson looked absolutely horrified, and Blaisdell felt shocked.

The tall man's voice had an air of authority to it. It was a voice that demanded respect. A voice that, centuries ago, would have led an Emperor's army.

At that moment, the tall man suddenly looked in his direction. Paul moved behind the door so he couldn't be seen.

'Is this guy the strategic genius? And how does he know Michaelson?' Blaisdell thought.

"Your little raid will fail, you know."

The tall man had started talking again, so Paul peeked back around the door.

"We've been very busy, you see, preparing for your visit."

The man was smiling; it was almost as though he were trying to bait Michaelson. Paul saw Michaelson glance at the woman, an appeal for help in his eyes. Paul couldn't see the woman's reaction, but it was apparent from the look on Michaelson's face that she wouldn't help him.

'I wonder what she means to him? ... Oh, hell, no wonder the rooms were empty... ' Paul thought in response to the tall man's remark about preparing for their visit.

"What do you mean?" Michaelson demanded, his voice tight.

The man's smile grew wider as he replied, "You will see Nicholas; you will see..."

Michaelson's expression grew even more horrified -- And haunted, Paul noted -- and then he turned and ran out of the room.

"Remind me that I really need to finish this game quickly, Janette," the man continued, speaking to the woman -- who hadn't said a word since Paul had gotten there; "Nicholas is getting too independent again."

"Are you sure that this is the correct way get him back, LaCroix? What has it been since he left us? 25, 30 years?" the woman inquired.

'30 years?' Paul thought. 'Michaelson can't be more than 35, 36. And she only looks 28!'

"Are you questioning me, Janette?" the man -- LaCroix? -- demanded; there was a threatening undertone in his voice.

"No, no," the woman -- Janette? -- replied quickly. "It's just... Nicolas can be so stubborn at times; why not let him go? We...."

"Let him go? He is mine. I made him."

"Every child eventually has the urge to break from the family to..."

"We are not your average family; he is my son, just like you are my daughter, and..."

'Son?' Paul thought. 'That guy, LaCroix, is Michaelson's father? Well, that explains why, and how, the kid knows so much about strategy. ... And that woman, Janette, is his sister? From the way Michaelson was looking at her, I would have thought she was an ex-girlfriend. But...'

Paul's thought was cut short as LaCroix's speech -- which he'd missed part of while thinking -- got his attention.

"...others are killed, it will be believed he betrayed them. ... And if some survive, well, we will still have our prisoners; and now that Nicholas knows we are here, he will be back to rescue them. After all, he can hardly leave his little friends at our mercy now, can he?"

Janette nodded and held out her hand.

Paul was frozen by what he was hearing.

LaCroix took a bottle from the table and poured the thick red liquid into a wineglass, then handed it to the woman.

'That's the same stuff Michaelson was drinking earlier! Must be some sort of family vintage. But it is still too thick to be wine,' Paul thought.

"So, when will the ambush take place?" Janette asked, taking a sip from the glass.

"Within ten minutes; whenever the ones who came in the front reach the dungeons," LaCroix replied, relaxing in his chair and lifting his wineglass up. "To Nicholas; after tonight, he will come back to us. To you, and to me." He declared as he took a sip.

Paul felt a surge of alarm as he realized what the two of them had been discussing. This whole raid was a set-up, a trap, an ambush. Kermit, Cali, and Kerr will be slaughtered, Paul thought as he quickly -- and quietly -- shut the door, and headed for the stairs leading to the dungeons.

PAUL'S ROOM/CELL

"... The Night-Crawler has a poem for all you listeners out there. Listen closely...

*"Twinkle, Twinkle, little star,
Oh my son, what a fool you are.
When will you learn, when will you see,
that with me, is where you should be.
From the day we met, all you've done is rebel;
But is what I gave you, really such hell?
You walked out on us, you closed the door;
You said you couldn't live like you had, anymore.
We are of one body, one soul, one mind;
You can not resist the ties that bind,
us together, though you may disagree,
are there forever, for e-tern-i-ty.
The life of a creature of the night can be fun;
so get used to it, grow up, it's over, it's done.
There's no going back, no reverting, no cure;
you can search forever, you won't find one, I'm sure.
Today I'm the Night Crawler, a radio jock.
And you my son, what are you? A homicide cop?*

(CONTINUED)

*Nicholas, Nicholas, by now you should see
that with me forever, is how it was meant to be."*

"...I will be back in moment, my children. Take a moment to ponder life's sweet ironies."

Paul turned off the radio as the commercials came on. He recognized the voice. "LaCroix. If he's here, in the city, then so is Nick."

1:30AM: KNIGHT'S CADDY

Nick and Kermit were en-route to The Royal York. They wanted to see if Blaisdell's luggage held any clues at all.

Nick was, as usual, listening to CERK. Kermit had this weird expression on his face. The Night-Crawler had just finished delivering his poem, and Kermit was thinking about what he'd said. He looked to Nick, then back to the radio.

"What is it, Kermit?" Nick asked.

"The host, The Night-Crawler? Do you know him?" Kermit inquired.

"Why?"

"I don't know if it's me, but he sounded like he was talking directly to you."

Nick got a momentary 'Oh-oh' look on his face. He was thinking what to say, but was saved when the police radio beeped.

"81-Kilo, please respond. 81-Kilo."

Nick grabbed the receiver, "This is 81-Kilo. Go ahead, dispatch."

"Proceed to Richmond and Duncan. Robbery in progress, possible hostage at Whiskey Saigon. Over."

"Roger. Copy that, dispatch. 81 Kilo out." Nick increased his speed.

2:00AM: WHISKEY SAIGON -- OUTSIDE

When they got there, he said, "Stay in the car."

"No can do. You may need back-up," Kermit said, as he drew his Desert Eagle. "Which I can provide. Let's go."

He left the car quickly, keeping low; making sure that Nick had no choice.

WHISKEY SAIGON - INSIDE

They entered, covering each other. They found shelter so they could assess the situation. The staff had been in the process of cleaning up. Kermit could see half cleared tables. The bartender was in front of the bar, along with the wait staff, a couple of bouncers, and a woman he believed to be the manager. A couple of guys, with masks over their faces and guns drawn, were watching them. A third was at the till, emptying it. Nick was closer to the third man, so Kermit signaled for him to take him, while Kermit provided cover. Nick kept low; using whatever was at hand for cover. He had just gotten into position, when a sudden movement at the corner of Kermit's eye, caught his attention. A fourth man rounded the corner, with Nick as a perfect target.

"Michaelson, get down," he cried as he fired off a shot. Kermit had purposely used Michaelson to see if Knight would react. Nick hit the ground shooting the other three as they drew their weapons into firing positions. All four went down. Kermit gave Nick a look that said, 'I knew it. You are Michaelson.' Nick just stared at Kermit.

When the uniforms showed up, all the statements were taken, and the robbers were brought to the station for questioning. Kermit and Nick left Whiskey Saigon.

WHISKEY SAIGON - OUTSIDE

While walking to the car, Nick was mentally kicking himself. 'Damn! Why did I have to respond when he called me Michaelson? It's obvious he remembers me, now. How am I going to convince him that it wasn't me, in the past? Somehow, I don't think that hypnotism is going to work in his case. He never takes those damn shades off, so I can't look him in the eye. And, even if, for some reason he did take them off, his mercenary training has taught him not to succumb to mind games easily.'

(CONTINUED)

"Well, Dr. Michaelson," Kermit commented as he leaned on the Caddy door, "it's been a long time." Kermit removed his shades, and stared at Nick.

Nick, trying to look puzzled, said, "Michaelson? That's what you called out in the club. Why?" Nick put his hand on the door handle and went to open the door.

"That's who you are, or were." Kermit paused. "I knew I'd met you before. Now I finally remember where, and when."

"I'm not this Michaelson character. My name is Knight, remember?" he said denying it. Nick and Kermit opened their doors.

KNIGHT'S CADDY

"Oh yeah. I'm sure you've had a lot of names in your past lives," Kermit said confidently.

As he sat in the car and put his shades back on, he stared out the front windshield, avoiding eye contact with Nick.

Nick took a deep breath, put the key in the ignition, and said, "Why are you so sure I'm this Michaelson person?"

"Because, when I yelled, I used your old name. You reacted. It's that simple."

Nick turned sideways, and looked at Kermit. "I reacted to your voice. I figured you were warning me. I had, and still have, no idea who this person is or was." Nick was hoping that his denial would work, as he started the car and drove off.

Kermit was looking at Nick and was about to make a comment when they passed under a street-lamp. Something about the way light hit Nick's face, reminded Kermit of an incident in South America.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: KERMIT'S)

Kermit opened his eyes and stared blankly up at the roof of the cave. He felt dizzy and nauseous, and there seemed to be spots of light floating in front of his eyes.

Then, just out of the corner of one eye, he saw a hand pick up a glass bottle that had been resting on a table. Kermit turned his head to get a closer look, and saw Michaelson sitting at the table.

Michaelson took the cork out of the bottle -- of wine? Kermit wondered -- and then poured the red liquid into a wineglass in front of him... and Kermit felt his heart stop in shock.

The mercenary had been in enough battles, and seen enough wounds, to know blood when he saw it. And Kermit watched, absolutely horrified, as Michaelson brought the glass of blood up to his mouth and swallowed.

He must have made a sound, because Michaelson abruptly turned around, putting the glass back on the table, and hurried over to him. Kermit tried to pull away, but the doctor moved too fast for him, and before Kermit knew it, he felt Michaelson's cool hand on his forehead.

"You've got a bad fever," Michaelson declared, frowning. "Lie back; you need to rest."

"Whaa..." Kermit mumbled; he wasn't sure whether he was asking 'What happened' or 'What the hell were you doing, drinking blood!', and he wasn't sure that he really wanted to know.

"The bullet that hit you was poisoned," Michaelson continued, standing up and heading over to the cooler. As Kermit watched, the doctor opened it and took out a small bottle. "The antidote I made up has counteracted the poison, but your body is still reacting to its effects." He opened a paper package and, taking out a small syringe, plunged it into the top of the bottle.

"As I said, you've still got a rather high fever; you've been delirious for the past few hours, and you might still experience some hallucinations for the next little while. This," Michaelson came back to Kermit's bed and held up the syringe, "has something to bring the fever down and help you sleep."

'Hallucinations? That must be it, then.' Kermit thought, then manager to utter aloud, "Cali?"

Michaelson didn't answer; instead, he grabbed Kermit's arm and placed the needle against the vein.

"Doc..."

"Hold still," Michaelson ordered, and before Kermit could move away -- he didn't want to go to sleep -- the doctor plunged the needle into his arm.

As blackness began to engulf Kermit, he saw Michaelson stand up; and for just a moment, he could have sworn that he saw the doctor's eyes glowing gold. Then the blackness took him, and he fell into a deep sleep.

3:30AM: KNIGHT'S CADDY

Kermit returned to the present. 'Now everything makes sense. The infirmary, what the Night-Crawler said, Peter's dream, everything. He's a vampire. Look at the facts: sun allergy, night shift, drinks blood, everything.' Kermit thought.

Kermit glanced over at Nick. "No. You were Michaelson. I still need to thank you for saving my life. So, thank you. And don't worry, your secret is safe with me." Kermit added.

"What secret?"

"What you are." He replied. "A vampire. I guess I suspected back then, but... back then I didn't want to believe it. No correction, I couldn't believe it."

"A vampire? What makes you think I'm not just another mercenary like yourself?" Nick added, hoping Kermit might buy the story.

"If this had've happened a few years ago, I probably would have accepted that. Vampires aren't real I kept telling myself. But in the last 3 years a lot of strange, supernatural things have been happening in my life. Compared to all that, vampires are nothing." Kermit continued, "Besides, look at the evidence. It's been 20 years, and you don't look a day older than you did then. In South America, when I never, ever saw you in daylight, well, that raised my curiosity. Then, a couple of times, I was sure I'd seen you drinking blood. I could have sworn I saw you fly, once. All the facts pointed to vampires. But I kept telling myself, there are no such things as vampires. Vampires are a myth. That's all. A myth. But that stuff with *The Night Crawler*, earlier, and..."

Nick gave up. "Okay, okay. I was Dr. Michaelson. But now I'm Det. Knight. Just like you're Det. Griffin. All right?"

"Fine with me."

"And you're welcome. I'm glad I was able to save your life. I hope we can find Paul. He's a good man."

"Yeah. And don't worry. Like I said, you're secret is safe."

(CONTINUED)

"What about Peter?"

"He won't hear it from me. But, I'd watch myself around him. That kid has a sixth sense. He gets it from his father, who's a Shaolin priest. They sense things. Peter's becoming more and more like him everyday. I'm warning you, though, if it becomes relevant, and I have to tell him, I'll tell him. But I'll let you know, first. I owe you that much." Kermit was silent for a minute, and then added, "To tell you the truth, I probably never would have thought of vampires in the first place had Peter not mentioned it?"

"What?" Nick asked.

"Yeah, he woke up saying you were a vampire, and that he'd seen you at the temple."

"The Temple? He remembers?"

"Remembers? You mean it wasn't a dream, then?"

"No. It wasn't."

"You really were at the temple?"

"Oh yeah."

"Well, if he forgot it once he can forget it again, right?"

"You don't understand. It's not that easy. It took a lot, and I mean a lot, of work on both mine and his father's behalf, to erase that memory then. Peter has a very strong will."

"Don't I know it."

"And now, it's probably a lot stronger. As long as he believes it was only a dream..." Nick trailed off not wanting to finish that sentence.

"And if he figures out it wasn't?"

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

"Speaking of crossing bridges, I think Kerr has Paul."

"Kerr!" Nick said as he looked at Kermit. "Why would he kidnap Paul?" Nick wondered.

"To get to me."

"I knew there was bad blood between you two. But why you, specifically?"

Kermit stared straight ahead and answered, "Cali." Nick mouthed an 'Oh', and Kermit nodded. Nick drove on.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - PALACE (FLASHBACK: NICK'S)

Nick came running around the corner, and stopped as he saw Kerr coming from the other side. He frowned. 'The three of them were suppose to be here before us! Why is he just getting here now? Where was he?' he thought, as he heard Kopolevski come up behind him. 'Did Kermit and Cali go on alone?'

"Where are the others?!?" he quietly demanded of Kerr.

"I don't know," Kerr began, snapping, when there was the sudden sound of gunfire from the stairs.

'Where's Blaisdell?' Nick suddenly thought. 'He should have...'

"It's an ambush," Blaisdell said, from behind Nick.

Nick looked at him, and saw a look of concern in his eyes. 'Damn! Could Paul have overheard my conversation with LaCroix?'

"Come on!" Blaisdell continued.

All four of them raced down the stairs, guns ready.

(DOWNSTAIRS)

A moment later, Nick was behind the fallen Kermit. He placed a hand on his shoulder, and Kermit tried to twist around. Nick sensed he was about to bring his gun up, so he said, "Don't move!"

Nick noticed that the number of guns that were firing had lessened.

"What..." Kermit began, but was cut off.

"Blaisdell, Kopolevski and Kerr are taking care of them," Nick replied, as he ripped the leg on Kermit's pants. "We've got to take care of your leg..."

"Cali," Kermit gasped out. "She's been shot..."

"Don't try to move," Nick said firmly, ignoring him. Kermit passed out.

(CONTINUED)

Nick dipped his finger in some of the blood from Kermit's wound. He tasted it, and spat it out. 'Damn! Poisoned. Good thing I made up those vials...' His thought was broken as he heard a swoosh. He turned, looked around, but didn't see anything out of the ordinary. His attention went back to Kermit.

He was rapidly applying the contents of one vial to the bullet wound when Kerr came up behind him.

"Where are Zelda and Cali?" Kerr demanded.

"Zelda's right here; someone's going to have to carry her back to camp," Nick replied. "As for Cali, I don't know...." He glanced around, searching with his vampire vision, and was dismayed to find that there was no sign of her at all.

"Maybe she was delayed, like you," he finally answered. "If so, she probably headed back to camp when she figured out what happened."

"I hope for his sake," Kerr stated, pointing at the unconscious Kermit, "you're right, doc." Kerr hefted Zelda onto his shoulder. "I hope you're right."

"So do I," Nick muttered under his breath.

3:00AM: 25 KIRKHAM ST

Kerr was conversing with Blaisdell via the monitor. "It's quite simple. Give me Griffin's e-mail address. I'll arrange for your release as soon as I have him."

"No. I know what you would do to him, and I can't allow that." Paul was adamant. He took a sip of the wine thoughtfully provided.

"I do have... means of persuasion," Kerr said softly, silkily.

"So, use them." Paul retorted angrily. "Just stop wasting my time with these pathetic attempts to get me to betray Kermit. Besides do you really expect me to believe that if I gave him to you, you'd let me go?"

"What harm can an e-mail address do, Blaisdell? It not like a phone number, you know. I won't be able to know his location through an e-mail address. He could be right outside the door, or on the moon. It wouldn't matter. All his address would tell me, is where is e-mail account is. His computer can access that account from anywhere."

Paul knew Kerr was right. He had a point. But Paul couldn't shake the feeling there was more to this. Kerr seemed to be going through a lot of trouble for just an e-mail address.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: KERR'S)

He had taken an instant dislike to Griffin, the arms runner. Then again, who didn't he take an instant dislike to? 'Cali,' he thought. 'She was... is... the only person I've ever liked from the moment we met.'

He found Griffin to be sarcastic, smug, irritable, condescending, and infuriating. Much like himself, as a matter of fact. So, he'd protested to Blake -- vehemently -- when he found out that he and Cali would have to work with him.

When Cali hadn't returned to camp after the raid, he searched out Griffin. 'After I'm finished with him, Griffin will be lucky to be alive. No, rephrase that, unlucky to be alive.'

Kerr stormed into Blake's tent, furious, interrupting a conversation between Blake and Griffin's friend, the mercenary Blaisdell.

"Where's Griffin?" he demanded, forcing the anger he felt out of his voice. It wouldn't do him any good to let the two others know just how furious he felt.

"Michaelson's still working on him," Blaisdell replied, his tone placating. "Kermit took a hell of a lot of damage from that bullet; the doc doesn't think he'll be able to walk for another two days."

"I don't care about that," Kerr snapped. "He let Cali get captured..."

"Calm down, Kerr," Blake said firmly. "It's not Kermit's fault; it's no one's fault. You were ambushed."

"And who was the one who got out alive from that ambush?"

"Kermit, Zelda, Michaelson, me, you," Blaisdell said firmly.

Kerr thought, for a moment, that Blaisdell said Michaelson's name kind of questioningly. He waited a moment, then turned and left them. He headed for the infirmary cave.

(CONTINUED)

He reached the infirmary that Michaelson was in charge of. It was very dark inside. No sunlight could reach into the system of caves that housed the patients. Kerr barged through, searching for Griffin.

In one of the beds, a woman moaned; obviously delirious. She was muttering, "...the sun... burning me... have to get away... too bright to look at... must rest... have to go on... the sun..."

Michaelson was standing over her, trying to bring down her fever. Something briefly crossed his face. Kerr never did quite figure out what it had been. He dismissed it, continuing his search for Griffin.

He was just closing in on his prey, when Michaelson approached him from behind. Nick placed his hand on his shoulder and held it in a vice-like grip. Michaelson turned Kerr around, and let go of his shoulder.

"I'd let Kermit heal a bit before you question him, Kerr." The warning tone in his voice was quite clear.

Kerr ignored it. "I need to speak to him now, Doc!"

"Kermit needs his rest," Michaelson reiterated. "When he wakes up, you may speak with him."

At that moment, Laurie moaned, then underwent a coughing spasm. She was still recovering from the bullet that had nicked her lung.

Michaelson hurried over to her.

Kerr made use of Michaelson's absence and went over to Griffin. He shook his shoulder vigorously.

"What... where...?" Kermit said, groggy from the combination of poison and medicine. "How the hell did I get here!!" Kermit demanded.

"You don't remember?" Kerr questioned.

Kermit shook his head. Kerr learned in closer. "Then let me refresh your memory. You, me, and Cali were suppose to raid the dungeon together. You and Cali went without me, and walked into an ambush. Blaisdell, Michaelson, Kopolevski, and myself, found you. You'd been hit. You took a bullet in the leg, one of the poisoned ones. Michaelson got it out, though. You were lucky, very lucky. Now... WHERE IS CALI? Because if anything's happened to her, you'll wish the poison had killed you." Kerr's voice was full of accusation.

"The last time I saw her," Kermit said slowly, trying to remember. "She'd been shot."

Kerr tensed up -- well boiled up was more like it.

"She and Zelda," Kermit continued, "were laying on the ground near me. I... I managed to shoot some of the guards hovering around us, but... a bullet decided to pay me a visit." Kermit tried to sit up straight, and get out of bed. "We have to find her!"

Kerr cocked an eyebrow, and then said, "That's the first sensible thing you've said since we met."

Just then, Michaelson returned, having ensured that Laurie was okay. "Kerr!" Michaelson said. Kerr just looked at Michaelson impassively. "I thought I told you..." Michaelson started to continue.

Kermit cut him off, jumping to Kerr's defense. "It's okay, Doc. Really."

Michaelson turned his attention to Kermit. "How do you feel?"

"Like finding Cali. Right now" Kermit replied.

"I meant physically. How's the leg?"

"Just dandy." Kermit stated as he tried, once again, to get up. But, he stopped abruptly when he realized his pants were missing. "All right, where are they?" he demanded to know.

"Safe. For the moment." Michaelson replied. "When you've healed a bit more, and I release you, you may have them back."

Well, Kerr had to give him that much, Griffin wouldn't let a little thing like, being exposed, stop him. Kermit threw off the covers, and sat up. He swung his legs down to the floor, and let out a hiss of pain. "Did you find Cali or Zelda?" Kermit inquired of Michaelson.

"We found Zelda. I don't think she's going to make it, though. As for Cali...."

"C'mon Kerr" Griffin stated. "We're going to find Cali." Kermit attempted to stand. He swayed for a few seconds, before he found his balance.

Michaelson was standing in front of him, arms crossed across his chest. "Lie down," Michaelson commanded when he caught Kermit's gaze.

"Not a chance," Kermit replied, standing his ground.

Kerr briefly smiled at that. "Well?" Kermit asked. "Are you just going to stand there all day? Or are we going?"

Kerr shook his head and followed Griffin out.

They went to Kermit's tent. While Kermit was changing he looked to Kerr and said, "So what happened to you, anyway? Where were you? You didn't make the rendezvous?"

"I was.... delayed," Kerr answered. 'Damn! If I knew this was going to happen I never would have let Cali out of my sight,' he thought.

"By WHAT!?" Kermit inquired.

Kerr just stared at him implacably, and changed the subject. "So the last time you saw Cali, she was beside you?"

"Yeah. And then Michaelson showed up. He must have seen her. She was right beside me."

Kerr looked at Griffin, "When we got there she was gone. you sure..."

"Gone? But that's impossible. There wasn't enough time for her to disappear." Kermit stated.

"Really? I think you're lying. I think that maybe you're on their side. Maybe you're working for them." Kerr replied with an accusatory tone in his voice.

"Look Kerr, I know you don't like me. And trust me, the feeling is mutual. But right now our only concern should be Cali. We have to get her out of there before she talks."

"She would rather die first!" Kerr said quietly.

"She might not have that choice!" Kermit said savagely. Then after a momentary pause he added, "You go talk to Blake, I'll talk to Blaisdell."

4:00AM: 96TH PRECINCT

After searching Paul's luggage at the hotel, and finding nothing, Nick and Kermit returned to the station.

Kermit checked his e-mail for messages. He modemed a wide variety of people every day -- doctors, snitches, engineers, mercenaries... He was surprised, by one particular message

(CONTINUED)

however. It read: "Griffin: By now you must realize I have Blaisdell. Instructions will follow. Come alone. If you obey, Blaisdell will be released, unharmed. Otherwise, well you don't need me to spell it out."

He read it again, and then tried to respond to the e-mail account. He got the same message he'd gotten before: "This account had been closed. No information available."

'Clever', Kermit thought, 'Open an account, send a message, then close the account. But you can't hide forever Kerr.'

Kermit began the arduous task of trying to backtrack the message.

Six hours later, he gave up. There was no way to trace a single line through the pattern of infinity that was known as cyberspace. Instead, he sent a couple of messages and signed off. He rubbed his eyes, trying to get rid of the gritty feeling. It didn't work. He got up, wincing at the pain of having sustained one position too long.

After carefully stretching to work the kinks out, he left in search of coffee. Industrial strength, that is. He was still stretching and yawning when he returned.

After gulping the coffee down, he packed up his laptop. Glancing out the window, he noticed that the sun had fully risen. Time to call it a night, er day, he thought and headed back to the hotel.

NOON: THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

When he got there, he slept like the dead for about six hours. Then he awoke abruptly, the presence of someone else in the room having disturbed him. He grabbed his Desert Eagle and aimed it at the person. "Freeze!"

"Kermit? What are you doing?" came Peter's voice from the gloom.

"Peter!" The relief was evident in his voice. "Don't you know it's dangerous to disturb sleeping mercenaries?" he quipped.

"I do now." Peter shot back. "Paul's never like this."

"Shows what little you know, kid. Why I remember once..." he trailed off. "Nah, that story's a little risqué for you."

Peter's eyebrow shot up. "Go on, continue. I'd like to hear it."

"Can't kid, sorry. Paul would kill me. Maybe in a few years. Now, did you find out anything last night?"

"Yeah. I found out where to go for the best souvlaki in town. ... That Myra, Schanke's wife, is the top salesperson for Skin Pretty in this area ... and that Nick can be a real pain-in-the-butt."

"Don't you mean neck?" Kermit muttered.

"What?" Peter said.

"Nothing. Anything else?"

"I learned that if you want to have a real good..."

"The case Pete, the case!"

"Oh. No. Nothing." Peter said desolately.

1:00PM: KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

When Nat entered the loft, she was surprised to find Nick fully dressed, sitting on the black leather chair. "Nick?" she said. "I thought you'd be..."

"Sleeping?" Nick started. "If you really thought that, then why'd you come over?"

"Ah, I, uh..."

"Relax. I'm just teasing you. I can't sleep. I tried to watch a little TV, but couldn't concentrate on it. So I..."

"Are you okay?" Nat's voice was full of concern.

"I suppose so. Nobody's come over to stake me." At her look of horror, he added, "Kermit does remember me. He knows I was Michaelson. He's also figured out I'm a vampire."

"Oh Nick. I'm so sorry"

He summoned up a wan smile. "It's not your fault Nat. He was bound to remember sooner or later."

She sat on the couch and he joined her, sipping from his wineglass. "But if I hadn't..."

Nick placed his finger on her lips, silencing her. "It's okay, Nat."

They hugged, and as they clung to each other both wondered if he'd have to move on.

1:30PM: 25 KIRKHAM ST

After he got dressed, he once again tried the door. Still locked. He tried, with the limited tools he had at hand, to pick the lock, but no luck.

He searched the bookcase once again. 'I've got to keep my mind active. All I can think about is 1974.' Paul thought to himself.

After a while he gave up on the bookcase and turned on the radio. He got the weather report.

"It's a cold winter's day, here in Toronto, but the sun is out and shining. You might want to wear your shades as the sun's reflection off the snow is quite blinding."

The sun. I kinda thought that Nick would have enjoyed Toronto in the winter. Less daylight. But then again, there was always the sun.

Paul paused in his thought as his mind drifted back to the night he learned what Nick really was.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA - CAMP (FLASHBACK: PAUL'S)

Paul Blaisdell glanced cautiously around, not seeing Michaelson anywhere, he strode over to the medical cooler and opened it. The top shelf was still filled with the bottles of Michaelson's drink, and Paul slowly took one out.

In the four days since they had come back from the partially failed raid, he hadn't had a chance to confront Michaelson on the subject of LaCroix and Janette -- and he wasn't entirely certain he wanted to. Every time he considered it, the memory of the woman saying that Michaelson had left them about thirty years ago returned, and Paul got the shivers. There was no way that Michaelson could be older than mid-thirties. Paul had always prided himself on his ability to guess at people's ages and occupations. He'd been good at it as a kid, and as a mercenary the talent served him well. He'd bet his life on the fact that Michaelson hadn't yet reached forty.

Shaking his head and wondering to himself if this wasn't all just his imagination, Paul pulled the cork out of the bottle and, reaching in with one finger, dabbed a bit of the drink on his tongue. And spat it out in horror as he realized that it was blood. Then a cold shiver of fear ran down his spine, and Paul turned around, slowly, to see Dr. Michaelson standing by the table, his blue eyes fixed on Paul's face. Paul's eyes went wide and he forced himself to overcome his fear enough to speak.

(CONTINUED)

"This is blood!" the mercenary exclaimed. "And I saw you drinking it."

"Yes," Michaelson admitted, "it is blood; cow's blood. I take it for a rare condition I have."

"It wouldn't happen to be vampirism, would it?" Paul demanded.

"What makes you say that?"

"Oh, a lot of things. The fact that you have been drinking blood; your allergy to the sun; that little discussion between you and those others in the palace."

"So you did hear that!"

Paul nodded. "Most of your conversation with LaCroix, and a bit more after you left," he replied, putting the open bottle on the table. "He's the one who made you a vampire, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"And now he's trying to get you back," Paul continued. "I heard him tell your sister that."

"Sister?" Michaelson said questioningly, with a raised eyebrow.

"Janette. She is your sister, right?"

"Well, I guess in a way she is, yeah."

There was a momentary pause, and then Paul returned to the subject of LaCroix.

"And that's why we were ambushed."

Michaelson swallowed and glanced away. "Yes," he admitted unhappily.

"Then you've got to help Kermit and Kerr get Cali out of there."

Paul saw the expression on Michaelson's face change from unhappiness to despair.

"I can't," the doctor -- the vampire -- replied.

"You've got to," Paul declared firmly. "You owe it to Cali; and I've got the feeling that if Kermit and Kerr go in there alone, they won't be coming back out, with Cali or without her."

"You don't understand!" Michaelson exclaimed, turning away from him. "LaCroix can sense where I am; if I go back there with them, he'll kill them anyway -- and he'll take more pleasure in doing it right in front of me."

"So what you're saying is that they're dead either way," Paul said. "I'd think that they might have a better chance if you went in with them. Maybe you could distract LaCroix."

Michaelson turned to face him, and Paul took an involuntary step backwards. The vampire's eyes were glowing bright golden, and his mouth was open in a snarl, revealing gleaming, very sharp fangs.

"Distract him?" Michaelson demanded, snarling. "You have no idea what he's like, Blaisdell. I can't distract him from something he wants to do; especially if he's trying to torment me. He'll pay no attention to anything I say or do."

Paul frowned, hearing a definite note of self-pity in the vampire's voice, and stepped forward, pushing his (very real) fear of the other... man... to the back of his mind. "You've got to try," he said firmly. "You owe it to Cali; and to Kermit and Kerr. And who knows, you might just succeed! After all, they're going to go in anyway, no matter what we do; as I pointed out, if you go with them, they have a better chance of survival."

Michaelson took a deep breath and pushed the vampire away, letting his eyes and teeth go back to normal. He seemed to be lost in his thoughts for a few moments, then looked up at Paul, meeting the mercenary's eyes with his own, and gave a short nod. "You're right," he declared.

"Good... I'm glad you realize that," Paul replied. He turned around to leave, and then stopped and turned back. "And, Nicholas," he said slowly, sounding almost awkward; "I won't tell anyone about you. I promise."

Michaelson nodded. "Thank you. Oh and Paul, please don't call me Nicholas. Nowadays nobody calls me Nicholas, except for LaCroix."

"I could have sworn I'd heard Cali call you Nicholas..."

"Yeah, and I hate it. Every time someone calls me Nicholas, I'm reminded of LaCroix."

"Okay, doc."

"Oh," Paul paused, holding up his hand, "one last thing. Please, try to make sure that Kermit and Kerr don't kill each other before the raid?"

Michaelson chuckled, feeling the sudden release of tension, and nodded. "Of course," he answered. "After all, how are they going to rescue Cali if that happens?"

Paul grinned in agreement, and strode out of the infirmary.

1:30PM: 25 KIRKHAM STREET

Paul returned the present and, determined to talk to Kerr, went over to the monitor, which was always on.

He sat on the chair near the monitor. He saw the silhouette of a man, but it wasn't Kerr. When the man turned around, Paul exclaimed, "Phila!"

He'd unconsciously used Phil's nickname. He earned the nickname because people were always saying: Phil, aah, can you open this lock? Or Phil, aah, go get Blake, and Phil, aah, go away and let me think. So everyone just shortened it to Phila.

"Blaisdell!" the short thief and master lock picker exclaimed. "Ooops!" he added, and disappeared from the screen.

"Phila! Come back, now!" Paul's voice carried every bit as much authority as it did when he commanded the men and women of the 101st.

It was no wonder to him, therefore, that Phila shuffled back into view. "Kerr said that I mustn't talk to you," he said edgily, nervous that Kerr would discover him.

"Now listen to me, Phila. You have to release me," Paul said persuasively.

"Oh no! Kerr definitely wouldn't like that!" He looked like he was ready to bolt.

"What you're doing here carries a lengthy prison sentence," Paul warned.

"Oh, that's all right; Kerr's kept us out of prison so far. I reckon he'll keep us out a bit longer."

Paul decided to change tacts, needing the conversation more than he wanted to admit. "Where did you disappear to? How did you hook up with Kerr, again?"

Phila looked through the monitor, staring at Paul. "Why do you want to know?"

"I'm interested," Paul replied lightly, truthfully. "Come on, give, Phila."

Phila considered it. At least here was a man who was actually interested in what he had to say.

The images rose up, unbidden...

1974: SOUTH AMERICA (FLASHBACK: PHIL'S)

Phila and Cali sat huddled in their cell. Cali shivered, and he checked her forehead. The fever still hadn't broken. In fact, it had risen. "Don't worry, Doc Michaelson will make it go away. He's so very good." Phila mumbled.

He could hear the gunfire, even though they were deep underground. Finally, his mind made up, he strolled to the door, and set to work. Approximately a minute later, he'd unlocked the door.

"Still have the touch, eh, my beauties?" he addressed his fingers.

The door opened, and Phila scurried to Cali's side.

"Don't worry, the cavalry's here," Kermit quipped as he and Kerr entered and crossed to Cali.

"Kermit! Kerr! I'm glad you're here, I..." Phila started to babble but Kerr cut him off with a sharp look.

"How is she?" Kerr asked softly. If she was dead he'd....

"Alive," came Kermit's curt reply. "She has a high fever, and her breathing is hoarse."

"We have to get her out of here," Kerr observed.

"Can you walk?" Kermit asked Cali.

"I, I think so." Cali said as she got to her feet. When she stumbled, Kerr went to her side. "Lean on me."

Cali put an arm around Kerr's neck and used him to help her balance herself. "Thanks."

"I'll cover you," Kermit promised.

"Oi, don't forget about me!" Phila protested.

"If only we could," was Kerr's fervent plea.

"Come on!" Kermit commanded. Phila thought he looked very uneasy. "Let's get out of here. Phila, you take point. I'll bring up the rear."

Phila gingerly peered into the corridor. Seeing it was clear, he crept out, straining to hear any sound that might suggest people approaching them.

As they neared the entrance, Phila really started to worry. It was too quiet.

Kermit's sharp intake of breath alerted Phila to the fact they had company.

25 KIRKHAM STREET

Phila looked again at Paul Blaisdell. He'd been so caught up in his memories, that he failed to notice that Kerr had entered the room.

"Phila!" Kerr's voice was silkily smooth.

"Kerr?" he gulped.

"Were you expecting someone else?" Kerr paused, and glared at Phila. "What did I tell you not to do?"

"Um... I don't know," he stalled. Kerr's glare persuaded him to talk. "Not to come in here?" he offered.

"Precisely," Kerr paused. "So why are you in here?"

"Um ..." he stalled

"Just leave," he dismissed him. "I'll deal with you later."

Phila shuffled out of the room, dejected.

Kerr turned his attention to Paul Blaisdell. "Soon I'll let you go. Once I have Griffin." He smiled coldly.

"Sorry, but Kermit will know it's a trap. He's not stupid enough to walk into it blindly," Paul said adamantly.

Kerr raised an eyebrow. "You think not? How about a friendly wager? Say, your freedom if he doesn't show, and your remaining, if he does?" Kerr was quietly amused at the mixture of emotion playing over Paul's face.

Paul thought it over, "You're on," he replied finally.

3:00PM: KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

Nick had just finished filling in Nat on his conversation with Kermit.

Nat tentatively ventured, "Do you think he'll tell Peter?"

Nick answered thoughtfully, "He said he wouldn't unless Peter really had to know. But Peter's not stupid. His father saw me for what I was years ago, the first time we met. He could sense my aura or something."

"Wait... You knew Peter's father too?"

"Yeah."

"Is there anyone connected to this case you don't know?"

"I'm not sure."

"Tell me, how'd you meet Peter's father?"

"It wasn't that long after South America, really. I'd heard of a man named Caine, who could cure almost anything."

"And you thought he could help you."

"Yes." Nick paused, as the images of his encounter with Kwai Chang Caine came back to him.

1975: SHAOLIN TEMPLE - CALIFORNIA (FLASHBACK: NICK'S)

Nick entered the Temple. He saw a group of monks working with a group of young boys. Nick was taking in the place when he sensed one of the young boys approaching.

"May I help you, sir," the young boy said.

"I'm looking for the one they call Caine. I was told he could help he." Nick stated.

"My name is Peter. Caine is my father. Come. I will take you to him." Peter motioned for Nick to follow him.

They were walking down a hallway towards Caine's room, when all of sudden Caine appeared before them. 'Where'd he come from?' Nick thought. 'I didn't sense anyone approaching.'

"Father," Peter said, "this man has come for your help."

"You will leave us, son. Return to your class." Caine said to Peter.

(CONTINUED)

"But father, I..." Peter began.

"Now!" Caine insisted.

Peter left, reluctantly. Caine just stared at Nick as if he was sizing him up.

"So, how may I help you, Nicholas de Brabant?"

Nick looked at Caine suspiciously. 'How'd he know my real name?'

"I know who, and what you are. I sensed your presence the moment you stepped foot in my temple."

"If you know what I am, then you must also know why I have come?"

"Yes, your quest for humanity. Your wish to be mortal again."

"Can you help me, Caine?"

"Come, I will see what I can do."

Nick followed Caine down the hall.

KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

"Obviously Caine couldn't help you."

"He tried. And for a moment, I thought it had actually worked." Nick fell silent. Nat was hoping he would expand on the statement but he didn't. So, she decided to change the subject.

"Has Peter remembered you, yet?" Nat asked.

"Well yes and no."

"What?"

"Kermit said Peter had a dream about a vampire at the temple. And that I was the vampire."

"A dream? Why would he think it was a dream and not..."

"Apparently Peter fell asleep watching *Interview with the Vampire*."

"Oh." Nat paused for a moment. "Do you think he'll realize it wasn't a dream?"

"Not if we play our cards right."

4:00PM: 96TH PRECINCT

Kermit had showered and shaved before he and Peter had headed over to the station. When they had settled in at their desks, armed with the industrial strength coffee that seemed endemic to all precincts, they started their search again.

While Peter was busy on the phone, Kermit checked his e-mail. One required an immediate response, which he sent. He'd also received another taunting message from Kerr, which read: "What's the matter, Kermit? Can't find me? Time's running out, mate. You will be contacted. Accompany the courier and Blaisdell will be released."

He knew it was a trap. But he reassured himself; 'I do have an ace or two up my sleeve'. He smiled grimly.

7:00PM: THE RAVEN

Nick needed information, fast. So he dropped by the Raven before his shift started.

The Raven was a downtown nightclub. But, it wasn't your average club. The owner was Janette DuCharme, a woman whom Nick had known since 1228. She was a vampire. She was his lover and his vampire-sister, since they had the same Master, Lucien LaCroix. The club was a haven for all vampires in the city.

When Nick entered, the denizens of the night were already out in full force, playing. As he passed Deirdre and Brandi, he tipped an imaginary hat in their direction. If Janette doesn't have what I need, he reflected, perhaps they do. They've proved useful in the past.

He kissed Janette's hand, holding it lightly in his and bowing in a courtly gesture.

"Nichola," she said. Her voice full of delight.

He always loved the way she said his name. Not pronouncing the 's' at the end. It was sexy. It got to him every time.

"What is it you want, mon cher?" She added practically, raising an eyebrow. For Nick hardly ever came to the club unless he wanted to pump her for information about someone, or something.

(CONTINUED)

He gave her his best innocent look. She lowered her eyebrow as he spoke. "Only a few moments of your time, Janette."

After almost 800 years she still loved how he said her name. Ja-nette. "What do you want?"

"An address. For a man named Kerr."

"Do I know him?"

"You might have met him briefly in '74"

She looked blank for a second, and then remembered. "Ah yes, you were playing doctor with a group of rebels, were you not? I'm sorry. I can't help you. Perhaps Deirdre can."

Nick kissed her, and then headed for Deirdre and Brandi.

"Ladies," he said, upon arriving at their table.

"Nicholas," they chorused.

They were both redheads. Deirdre enjoyed a Rubenesque figure, while Brandi resembled Kate Moss. They were both quite tall, about 5'10". Brandi was still a youngster, seeing how she'd only been around for about a century. Deirdre was a little older, but not much.

"Maybe you can help me," he said, sitting down at their table.

He took out his wallet, and showed them a picture of Kerr.

"Have either of you seen this man recently?"

They studied the picture for a minute or two, and then shook their heads.

"Sorry. I've never laid eyes on him before," Deirdre stated.

"Me neither," Brandi said. "Why are you looking for him?"

"It's personal," he said tersely.

"...And professional, I take it." Deirdre observed, one eyebrow arched enquiring.

"What makes you think that?" Nick said defensively.

"You're a cop, Nicholas. You come here on police business frequently, do you not?" Nick nodded reluctantly.

"I have reason to suspect that he kidnapped a friend of mine. A mortal friend," he hastened to add, seeing the looks on their faces.

At that moment, a familiar voice spoke behind him. "Find out anything, yet?"

Nick wondered how Kermit always seemed to sneak up on him. No other mortal could do that. He turned his head and asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Checking in with you. Aren't you going to introduce me to these lovely ladies?" He grinned at them appreciatively.

"No." Nick took his arm and tried to walk away.

He didn't move. "What's your name, sweet lips?" he addressed Deirdre.

"Deirdre. Enchante, Monsieur..." She held out her hand.

He took it and lightly pressed his lips against the back of it, slightly bowing over it. "Griffin. Kermit Griffin. At your service, mam'selle."

He repeated the process with Brandi. Then looked at Nick. "Well, come on then, let's go," he said impatiently to Nick.

Nick was just a little taken aback by Kermit's sudden change of mind. He followed Kermit out of the club.

RAVEN - OUTSIDE

Once they were outside, Nick asked Kermit, "How did you know where to find me?"

Kermit took a bag from his pocket and flipped a Gummy Bear into the air. He caught it in his mouth. After he finished it he said, "I'd offer you one, but with your condition..."

"Kermit..."

He shrugged. "Easy. I asked Schanke. He told me that you're often here, so I thought I'd check it out." He paused. "They're vampires, right?"

"Who?"

"Those two ladies I just met."

"Well, let's just say it would be a good idea to stay out of that club." Nick looked at him. "I mean it Kermit. Don't go there again."

(CONTINUED)

He held up his hands in surrender. "Okay, okay. If it means that much to you..."

"It does. Thank you."

"I take it Schanke doesn't know that you're a..."

"No. He doesn't."

"You ever planning on telling him?"

"I don't know."

"Does anyone know?"

"Only Nat."

"Is she your.."

"Do you have anything on the case?" Nick said, changing the subject.

He raised an eyebrow, "Not a thing. You?"

"Damn! How does Kerr manage to leave no trace of himself?"

Kermit gave Nick a look. "Look who's talking... I bet you've done this millions of times! How old are you anyway?"

Nick headed for the Caddy, without replying. After a few moments he said, "Where's Peter?"

Kermit, following Nick, stated, "He and Schanke have gone to the harbourfront."

"The Harbourfront? What for?"

"They think they found something relating to Kerr."

"And you let them go alone?"

"I said, they think, they've found something. It's nothing."

"Why'd you let them go follow it, then?"

"Hey, I told Peter it was a dead end. But the kid is going stir crazy. He insisted on checking it out. He wanted to know how I could be certain it was dead end." Kermit paused as they reached the car. "Look, Nick, Paul means a lot to all of us. He saved my life more times than I can count. He gave Peter a home when he was alone. Peter feels like he should be doing something. I let him go, because I knew

there would be no danger. If I thought for one moment that Kerr might really be at the harbourfront, I would have been right beside Peter."

Nick had listened to all of what Kermit had said. He knew it was the truth. Nick got into the car, and was about to start it when Kermit said, "Can I get a lift back to the station with you?"

Nick just looked at him, wondering how he got to the club in the first place. "I took a cab here. I am new to this town after all, and I don't know my way around it."

"Sure, get in." Nick stated.

Kermit got in the car and they drove to the station.

TIME FLIES: WEDNESDAY - MONDAY

Upon entering the station, Schanke had nabbed Nick and hustled him out, explaining they'd just found a witness to Adrian MacLeod's murder.

Over the next four days, they managed to solve that case and a few other outstanding ones.

Peter and Kermit kept searching for clues about Kerr. But they couldn't get a break, and Peter became completely frustrated.

Finally, Monday arrived. They'd been in town for one week, and Kermit had the feeling that today, something would happen.

6:00PM (MONDAY) - THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL: ROOM 757

The lack of sleep was really beginning to tell on Kermit. He constantly kept the sunglasses on so that nobody would notice just how bloodshot his eyes really were. It was also starting to affect his temper. He'd started to lose it more often than he cared to admit. He'd been consuming coffee by the gallon. He realized he wasn't doing Paul any good in that condition, but he couldn't stop pushing himself. He was hacking away at his computer. Trying to use everything he could think off to find some trace of Kerr.

Peter's eyes cracked open. "What's the time?" he croaked.

He looked blearily at the clock. "Umm, 6 o'clock," he said, wishing the numbers would stay still long enough to read them.

(CONTINUED)

Feeling a little bit more awake, Peter asked, "What time did you get up?"

"I didn't."

Peter thought for a minute, and then realized Kermit hadn't slept. "Right, that's it. I'm pulling the plug."

"What are you talking about?" Kermit asked wearily.

"You. You're no use to Paul in the condition you're in. Go to bed and get some sleep," Peter ordered him.

"Who's going to finish the search I'm running now? You?" he scoffed.

"That's right, me." Peter said defensively. "What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing kid, except that it's too complicated for you," he shot back.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Peter asked, hurt.

"I haven't forgotten last year, when you crashed the system for a week."

"That wasn't my fault!" he said hotly.

"Then whose was it?" he said sarcastically, "Your pet grasshopper?"

He paused and stared at Peter. Then he stopped and looked closely at Peter. "Sorry, kid. I guess I have been pushing myself too much."

"I know. This is getting to all of us. Look Kermit, if it'll make you feel better, I've been taking computer classes. I'm really much better than I was then."

Kermit took a deep breath, and said, "C'mere and I'll show you what I'm doing. Wake me at noon."

Once Peter was comfortable with it, Kermit went to bed. Peter noticed that he slept uneasily. Every so often Peter would check on him. He just wished he could help Kermit sleep easier.

9:00AM: KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

Nick couldn't shake the feeling that something would happen. It had been a week since Paul had been snatched. He hated feeling helpless.

The door opened and Natalie entered. "Hey you, shouldn't you be in bed? It's..." she checked her watch, "9 o'clock in the morning."

"Couldn't sleep."

"Why not?"

He shrugged. "Just a feeling I have. I'm sure something will happen today."

She crossed to the black leather sofa and sat down. She patted the empty seat beside her, inviting him to join her. He promptly stopped his restless pacing and dropped down next to her. She put an arm around him, comforting him, and gave his shoulder an affectionate squeeze.

"Boy are you stiff!" she exclaimed. He looked at her. "Ooops. Guess I could have phrased that just a little bit better. All your muscles are knotted up; you're tighter than a drum. Here, turn around a bit."

When his back was facing her, she began to give him a shoulder massage. After a couple of minutes, she said, "You know, this works better with direct contact on bare skin. Take off your shirt," she requested. Her heart started to beat faster at the prospect of seeing Nick shirtless. He shifted until he was facing her and looked sceptically at her. "It's true! I'm a doctor, I know these things," she defended herself, as Nick continued to look at her.

After a moment, Nick obeyed and shed his shirt, affording Nat a front view for a few seconds. 'Oh my!' she thought, and set to work.

Nick was enjoying Nat's touch. Maybe a little too much. After about 10 minutes, the sensations she was bringing out in him, made him change. His eyes slowly started turning yellow. His fangs protruded.

"Nick, are you okay?"

"Why do you ask?" he said, his fangs still out.

"You're tensing up again."

(CONTINUED)

Nick took a deep breath, and calmed down. Nat went back to work. Nick tried to remain calm and collected. He lasted for about 10 minutes, then his eyes changed again.

"Maybe you should stop, Nat."

"But I'm almost done. Why stop?"

Nick put his hands on hers, and faced her. She got one look at his eyes, and fangs, and said "Oh."

"That really felt good. Thank you. It's been along time since..." began Nick.

"You're welcome. It was my pleasure."

They sat in companionable silence for a while. When the clock struck ten, Nick ambled over to his computer. Nat joined him, and together they searched for Kerr, using the Internet, and the other advantages of modern technology.

NIGHTMARE: KERMIT'S

"How could you let it happen, Kermit? I trusted you!" Cali advanced on him, accusation flaring in her eyes.

"I'm sorry! I didn't know. You've gotta believe me," Kermit said frantically, thinking Oh God! Not again! I don't know how much more of this I can take.

Blake approached and gazed at him sorrowfully, "If only you hadn't botched everything."

Kerr flanked his other side. "It doesn't surprise me. I knew from the moment I met you that you wouldn't come through."

"Leave Kermit alone. There was...." Paul began.

At that moment Nick arrived.

"Knight, you've got to help me. Tell them...."

Nick vamped out and attacked Kerr, then Blake, then the others who were teasing Kermit. Kermit yelled for Nick to stop.

But they didn't die. They all turned into vampires and headed to Kermit. Cali advanced on him, her newly inherited fangs protruding.

NOON: THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL - ROOM 757

Kermit tossed, twisted, and turned violently, held fast by his nightmare. "I tried everything to save you!" he cried out.

Peter turned, looked at him, and hurried over to his side. He placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder and spoke. "Kermit. Wake up! It's just a nightmare."

He was breathing much faster now, and sweating freely. "No, no," he moaned. "Leave me alone!"

Peter shook him harder. "C'mon Kermit, wake up!"

Kermit let out a long, shuddering breath, and then was still. Too still. Peter knew he had to do something, anything, to help his friend out. Suddenly, Kermit's eyes flew open, and he stared, at what, Peter couldn't say. He drew a breath and seemed to return from whatever hell he'd been in. "Oh boy," he said, shaking his head to clear it. "What is it?" he asked, noticing the way Peter was looking intently at him.

"I should be asking you that."

"What?"

"You were having a nightmare, I think."

"Oh yeah," he acknowledged, as he put on his sunglasses.

"You also appeared to have stopped breathing"

"Well, as you can see, I'm all right now"

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"About what?"

"Whatever it is that has you on edge. I've never seen you like this, Kermit. You're starting to scare me."

"Don't worry about me, kid. I'm fine. Did you find anything out?"

"I'm not sure. Want to check it out?"

He rubbed his hands together. "Do I ever. Let's get to it, kid."

6:30PM: KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

"C'mon, partner, let's rock 'n' roll!" Schanke said as he entered, what he called, Knight's high-tech dungeon of doom.

Nick and Natalie looked up from his computer. "What are you doing here?" Nick asked.

"Oh, I was just driving by when I thought I'd pay ya a visit."

Nick looked disbelievingly at him.

"Okay, okay, you got me. Myra," Nick and Nat exchanged a look that said 'Myra, of course.' Schanke continued, "was driving me nuts, so I thought I'd come over here to kill some time before we reported to the station." As Schanke advanced, he remarked, "Hey, you got Donkey Kong on that thing?"

Nat and Nick looked at each other and simultaneously shook their heads.

Schanke oblivious, asked, "So, what games do you have?"

"I'm not sure, Schank."

"Oh man! You've had that thing for how long? And you don't even know what games you have? That's pathetic, Knight."

"What can I say? I use it for research, not entertainment. Whatever ones came with it, I guess."

8:00PM: 96TH PRECINCT

Nat had left them, mentioning she had "People to see, bodies to dissect. You know how it is." She'd waved to them as she drove off.

The first thing Nick noticed upon entering the station was Kermit, whose head was bobbing madly.

It's, as though he's listening to his own internal music. Nick thought. I wonder what kind it is? Blues? Jazz? Classical? R 'n' B?

He pondered it for a few minutes, and then decided. Jazz. It's got to be Jazz. That settled, he strolled over to his desk and got started on his paperwork.

(CONTINUED)

Kermit and Peter had been hard at work for a couple of hours already. Kermit had received a cryptic message about 10 minutes ago stating that: a friend of his friend would be in Toronto at 8:00pm. Who? He wasn't sure. 'I guess I'll have to wait and see.'

The four of them continued working, each in their own way, for the next couple of hours. Then, Kermit's computer flashed: Incoming Message. Do you wish to view it, or save it? Kermit, hoping it would be about Paul, or Kerr, decided to view it. The message read: Follow the courier. You'll recognize him. He'll lead you to the meeting place.

He glanced around, but nothing, or nobody, seemed out of place. He returned to work, following a promising lead.

Half an hour later, Peter heard him exclaim, "Oh yeah! Give it to me, mama."

Peter looked up and asked, "What do you have Kermit?"

"The pot at the end of the rainbow! That's what."

"Yeah? Let's see!"

"In a minute. I'm just confirming it." While Kermit was waiting for the confirmation to come through, he got up, stretched, and then made his way over to the coffee machine.

Peter's stomach rumbled, insistent that it needed sustenance. "I need something to eat. Now!" Peter muttered.

While Kermit was going to get a cup of coffee, Peter decided he'd go find that cafeteria, and grab a sandwich and a chocolate bar.

As Kermit poured himself a cup, he happened to glance up. "Phila!" The sight startled him so much, that he poured some of the coffee onto himself. "Damn!" he swore, both at the coffee and the fact that he now couldn't see Phila. He hurried out, hoping he hadn't completely lost him.

Nick, his hearing attuned to catch the slightest whisper, was intrigued. Phila? he thought. Nick glanced around the station, but didn't see him. He did, however, see Kermit hurrying out the door, and surreptitiously followed him.

Schanke called out to the retreating Knight, "Knight! Yo, Knight! Where are..." But Nick just kept on going. Right out of the precinct.

Schanke tossed his pen on his desk. "Damn," he stated, "I really hate it when he does that."

OUTSIDE STATION

Nick saw Phila drive off in a black sedan, with Kermit in hot pursuit in his green Corvair.

INSIDE STATION

Peter was returning to his desk, finishing off a sandwich. He threw the container in the garbage can, and finished his drink. He got to his desk, and put down the chocolate bars, and the other unopened drink.

He noticed Kermit wasn't around, so he decided to finish up what he had been doing, until Kermit got back.

15 minutes later, he started to get impatient, so he went over to Kermit's desk.

He had to smile when he saw the screen on Kermit's computer. The screen saver had kicked in. It featured a group of 8 frogs in an open meadow, playing a game of leapfrog. He watched it for a few seconds, and then hit a key. To his shock, a box appeared on the screen, over the screen saver, that contained the following message: The screen saver you are using is password protected. You must type in the screen saver password to turn off the screen saver. Also in the box was the word 'Password: ' followed by a blank box. Underneath the Password box were two more boxes. One said OK and the other said CANCEL.

"Great," Peter mumbled. "Now I have to figure out the password."

Peter tried to break the password. When he typed, the letters appeared as '*'. After he finished typing each word, he'd press enter. Only to have the computer display 'Incorrect Password. Check your screen saver password, and try again.' Peter would press enter, and try again. He was hoping he would be able to break it before Kermit got back from wherever it was that he had gone.

After about 30 minutes of trying, he was still unsuccessful. He'd tried everything. He was about to give up, when Cat walked by. Inspiration struck. Robin Hood, he thought. So he tried it. It was also wrong. But, believing he was on the right track, he tried people, places, and things associated with Robin Hood. He was just about to give up and try Ancient Greek Mythology, when he remembered one thing he'd forgotten. How could I forget Sherwood? It's just the most important piece of the Robin Hood legend. He entered Sherwood, and the computer accepted it.

The screen saver disappeared, and the screen was revealed.

(CONTINUED)

It read: Mr. A. Kerr 25 Kirkham St.

"Dammit!" Peter swore. "I bet he's gone without backup!"

"What?" Schanke asked.

"Kermit. He found Kerr! I bet he's gone there to rescue Paul."

"Well, what are we sitting around here for? Let's go!"

"Shouldn't we tell Nick what's going on?"

"Nick? First we'd have to find him!"

"What do you mean find him? Did you lose your partner, too?"

"Yeah. Nick has a tendency to take off every now and then."

"So does Kermit. He thinks he can solve everything himself."

"Exactly. Knight thinks he's invincible. He thinks he's Superman or something."

"Looks like our partners have a lot in common."

"Yeah. Looks like it."

"When did he leave?"

"About 45, 50 minutes ago. Like a bat out of hell. I swear he flew out that door."

"I'm going after Kermit. You coming, or staying?"

"I'm with you, kid. Knight'll catch up with us, sooner or later. He always does. So, where are we headed?"

"25 Kirkham Street. Know where it is?"

"Yeah. It's up around the Zoo, I believe." Schanke stated as he was putting on his warm winter coat. "Let's take your car. Mine's acting up. I swear it hates winter almost as much as I do..." Schanke's voice trailed off as they got outside.

9:00PM: EN-ROUTE

As Kermit drove, he kept an eye on his rear-view mirror, making sure a certain distinctive-looking Caddy wasn't following.

Kermit drove on, keeping Phila's car in sight. He was calm, by now completely in mercenary mode. Seeing Phila again, after such a long time had passed, triggered an onslaught of memories.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA (FLASHBACK: KERMIT'S)

They faced a group of ten men. Well, boys really. The eldest looked to be no more than 18, and the youngest, 12, if a day. Kermit was appalled by just how dead their eyes were. He prayed he'd never end up that way. He was worried all the more so because they were so young. They'd likely rattle easily, and they were amateurs, which made them unpredictable. Phila whimpered, and as one, they turned to face him. "Don't look at me that way! I'm completely harmless, and armless!" he added, for good measure. He advanced towards them. One step, then two.

A finger on a trigger jerked. Suddenly bullets zinged through the air at them. Phila hit the ground, survival instinct kicking in faster than the first shot. The others had managed to find scant shelter, and laid down covering fire, until Phila managed to join them. They were able to retreat a little, but the exertion proved too much. Kermit's leg, not quite fully healed, abruptly decided it couldn't take the punishment any more, and collapsed, causing Kermit to stumble and fall.

"No!" Cali cried, and broke cover, barely avoiding Kerr's grasping hand, trying to keep her covered, and safe. Crouched over, she ran to him and, as she was trying to lift him, was hit. She fell to the ground, lifeless. Kerr cursed, and he and Phila fell back further, but not before Kermit saw the look of utter hatred, and promised revenge in Kerr's eyes. It chilled him as very few things had. Kermit managed to kill two of the boys, and was himself wounded. Kermit passed out.

10:00PM: 25 KIRKHAM STREET

Kermit saw Phila pull into a driveway. He grinned. The address matched the one he'd finally found.

"You weren't quite as careful as you thought, Kerr!" Kermit muttered to himself.

(CONTINUED)

He felt vindicated. His face was serious as he got out of the car, and approached the front door carefully.

He'd seen Phila enter it, so, naturally, he was suspicious. He made a circuit of the house, keeping to the shadows. It appeared to be a simple house, but Kermit knew differently.

He drew his gun, then kicked in the front door, and, very much in mercenary mode, started searching the house.

FOCUS ON KERR

Amused, Kerr watched on his security system, as Kermit made a through sweep of the house. "That's it, just a little bit more..." he breathed. He addressed Phila. "Are we ready to leave?"

"Yeah."

"Excellent!" He had planned thoroughly for this moment. Kerr had never meant to harm Blaisdell. He liked him. Blaisdell was just a means to an end. He knew that it would be wise to move Kermit after he'd finished with him. Somewhere where his friends would never find him. For he was sure Kermit had left some hint as to where he was going. Kermit was always so resourceful.

Kerr returned his attention to the monitor -- his eyes were going to stay glued to it. 'No tricks Griffin!,' he thought.

"Ahh, Kerr?" Phila questioned.

"Not now, Phila. I'm busy."

"Ahh, Kerr, I..."

"Shut up, Phila. I have to concentrate."

"Ahh, Kerr, I really..."

Kerr, frustrated with Phila, abruptly turned around and yelled, "WHAT IS IT????"

Phila was startled. The tone in Kerr's voice made him forget what he was going to say.

"I... I..." Phila started.

"Spit it out, Phila. We haven't got all day!"

"I forgot."

Kerr turned back to the monitor. It was dead.

"Damn!" he cursed, hitting a table with his fist. "Look at what you did!!" he demanded. "I took my eyes off for one second and..." Kerr just wanted to strangle to Phila.

FOCUS ON KERMIT

Kermit chuckled softly. It really had been child's play to disable the alarm and security systems. "Now, to find Paul." Kermit thought aloud.

FOCUS ON PAUL

The light went off indicating that the door, which had been electronically locked, was now unsecured. Paul acted. The door opened easily, and he slipped out into the rest of the house.

FOCUS ON KERMIT

Kermit heard footsteps, so he quickly concealed himself. The steps drew closer, and closer, to the room he was in. Then they stopped, right outside the door. Kermit prepared himself, mentally and physically. He wasn't in an immediate line-of-sight of the door, so he had to rely on his other senses. He heard the door creak open, and he tensed, adrenaline pumping through him.

Someone entered but stopped in the doorway. 'It's now or never Kermit', he thought, and burst into action. He attacked the figure, barely able to check the lethal blow aimed at the figure. "Paul!" he exclaimed.

ELSEWHERE

A shadowy figure, head swathed in a hat and scarf that completely obscured the face, landed. "I hope I'm not too late!" the figure said as it entered the house and proceeded to methodically search it.

FOCUS ON KERMIT AND PAUL

"Who were you expecting, Kermit?" Paul Blaisdell was relieved to see his old friend. He didn't want anything to happen to the man he'd taken under his wing.

"Oh, one of Kerr's heavies," Kermit replied.

"As far as I can tell," Paul began, "it's only him and Phila."

(CONTINUED)

"You're looking better than I expected you would, after Kerr's tender mercies."

"It's you he wants. Other than kidnapping me, he had no reason to harm me. In fact, one could say he treated me like a guest. I had everything I wanted. Except my freedom."

"Well, I'm glad you're fine. Let's get out of here. This place is giving me the willies."

FOCUS ON KERR

Kerr and Phila searched the house.

It was quite by accident that they ran, quite literally, into Kermit and Paul. Kerr had opened the door to the stairway, Kermit's hand still on the doorknob.

Kermit had been in the lead, gun drawn. Kerr had his own, also drawn. "I believe this is what is referred to as a stand-off." Kerr said.

"Oh yeah," quipped Kermit.

"You and I have things we need to discuss."

"For instance?" Kermit cocked an eyebrow.

"Cali. Why don't we go continue this conversation in the library?" Kerr asked.

"No way, Kerr. Whatever you have to say, say it here. Say it now." Kermit stated.

"Griffin, I promise, I won't harm you. Here," Kerr offered Kermit his gun. "Take it, as a sign of my sincerity."

Kermit wasn't sure what to make of this. He took the gun, but wasn't sure if Kerr was being completely honest. Only one way to find out, he thought.

"Okay, lead the way." Kermit said, giving the appearance of trusting Kerr. But he kept his senses on red alert. This could be a trick. With Kerr not everything is, as it seems all the time.

They headed for the library.

LIBRARY

In the library, Kermit and Kerr were seated across from each other at a table. Paul and Phila were standing near their respective colleagues. Kermit's and Kerr's conversation had reached its climax.

"You caused Cali's death. I demand retribution." Kerr stated, as he stood and slammed his hands on the table.

At that instant, the door to the library opened. All eyes turned to the door. For the first time, the figure stood revealed. Gone were the hat and scarf. The coat was wide open. "Cali!" all said at once.

Cali walked towards Kerr, seductively. "As you can see, I am still here, on this Earth," she said calmly.

"How did you survive?" asked Kerr. "I saw you... I saw the bull..." He turned to Kermit, "Did you know about this?" Kermit nodded. Kerr returned his gaze to Cali. "Why don't you look any older?"

"Be patient my love. All is about to be revealed."

She took the few final steps towards Kerr and embraced him in a loving kiss. Then she released him and brought her lips from his lips to his neck. She nuzzled his neck and sank her fangs in.

Kerr moaned. The moan was a cross between pleasure and pain. No one could move. Everyone was in shock.

KERR'S MIND

Kerr was drowning in the images he was getting. He saw Cali being drained until just before death.

'So,' he thought with the one tiny detached bit of his mind, 'Cali hadn't been killed by the bullets after all.'

He saw Cali being brought across.

'That's what's happening to me now,' Kerr thought drowsily.

He saw Dr. Michaelson, teaching her how to survive as what she now was, a vampire.

And Griffin, corresponding with her over the years. Her learning that he was still alive, and living in Scarborough.

'But why Griffin? Why'd she reach out to him? Why not me? I'm the one, and only one, that ever loved her. Why would she contact Griffin?'

LIBRARY

Cali finished him off, and he slumped in her arms.

Kermit finally found his voice. "You've killed him!"

"No. I haven't, Kermit. He's not dead." Cali faced Kermit and he saw the yellow glint in her eyes, and the fangs in her mouth.

He wasn't sure what to do. Cali then bit her wrist, and let her blood drip into Kerr's mouth. Kermit saw Kerr start to come to. Then he saw him grabbing Cali's wrist and sucking on it like a newborn would its mother. I don't believe this, Kermit thought.

Suddenly the doors flew open again, and Nick burst in.

"Nooo! Cali, stop!" Nick cried. But he could see he was too late. He always seemed to be too late. Kerr had just let go of Cali's arm.

1974: SOUTH AMERICA (FLASHBACK: NICK'S)

When Nick arrived, Kermit was unconscious. Kerr was kneeling beside Cali, cradling her head in his arms. Phila was standing beside him. The shooting had stopped. For some reason all the shooters had just stopped shooting and left. Phila placed a hand on Kerr's shoulder and said, "She's gone, Kerr. There's nothing you can..." Phila looked up and saw Nick approaching. Nick looked at him and asked, "What happened?" Phila looked at him, not quite sure how to answer. "Not sure, Doc. The bullets just came from nowhere. We..." Nick looked at him and, using his vampiric voice said, "Rest." Phila sat down and closed his eyes.

Nick went over to Cali side. Phila was wrong. She wasn't dead. Pretty close though. Between the poison in her system, and the severity of these new wounds, Nick wasn't sure if he could save her. Kermit on the other hand still stood a chance. Nick knew he had to get Kerr and Phila out of here. With them gone, he would be able to move Cali and Kermit to a safe place a lot easier. Nick looked at Kerr who was still cradling Cali. "Kerr, look at me", Nick said. Kerr replied without looking at him. "She can't be dead, Doc. She just can't be."

(CONTINUED)

Much to his surprise, Cali was barely clinging to life. Although, she was fading fast. Nick spoke to Kerr again this time using his vampiric voice. "Kerr. Look. At. Me." Kerr looked up in a hypnotic trance. Nick continued, "I need you to go back to camp. Take Phila. Do you understand?"

"Yes. Camp. Take Phila."

"Good."

Nick turned to Phila. As soon as eye contact with Kerr was broken, Kerr looked at Cali and let her go. Nick addressed Phila, "Phila, wake up." Phila woke up, confused. "What? Where?" Nick turned back to Kerr who was rising, "You better get going. And, take a nap when you get back to camp."

Nick went over to Kermit. Kerr looked at Phila, "Let's go Phila."

Phila got up and looked at Kerr, "Why..."

Kerr started to walk off, and yelled back at Phila, "Now!" Phila ran after him.

Nick was examining Kermit, his back to Cali, when he heard a noise behind him, and sensed the presence of someone. But not just any someone. The feeling he was getting could mean it is only one person. He turned around and saw LaCroix and Janette.

LaCroix was kneeling beside the fallen Cali. "She has spirit! This one." LaCroix reflected. "Such a pity to waste it." He sank his fangs into her.

"LaCroix!" Came the despairing cry.

The master vampire finished the transformation. "You, must teach your little rebel friend, Nicholas. Otherwise, I will be back for her." LaCroix stated and then with a look to Janette he flew off. Janette followed.

Nick knew he must tend to Cali and that he could not return to the rebel camp. He also knew that if Kermit returned to the camp, Kerr would probably kill him. So, Nick picked up both of them and flew off.

LIBRARY

Cali turned her head, licking off the blood that was still on her lips. "Why shouldn't I, Nicholas?" Her eyes glowed yellow-green, and her fangs were very prominent.

(CONTINUED)

"Indeed, why, Dr. Michaelson?" Kerr emphasized the use of Nick's old name.

"If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes..." Kermit muttered.

Paul glanced at Nick. 'He hasn't aged a day. I guess what they say is true. And. ... Why doesn't Kermit seem to be surprised to see Nick? I... Wait, what was it the Night Crawler said in his poem. ... a homicide cop? Nick must have been working with Kermit, to find me. ... I guess Kermit has figured out by now that that Nick was Michaelson. I wonder what name he's going by, today?' Paul thought. Then he noticed that all this vampire stuff wasn't having any effect on Kermit at all. 'Shouldn't this vampire stuff be affecting Kermit somehow? Unless his experiences with Caine, since I've left, have taught him that anything is possible.'

Phila, after spotting Cali and Kerr, had hidden under a table, his eyes tightly squeezed shut, repeating, "This isn't happening! This isn't happening!" It took on the tone of being a mantra.

"Phila, shut up!!!" Kerr ordered, his eyes also glowing.

"Yes Kerr," he said meekly. Boldened by the strength of Kerr's voice, he dared a quick peek. Kerr and Cali, arms circling the other's waist, stood looking at each other; eyes an unearthly yellow-green, and fangs protruded. "Nooo!" he wailed, burying his head into his hands.

"You're a fool, Phila," Kerr commented.

"Yes, Kerr," he replied, still firmly holding his head.

"Look at me!" he commanded.

Phila relented, by spreading his fingers out. Daring a little bit more, after nothing bad had happened, he opened his eyes. Then, just as quickly, closed them again. Finally, he opened them for good. "Kerr? You look normal! I mean, well, of course, you look normal..."

Kerr cut him off. "Shut up, Phila," he said wearily. "We're leaving."

"You're taking me with you?" he asked, incredulous.

"Yes, of course I am." Kerr was confused. "Why wouldn't I?"

"Oh good, then what I thought I saw..."

"...was real, Phila," Kerr confirmed.

"But, then why?" Phila wondered aloud. His eyes grew large as he realized what Kerr meant to do.

"No, Phila. I do not intend to feed on you. You know you are always safe with me. No, I merely intend to carry out my end of the bargain. Something about... 50 hand-picked virgins in red fur uniforms to protect you, I believe."

"Right." He rubbed his hands in anticipation. "I'm ready."

"For what?" Kerr questioned. Seeing his eager look, he said, "No, I'm, that is we, are not bringing you across." Phila's face fell. "However, we will bring you to safety. Come, Phila."

Kermit had had just about enough. If Nick was just going to stand there and do nothing, he'd have to do something himself.

"You're not going anywhere, Kerr!" Kermit snarled, his Desert Eagle aimed at Kerr's head.

"Oh, but we are. I suggest you put away your gun, Griffin. Unless you want to pick up the pieces." Kerr's voice was velvet soft, covering steel.

"You had Gordon killed!"

"That was a mistake. I personally saw to it that the man responsible was permanently taken out of my employment. Now, get out of my way," he growled.

Kerr took a step forward. Kermit fired, directly into his heart. With inhuman strength, Kerr took another step, apparently unaffected. Kermit shot again. Kerr started laughing as Kermit's bullets just went right through him.

"You don't know much about vampires, do you Kermit? Bullets are useless! As you can see." Kerr flew to Kermit, and grabbed his coat lapels, then sent him flying into a wall.

Nick, flew over to Kermit, placing himself in front of Kermit, facing Kerr, vamped out. "Don't you ever come back to Toronto, or go after my friends again," he warned Kerr.

"Or what Michaelson? You'll stake me?" Kerr laughed. "You don't scare me. You didn't then, and you don't now!"

Nick looked at the new vampire, with yellow eyes. "Oh, but I should. I'm a lot older than you are, Kerr. I could very easily kill you."

Kerr looked at Nick and seriously said, "But you won't. Don't worry, I have what I least expected -- Cali. I will do no harm to your friends -- as long as they leave us alone," he said hauntingly.

Nick watched Phila, Kerr and Cali, disappear into the night; he had no doubt that Cali would pull Kerr into line.

Perhaps I ought to look in on them. See how they're doing in a few years. Yes. 50 years should do it, he mused to himself. Nick turned to face everyone else; his eyes had reverted to their natural blue.

Paul walked over to him. "It's been awhile, Nick. What's new?"

"Not much. You?"

Kermit walked over.

"So, what's your name these days?"

"It's Knight. Detective Nicholas Knight." Kermit chimed in. "A vampire cop."

"So then, it was you LaCroix was talking about on the radio."

"What?" Nick stated.

But before Paul could answer, Kermit jumped in, "Wait... You knew he was a vampire?"

"Oh yeah." Paul said.

Nick and Paul stifled a giggle. Kermit looked at them. Kermit was about to make a reply, when Peter and Schanke skidded into the room, guns drawn. "Freeze!!" they demanded.

"Where's Kerr?" Schanke demanded, upon seeing only Kermit, Nick, and Blaisdell.

"Dad!" Peter was so ecstatic to see Paul alive and well, it just slipped out.

He ran over to him and they hugged, fiercely.

Paul looked at Kermit and arched his eyebrow, as if to say 'What's Peter doing here?'

Kermit shrugged eloquently. 'What can I say, the kid followed me,' the gesture seemed to say.

"Son, I'm all right. Now, let me look at you," Paul said gruffly, secretly touched that his foster son was so concerned about him.

They released each other, and both looked the other over, satisfied that no lasting damage happened to the other.

"Well, partner. I guess that's what life is all about. Family and good friends," Schanke observed.

"You're right, Schank," Nick said, without thinking.

"What was that? Did I actually hear you agree with me?"

"No. No," Nick back-pedaled immediately.

"Aw, c'mon, partner. When I'm right, I'm right."

"But you're never right, Schank," their voices trailed off as they left.

"Well kid," Kermit said, "I guess we'd better go and find a place to sleep."

"Why? Where have you been staying?" Paul asked.

"Your room at the Royal York," Kermit replied. "We thought that since you asked us up here, then had the bad sense to go and get kidnapped, that, in the spirit of fairness, we'd let you pay," he joked as he and Peter and Paul followed Knight and Schanke out of the house. Paul just laughed.

EPILOGUE

KNIGHT'S WAREHOUSE

A couple of days later, Nick and Natalie were watching a movie together. Although Nat called it part of the humanizing process. What it really was, was just an excuse to watch romantic movies with Nick. This time, it had been Romeo and Juliet.

"You know, Nat. When I was watching the premiere performance of Romeo and Juliet, at the Globe Theater, I knew it was something special."

Natalie was reminded, yet again, of just how long a life Nick had led so far.

He certainly puts a whole new meaning to the phrase older man! She thought.

Every so often it would just blow her mind how many different experiences Nick had gone through. The changes he has seen in the world. And all the things he'd had to adapt to.

"Did you know William Shakespeare?"

"Yeah. In fact, I wrote down some of his plays for him."

"Really? Which ones?"

"I'll never tell."

"Oh, come on Nick."

"Nope. I made a promise."

"Give me a hint."

"If you read them close enough, you might be able to figure it out."

"I'm definitely taking you to the Stratford Festival this summer."

BLAISDELL'S

Kermit had, at first, refused to accompany Paul and Peter to the Blaisdell's. He felt like he would be intruding. But, father and son ganged up on him, and persuaded him to come along.

The three of them pulled up, in their own cars. Peter let Paul go first.

When Paul opened the front door, Annie was standing right there.

"Hello darling. I'm home. To stay. I missed you." Paul said.

With a sob, Annie clutched Paul to her, and started to kiss him, as they entered the house, together.

"Sure is nice to see Paul back. Mom is thrilled," Peter said as he and Kermit approached the house.

They entered the Blaisdell house, as Kermit observed, "Oh yeah."

THE END