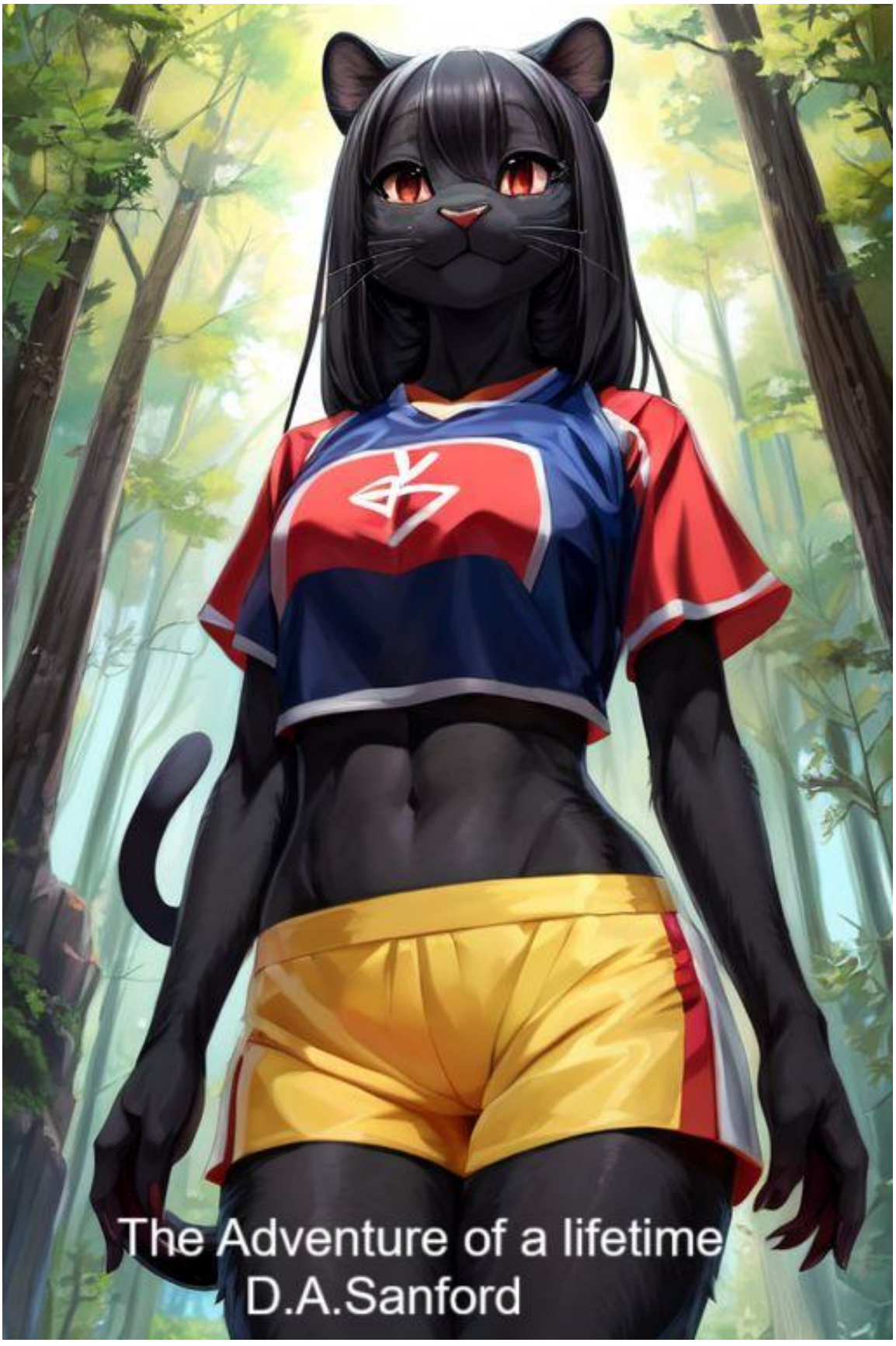
The Adventure of a lifetime
D.A.Sanford

The Adventure of a Lifetime
By D.A.Sanford

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Warning: Contains adult content due to graphic descriptions of any or all of the following:

Battles, Language, Sexual

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The contest

I am a sucker for contests that you entered to win a prize. Before they would draw the winner, I always knew that I would win. Never did. I still entered, I still dreamed, I still lost. Yes, I'm a sucker for those. You would think I would learn.

There was a science fiction convention in the city that was going to have my favorite author signing her books. I wanted to be able to tell her how much I loved her books but there were a few endings that would have been better with a few tweaks.

As I was waiting in line, I saw a large poster on her desk. Win a wild vacation that you may never want to leave. Fill out this form and drop it into the box. I'm going to win that. I got my signature and tried to tell her about the revisions she needed to make but the line and her look told me that I needed to move along.

I filled out the form and noticed the draw date of a month from now. Also that the author would be with you on that vacation for a one on one discussion. My imagination went into high gear and started to plan that encounter.

All I could think about is winning. That is my usual pattern. I do have the small reality voice in my head that told me that I was not going to win. I counter with , I can dream, can't I?

I was settling in for the night. I had my music playing softly. I had her latest book on my reader. This will throw you but I do not have a glass of wine. I find nothing more satisfying than an almost freezing thermal tall mug of water. Nothing is better.

Getting a few pages into the book, there is a knock on my apartment door. Reluctantly, I get up and go to the door. Through the peep hole, I see an official looking man in a black suit, holding a large envelope. I am curious so I open the door.

In an almost robot manner, the man asks for my identification. I show him my driver's license and conceal carry permit. He looks at both and is satisfied. He hands me my cards and the envelope.

"All necessary information is inside."

With that, he doesn't say another word. He turns and walks away.

I'm shaking my head as I close the door. Looking at the large manila envelope. I go back to my chair and set it on the coffee table. I stared at it for a while and then picked it up. All the outer envelope had was my name and address. I open it and my heart jumps.

“This is to notify you that you have won the contest for the once in a lifetime wild vacation.”

The rest of the letter tells me that I need to be at the location with this letter, The strange thing is that it is telling me that I am not to bring anything more. All will be provided. I was to be there tomorrow. I am elated. I finally won something.

Why tell me the day before? I really did not have anyone I needed to tell. I pay my rent ahead by a month. That won’t be an issue. What the heck, I won. I’m going.

It was a long night but I took the bus to the address. It really was not that impressive. A historic brownstone that was restored but it still was an old building. I went in to the lobby. It surprised me. It was like a high security military base.

They had my picture. I pulled out my wallet to show my ID but it was confiscated. I was told that I would get it back when I returned. Then I was escorted to an office where the author welcomed me.

“Welcome Mr. Brown, can I call you Rick?”

“That will be okay. What the heck is going on?”

“All your questions will be answered but first, we need to have you looked at by our doctors as a precaution. We need to find out if you are in good health.”

I am ushered out to another room where I am poked and prodded. There was a lot of questions. I’m now getting worried. What is the destination of the vacation that I need to go through all of this? It better be good. After all was done, I was told that I was in good health. Then I was escorted back to her.

She looks at her laptop and comments to herself, “Good health, that’s perfect.” She closes the lap top, leans back and says that this will be an adventure on an epoch scale. She tells me that I stuck out at the signing.

“There were a multitude of people that commented on what the books meant to them. A small few had ideas of new books. You stood out because you were offering rewrite suggestions that really made sense. You really know my genre. This is going to be hard to accept but most of my stories are from my real adventures.”

Almost all her books take place on the planet Randan in a faraway galaxy. She has to mean that the adventures are real but here on this world.

“:That is not correct..” She tells me.

“What’s not correct?”

“What you thought when you surmised that my adventures were on this world.”

I think that this is fucked up. I know that I did not say that out loud.

“No, you thought it out loud. My species can read minds from those who cannot shield their thoughts. I figured that you would have gotten that. My main characters all had this ability.”

Suddenly I get a bad feeling about this.

“I thank you for the prize but I now know that I don’t think that it is in my best interest. Nice meeting you.”

I get up and find that the door will not open.

“You evidently did not read the fine print on the card you filled out.”

She opens her lap top and brings up my card. On the flip side, it does say that if you enter this contest, you are contractually required to go on the trip if you are chosen for the prize. Upon examination, you are obligated to leave with Azael Windwillow on that said trip.

“I am from Randan, my stories hero is me. My real name is Azael Windwillow. Vickey Dew is my pen name.”

She shifts into that character. A felid, a very deep black fur with a satin glow, with her iconic one white whisker. Even though she is still in the office suit she was wearing, all my mind could see is her scantily clad perfect figure that does not have those enormous breasts that others write about. They are a little more than the perfect handful. I am stunned to see the character that I have been in love with since the first book I read of hers.

She is standing right in front of me and is smiling. I do not care if she can read my thoughts. The character I love is real. I had to sit down.

In her true form, she sits next to me.

“I picked you personally. In all the book signings I have done. People’s thoughts leak. I have heard everything they wanted to do to the character. I am sure you know what they thought. Not those adventures but the sex was their only thought. You are the only

one that I felt had true love for Azael. A want that could not be fulfilled. You wanted to protect her even if it cost you your life. I felt affectional desire."

To hear my innermost feelings spoken by the one that I love, who up to now, was just words on a page. I don't know what I should do. I actually am hugging myself and rocking. I am overwhelmed.

"I will follow you anywhere!" in my now shaky soft whisper. I break down when she puts her arm on my shoulder and tells me that it is alright.

"I have never had anyone that loved me for me. I hope we have a long time together.. Now, there is a crisis on Randen that I need to go and help. I have never had a permanent companion through any of my adventures. I now feel that I need that support. Wasn't that one of the suggestions you were making. I need someone that has my back. I know that it is you. Want to go?"

She did not need to ask. Knowing that she can hear me, I think I need to change my clothes. These will not stand the climate and terrain. Azael takes my hand and leads me to another room that has all the things that we will need.

Azael starts to pick out my clothes. I actually am an average build. Toned but not ripped. I always saw that those that are ripped don't think very well. They are more interested in themselves first. Azael's safety is mine.

I am given what would be called a tomb raider style outfit. Brown pocket pants, tan shirt, vest and hat. I can tell that she is writing in her mind. I am presented with a dual holster with the lightning pistols from her books.

She steps back and twirls her finger to have me rotate. "Those shoes are not right. You need a pair of scuffed tan lace up tall boots. What size are you?"

I tell her that I am size twelve US. Immediately she disappears between the shelves and brings out a pair of thirteens.

"You need a little room. Thick sox for the cold region. Try these on."

They are very comfortable and I say that I like them.

She now hands me something that looks like a large flask.

"This is going to be your signature piece. Almost a running gag that I think you will enjoy. Take a sip."

I unscrew the cap and take that sip. I can almost feel the ice crystals in the purest water that I have ever tasted. She tells me that even on the hottest days, that will never run out of that ice water.

“People will want to take a sip and will be disappointed. Some will try to take it from you but will find that the next sip will be instant death, deadly poison. The flask will always return to you. We both will be sustained by it but even I will not be able to keep it. I will not be poisoned but it is yours.”

I can’t resist. I take a long drink and hand it to her. She takes a drink and holds on to it. Withing a few seconds of recapping it, it was back in my inner vest pocket.

Now something that I never expected, she gets on her clothes. However she did not leave, she stripped out of this world’s clothes and without concern. I thought that she is perfect. She is exactly what my mind saw when I first read about her. She turns and smiles.

Her garb donned, she poses for me.

“You are exactly who I fell for. Will you allow me to follow you. Even if it means giving up my life both here and on Randan.”

She knows that it is the most sincere thing that she has ever heard in her life both as an author and an adventurer.

“I will not accept forfeiting your life in both worlds although you may need to become my companion here as well.” She has that coy smile. “The word has gone out with the fact that you won and that we are going to travel on a long adventure.”

Now we walk to the next room’s door. She asks me if I was ready and she opened the it without waiting for my answer. There, on the other side is a rustic room, it’s her mansion’s bedroom. I recognize it from the description. I read about it in many pages that are contained in all her books. I blush and she notices.

We step outside of her room and she yells for Margret, her fox war maid. She is a tease that you do not want to get on her bad side. She almost magically appeared.

“Yes mam.”

“This is Rick Brown. He is my very close friend. He will be accompanying us on our new mission. Treat him as you would me.”

“So you want me to spend some nights with him?”

Azael, in a tone that I know that they are playing around with me.

“Don’t you dare! He is mine forever. You can’t touch him.”

I might as well go along with it. I hang my head and acted disappointed. They looked at me. We all break out laughing.

Margret looks at me and at Azael. She now sees something that she never thought she would see.

“You found the one you have been looking for all your life. Rick, please take care of her heart, or I’ll have to take care of you.”

That was said with both compassion and threatening. It almost had a bit of remorse in it. Throughout all the books, Margret has been the only true friend to Azael. She was her support. Her words seemed to be her relinquishing that role to me.

“I will never replace your compassionate relationship with Azael.” I tell her. “You will always have a permanent spot in both hers and my heart. Please let me help you to keep her safe.”

Margret takes my hand and gently kisses my cheek. “Thank you. I’ll inform the staff of your arrival and that master Rick has joined us. She walks away and all we see is her tail wagging.

“She likes you already.”

“I hope so. I do not want to upset her or make her think I’m pushing her out. Far from it. I hope you will still have the same relationship that you have had with her. I love you the way you are. Please don’t change.”

I am surprised when Azael hugs me tightly and whispers that she loves me also. I’m feeling that this will be my world now. Only a short time has passed since I walked into the brownstone but this feels right. It feels like I must have been abducted from here as a baby and taken to my old world. It feels like I am home.

I have my arm being wrapped around by hers. She tells me that I was correct, I was home.

“We will need to go back but now, yes, you are now home.”

There is something that I need to ask. “That setup in the other world. Is that the government?”

“No, those are my hires. They are handpicked from this world as are the doctors. The guard’s man the building twenty four hours a day but the doctors are on call. That world’s governments would use my stores and destroy that world. No, I pay well and those chosen are well aware of the consequences of going against my instructions. What have my books said about double crossing me?”

I shiver because I have read about just that.

New surroundings that are so familiar

It is a totally weird feeling. I have read so much about this world, this mansion. It is familiar but at the same time so unfamiliar. I know the rooms but I don't know the layout of the mansion. I know that there is a practice field outside. There are two doors. One off the kitchen and one off the main room. I can tell you about most of the details of each but where they are, I only have the vague descriptions.

"Azael, for your next book, why don't you add a mansion layout map. I know your rooms but not where they are, I have to explore and find my way around."

"That is the start of adventures. Finding out where you are. Why don't we go to the practice field. I need to see where you stand with the weapons. That will give me a starting point to train you."

Finally I know where the field is. I am itching to try out the lightning pistols. I'm a pretty good shot on the target range with my own pistols but the description of the force of the lightning pistol. Blowing holes through a monster. I got to.

"Rick, you are broadcasting like crazy. We will have to work with that but first, there's the targets." She yells, "Clear the range! Lightning pistols being fired. Rick, show me side by side shots either side of center and the next target center only."

With both pistols in hand. "I'm going to do top and bottom first to get the feel. Then I'll show you what you want."

I fire and it is powerful but not like my forty four magnum. I decide that I need to impress them. In rapid order, I shoot both at once. One up and down followed by either side. Then I shifted towards the second target without moving from the first target. I put two rounds through the center. Then I resisted the urge to do the cowboy twirl. I just holstered them and asked.

"How was that?"

"I knew that you would be a good shot with your pistols. What to try archery?" Azael asks me.

I tell her that I have never even touched a bow and arrow but why not. An attendant brings out a set. It looks well made but what do I know. Azael sticks six arrows in the ground and shows me how to hold and notch the arrow.

Funny, I held it and if felt familiar. Looking at it, I grab an arrow. I take a comfortable stance, notch the arrow and aim. It flew and was a center shot. I think luck. The rest crowded into the bullseye.

Azael and Margret are stunned to say the least. She comes over and stares hard into my eyes. Then she asks me to hold out my hands palms up. She places hers on top of mine. She tells me to close my eyes.

“Concentrate and picture yourself shooting the arrow”

With that, I do what she asks but she is thrown back with force. She is looking at me and says that she has to summon the grand mage.

“There is something very familiar with you and I don’t know what it is. There is a very strong magical signature within you but you should not have it. That’s what threw me back. I have to call in the grand mage. She is the only one that can figure this out. It’s too deep for me.”

She sends out a mental call and is told that the mage will be there in two days. She is told not to take me out until exactly what is within me is found out.

We spend the rest of the day exploring the grounds. Azael shows me the whole mansion. We had more practice with different weapons and I must be a savant. It seems that I am proficient in all the weapons.

The two days went by and the grand mage is here. Without a word she looks at me.

“There is a powerful force coming from you. I am glad that Azael did not try to go any further with her probe of you.. Hold out your hands palms up.”

She does what Azael did. She placed her hands on mine. She put one foot behind her to brace herself but after a minute she broke contact. She was totally bewildered as she looked at me.

“Margret, if you would please, attack Rick full force. Show no mercy.”

Margret turns to Azael who is confused but nods in affirmation.

Without hesitation, she goes full force on me. I have never been in a fight let alone one that is clearly meant to do me bodily harm. As she is attacking, I find that I am countering her and also scoring hits on her. Margret is actually getting angry and tries a different style. That was less effective. I was able to pin her down and the mage called a halt.

The mage has both of us sit. I pull out my flask and take a satisfying drink. I almost had brain freeze it is so cold. I love it. I hand the flask to Margret who also took a drink but exclaimed that it was too cold.

The mage asked if she could have a drink. The look on her face was a combination of surprise and almost horror.

“I’m going to place both of my hands on either side of your head. Please bear with it. This is of vital importance.”

She does and my head is buzzing. I can feel her as if she is going through page after page on an internet site and going from site to site. Finally she is thrown back.

“Who dares wake me from my slumber?” I hear in my mind. I see both Margret and the mage on their knees. Only Azael is standing but she looks like she is in shock.

The mage is trembling as I hear her thoughts.

“Forgive me, oh lord Elrick. I did not mean to wake you but you were lost on your last exploration in space so long ago. This man has exhibited a lot of your traits. He even has a flask of your favorite drink. Almost frozen water.”

I think that this is totally wrong and I ask what is happening?

“My son, I have been awakened from a long slumber. You are my descendent. You line has been my protectors while I slept. I have a question for you. Could I have a drink of that ice water? I have a great thirst after so long. You’ll have to drink it for me.

I again open the flask and take a long drink.

Elrick sighs and he says that it is just the right temperature.

Now I feel a little schizophrenic having a think conversation with myself. “Now that you are awake, what happens to me? I don’t want to disappear.”

“I was going to wake anyways. I was asleep biding my time in the hope that another traveler found me and I was able to return here. It seems that my wife was the one to bring me home. Razael are you awake my darling?

I am just as surprised as she is when the woman talking is in Azael.

“Yes I am. I felt you and I am finally happy again. Now we can go together to the final life. First we should tell these wonderful children what is their reward?”

Elrick tells me that all his talents are mine including the god magic.

“All my memories are yours. You will start writing them and be a great author on the world that your mate publishes on. Both of you will go on to be extremely well received. On this world you will both be saviors of this world. As I have been asleep all this time, so have you. The reason you are so attracted to each other is that you are a felid shifter. I’m going to push you.”

He does and now I am a tan felid. Taller than Azael, I am now extremely muscular. I almost can’t wait to see myself in a mirror but by the reaction of Azael, Margret and the mage I must look good.

Razael tells the mage that she is to devote herself to training me in our ways. She tells Azael that I am her true one. Neither of us will leave each other.

They asked us is we would let them step to the front for a little while. We let them

Elrick said, “I was on that last trip. An asteroid disabled my ship but I was able to land on that world. I knew that I would not be able to return here. I needed to wait for as long as it would take for someone to find me. I had to marry a local and when I passed, I transferred myself to our child. That happened over and over until I entered Rick. I felt that he was the one. Then I found the books that you wrote with Azael. I knew that I would come home. I am so sorry to have left you but I thank you that you also waited.”

Razael said that she would have waited until time itself ran out but when Azael went on her first time to that world,

“I felt your presence. That is why I had her run that contest. It’s time to leave these young ones and go to the final life. Know this you two, we will come when called and give advice.”

I suddenly felt both empty but at the same time richer than I have ever felt. All his memories from exploration and his life here were mine. To top that, I knew that Azael is mine. Over eons, we were destined to meet.

Walking over to her, I pull her into a deep hug and a kiss then say to her

“I’m home.”

A hell called training

Things in both worlds cannot be kept secret. One talks with another without looking to see if someone is nearby. A loose word or thought. In this case, this is Azael's mansion. All are handpicked to work here but the grand mage travels with her entourage.

One of them had talked to a friend who talked to another and the word was out about the return of Elrick and Razael. It did not matter that I was only the vessel to carry him. It was not the fact that Azael was the same. This world is abuzz with the fact that they have returned. It was also pointed out that we had derivatives of their names as ours. Destiney fulfilled.

We are getting requests from royals, to the influential, for an audience. The blatant part is that all are requesting that we come to them as opposed of them coming to us. Going to them will make us subservient to them. Not that we care about that. We will not be manipulated to their advantage.

Our common answer is that I am being trained. If they want to talk, make an appointment.

Speaking about training, I know that my previous life was lack luster compared with life on Randan. I need to be train in my magic aspects but there is an urgency for me to grasp the basics of magic. I have the integral knowledge of the mechanics but the control is what I am lacking. The magic Elrick has endowed me with is so powerful, it can destroy nations without the control. They are on the apocalyptic scale.

I shudder to think that my lack of control would kill my kin.

BUT

I'm only a living being, not a god.

"You are killing me" I tell the mage. Trying to divert the issue I ask her,

"I can't keep calling you the mage. What is your name?"

"I let you get personal but my name is The Grand Mage. I will let you just call me mage. Get your control in order and I may let you call me by my childhood name. Until then, let's start the exercise again."

Why is she using a riding crop to keep my attention. I will admit that when she comes into view, my attention is solely on Azael.

“Ouch! take it easy.”

I have been getting to the point that she will let me start with water magic. Mainly I am restricted to being a garden hose. She is leading me around the garden. I get a hit if I harm a flower. Now I can become a sprinkler but, not satisfied, she will have me bring it down to the equivalent of a dripping faucet.

When she is not on me, Margret is now bringing out exotic weapons to try to mess me up. Most, after looking at the particular weapon, I can use them with great proficiency. She is delighted when she brings out something that I cannot figure out at first. She is just as vicious when she can strike me.

There is one thing that will get her pissed. It is when I hesitate going full out at her when I am getting the best of her.

“Don’t you ever hold back. There are women out there that will not hesitate to kill you. Especially now that the fact the you are Elrick. Killing you would make them famous. A person to be feared. Once you start to fight, fight to kill.”

I have some new scars but she has to fear Azael. I think that she has been told that a few arm and chest scars are acceptable. I still cannot deliberately mark Margret. That was until my love told me that she is a closet masochist.

“She’ll love you forever if you can sting her. She can take it. Margret will be mad at me for telling you this but if you were able to get her into a restrained wrestling hold and pin her. She will need to leave the field quickly.”

We go at it with swords and I was able to cut her butt. I told her that she wanted to have me actually go full force. She threw down her sword and went hand to hand. I was now comfortable in this form. This lasted for a few minutes and then I saw my opening. Sweeping her legs out from under her. I was able to pin her to the ground. I’m holding her wrists and sitting on her legs.

“Do you yield? I ask her and she tries to escape the pin but I hold fast. “Say I yield master Rick.”

“I yield.”

“I did not hear the right words. You yield to who?”

“I yield to you master Rick.”