

*The Legends of  
Whiteknight  
II*



**MORE HERO CATS**

**Al Strano**

**Copyright notice:**

Copyright © 2015. All Rights Reserved

Al Strano retains 100% rights to this material and it may not be republished, repackaged and/or redistributed for any purpose what so ever without the express written consent of Al Strano, [canam\\_man2002@yahoo.com](mailto:canam_man2002@yahoo.com).

## Chapter One

### Amy's Secret

Amy was raised by her grandmother, an unassuming lady who led a double life. Her one life was as a librarian at the local high school, living in a modest house on a tree lined street in a middle class section of town. Her other persona was as a fortune teller, potion maker, and midwife working out of a ramshackle hut on the wooded edge of town. Amy was twelve years old before she learned of Granny's dual lifestyle. She was captivated and delighted when her schoolmates talked about the wicked witch that lived in the forest. Amy knew the real person as a sweet, caring woman who did everything to make Amy's life comfortable. This eventually included paying her way through university, where Amy earned honors as a journalism major. Of course, in the meantime, Amy also accumulated a rich understanding of the occult.

Later on, Amy met Al. Events seemed to take a course of their own. Amy's job as a reporter constantly got her involved in Al's life. She was instrumental in saving Al's life when he was trapped under an oil tanker. Her insistence that the firemen look under the tanker to save a howling cat, only to discover Al, was their first meeting. Amy's continual reporting on Whiteknight's heroics developed into a romance with Al that led to their marriage. In addition, the money paid by the suitors for Whiteknight (supplanted by imitations) provided the funds to implement a plan devised by her grandmother. With the obvious need to relocate, the funds provided her with a way of moving back to where her life had changed after the deaths of her parents.

After her successful pregnancy, Amy took a few weeks off to be a stay-at-home mom. She was relaxing in bed with little Whitmore (who was named for Amy's father) and was joined by three white cats: WhiteKnight, White Princess and Home Alarm. She was speaking to them in a language not used since Arthur was the King of Britain. The cats understood every word she said and the volume of purring indicated that their understanding was very high. They were planning some activities that would have a great effect on the local community. Along with Home Alarm's three siblings, Amy and the cats were establishing a network that would encompass the whole community. In what appeared to be random placements, the three cats were actually in strategic locations: White Smoke at the firehouse, in the

same building as police headquarters; Holy Smoke at the orphanage, which was located in the general hospital; and Smoke Alarm's location at the newspaper, across from City Hall where Amy's boss spent a lot of time. No one would suspect cats of intelligence gathering.

The next step in the operation was fitting each cat with a special collar. When Al saw the collars he became suspicious, because the collars contained electronics. "What's with the little antennas? Will they be receiving TV stations?"

"No," laughed Amy. "They have tracking devices, in case they get catnapped."

Little did Al know he was close to the mark. The collars contained transmitters and listening devices.

What is all this about you may ask? Amy was born in this town. She moved at age 3 to live with her grandmother after her mother had died in the general hospital. Her mother had been admitted with a headache, then tragically died of an undetected aneurysm that caused a massive stroke. The doctors pronounced her brain-dead. Then, after a week, Amy's father agreed to have the artificial heart machine disconnected – an extremely painful experience. Amy's mother's personal physician had ordered an angiogram, which would have detected the blockage and allowed the hospital to take the proper steps to save Amy's mother. But according to her chart, no test had been done. However, when Amy's dad received the hospital bill, one of the many tests listed was an angiogram. Careful checking also showed several other procedures that no one could remember being performed. When Amy's father, Whitmore, questioned the hospital administrator about the charges, she calmly said, "Don't worry about it, your insurance covers them all."

"I don't care about what's covered, I care that the tests weren't done. My wife could have been saved if they had been done." Amy's dad was furious. "I'll start an investigation and get to the bottom of this."

Whitmore was a reporter for a national newspaper and had many sources to help his investigation. The more he looked into the hospital's business, the more he discovered massive overbilling and fraud. He contacted the local police, but was ignored. The district attorney told him, "Your

overreacting to your wife's death. I'm sure the hospital did everything to save her."

"I'll see what the state's attorney has to say about that," Whitmore retorted.

His threat did not go unnoticed. A call to a police captain from the DA started a chain reaction that led to Whitmore's arrest. Police acting on an anonymous tip raided his office and found two kilograms of cocaine. Even though he had no record of drug use or trafficking, the DA's office pressed the prosecution ahead with the result that Whitmore was sentenced to 20 years in jail, an incredible sentence for a first offender. Still using his contacts in the press, Whitmore tried to continue his investigation. This did not sit well with the crime bosses back home, so they arranged to have him stabbed in the shower and he died in the prison hospital. No one was ever charged with his murder.

Amy's whole life was dedicated to clearing her father's name and punishing the wrongdoers. Her grandmother came up with the plan to use specially bred cats as a way to infiltrate the offices of the corrupt city. Who would ever suspect a cat?

The time had come to bring Al into the plan. Amy planned to use the old special dinner ploy of his favorite food, wine, soft lighting and mood music. However, she really wasn't up to that level of deceit and her nervousness tipped Al off. "O.K. what's this all about? Special collars for the cats, even the ones that don't live with us? I was an investigator, you know, not some rube off the farm."

Amy was in tears. "I know I've been terrible, but when I explain you'll understand."

Al knew Amy's parents were both dead but thought that the circumstances were innocent. Amy told the whole story having to stop several times to catch her breath and wipe away tears. Al was very sympathetic, but not pleased with the way it was being handled. He belatedly noticed that there were three places set for dinner. "Who's the third place for?"

"My Granny's coming. She's been the mastermind behind this all along."

When Amy's grandma arrived, Al was shocked to recognize her. "You're the

mid-wife! No wonder Amy trusted you.”

“I hope you’ll forgive us, but we needed an experienced investigator to fill out our team.”

“What a team: 6 cats, a cub reporter, her Granny and a semi-retired sleuth. What’s next?”

Granny proudly laid out the plan. “A sophisticated eavesdropping system arrives tomorrow. We deploy the cats and start gathering info. Whiteknight’s brood has been making themselves accepted throughout offices of the hospital, police station, city hall and the DA’s office.”

“Will your transmitters be broadcasting all the time?” Al asked skeptically.

“No, the cats can activate the transmitter with a specific purring frequency and turn it off with a different one. We’re sure the blabbermouths will incriminate themselves. And once they have, we’ll take the information to the state’s attorney and hope he does the rest.”

“Won’t your evidence be invalidated having been gathered without a warrant?” Al’s investigator mode was kicking in.

“Nope. We don’t need a warrant. We can turn our info over to the authorities. And as long as they weren’t involved in the process, the evidence is clean.”

## Chapter Two

### Operation Snoop

The first bit of activity was at a town council meeting, being held behind closed doors. When the council chairman called the meeting to order, one of the councilors questioned what a cat was doing in the room. "Oh, she hangs around and is our pest control expert," answered the chairman.

As the meeting continued, the discussion moved to raising the fees for trash removal on commercial properties. "The business community feels really stretched; their fees are double other towns'," spoke one councilor.

"The Chechen mob doesn't run the business in other towns. We have to split the revenue with The Czar," answered the chairman.

"Doesn't he get enough? He collects protection money from most of the businesses already," came from one of the other councilors.

"Do you want to hold your seat? One word from The Czar and we'll all be out. It's his town," once more from the chair. "So the fees go up 8%, that's that."

All this was carefully recorded on the Cat Net.

The next episode took place in the hospital administrator's office. The chief of security was giving a status report on the investigation of a hospital volunteer. "Ms. Hernandez has been checking patient files, which she is not permitted to do."

The administrator replied. "Maybe she's just curious? Most of our volunteers want to help any way they can."

The chief corrected, "No, she's cross-referencing drug billing versus drug usage, an area we don't need scrutinized. Matter of fact, that's another problem, our distributors are demanding increased supplies."

The administrator looked incredulous. "We're already sending them a million dollar's worth of drugs a month. We can't possibly manage more."

“Look, all you need do is increase the prescribed dosage and make sure the invoice to the drug manufacturer matches. Worst thing that can happen is you get accused of over medicating.”

“Not so easy. We’re already doubling what we prescribe the patients versus what we’re actually giving them, especially on the Medicare patients.”

“Do you want to tell these gangbangers ‘NO?’”

“Somebody’s going to have to. It’s out of control.”

“You thought it was great when I showed you how much money we could make. The drugs coupled with the scheduled-but-not-performed procedures are real money makers.”

“Let me think about this.”

“Should I call Captain Meyers about this Hernandez broad?”

“I guess. When will this stop? Another case for the morgue?”

Back at cat headquarters this recording hit like a bomb. “They’re going to kill that poor woman, just because she’s checking files,” a shocked Amy said.

“Just like your dad,” said Granny.

“We have to do something,” came from Al. “Do either of you know who she is and where she lives?”

“I’ll go into the paper and check our records. Granny, hit the phone book.” Amy was taking charge.

Meanwhile, at police headquarters, White Smoke’s recorder was hearing the following. “Got a call from the hospital. Looks like one of their candy strippers is getting a little too nosy. They want her shut up,” said Captain Meyers.

“Is this a 'permanent' shut up or 'send someone to jail' shut up?” came from one of the patrol officers.



“I guess it’s permanent. Her name is Maria Hernandez and she lives at 3231 Maple Terrace.”

“I’ll get it done this afternoon.”

Luckily, Al was listening to the transmission live. “I’ve got the address. The cops are going to hit her this afternoon. We’ve got time. Granny, you continue to monitor the receiver. Amy should be back in a few minutes. I’ll wait for her and then we’ll go warn Maria. It’ll be better to have a feminine touch.”

They arrived at the address within half an hour. Amy went to the door while Al kept lookout. When Maria answered the door she seemed quite composed. After Amy told her the police were coming for her, she was skeptical for sure and looked apprehensive. “What is this, some kind of joke? Is my brother Pauly behind this?”

“No joke, Maria. We’ve been monitoring both the hospital and police HQ. They don’t like that you’ve been checking drug records. I bet you’ve uncovered the scam they’ve been running. When my father did it 20 years ago, they had him killed.”

This got Maria’s attention. “Oh my God, what can I do?”

“Get all the information you have, including your computer, your personal stuff and come with us. We’ll protect you.”

An hour later Maria was shocked to be in a house full of cats and listening gear. “What is this, the CIA?”

“Sure. Cats Intelligence Agency,” said Al.

“Poor joke,” said Amy. “Let’s all sit down to a nice lunch and discuss the situation.”

They soon learned that Maria’s sister had died in the hospital and Maria was sure it was due to the lack of a prescribed drug that had not been given to her sister, but charged to her account. She had volunteered at the hospital, so that she could do some checking, and had found a huge number of discrepancies that could not have been a mistake. She was

preparing to go to the district attorney with her evidence.

“That would have been a big mistake,” said Amy. “My father did that and they framed him, sent him to prison and he was murdered. Here, listen to this.” She played the recordings from the hospital and the police HQ. “This whole town is corrupt, we’ll need to take our evidence to the state or federal level. Let’s start combining our research and then take it forward.”

Meanwhile at police HQ, a frustrated police officer returned without completing his mission. “That Hernandez girl has flown, Captain.”  
“What do you mean flown?”

“She wasn’t there. Looks like she left in a hurry, like she knew I was coming.”

“How could that be? Only the men in this room knew you were going out there.”

White Smoke was attempting to leave the room, when one of the cops saw him and shouted. “Not everyone in this room is a cop. Grab that cat.” White Smoke wasn’t fast enough; one of the cops grabbed him.

“Look at this collar. It’s awful thick and there’s an antenna on it.” With that he found the catch and undid the collar. “Where did this critter come from?”

“The fire house, he’s their pet. He rides on the engine when they respond to fires.”

The captain had been aware of the cat for some time and never paid it any attention. “We better find out where it comes from and what this antenna is all about. Lock this flea bag in the broom closet for now.”

Just then Granny made an alarming discovery, White Smoke’s transmitter had just gone dead. “Could it be a dead battery,” asked AI?

“No, they last for weeks. Someone has opened his collar. That breaks the circuit.” The concern for White Smoke was heightened two days later when they got a call from their friendly fireman. “Do you guys have White Smoke? He’s been missing for two days and Smokey is real upset.”

Al explained that they didn't know where he was, but would let the fireman know if he showed up.

To add to their consternation, a loud knock on the door startled them. Peering out the side window, Al saw two severely dressed men. If he hadn't recognized one of them as an FBI agent, he still would have known they were cops.

Turning to Amy he said, "We have no choice but to open the door. I know the one guy. He's an FBI agent."

Opening the door, he greeted the agent like an old friend. "Good afternoon, Agent Adams, what a surprise seeing you here. How did you find us?"

"We didn't find you, we've always known where you live. This is U.S. Marshall Timmons, he's assigned to witness protection. Even though you opted for your own protection scheme, he has kept tabs on you."

"Was it that easy?" Al asked.

"Our job is to hide people. Finding them is easy for us. But right now we need to get you out of here."

"What do you mean? We're not in any danger."

"That's what you think. Right now the local police are dispatching a SWAT team to arrest all of you."

"How do you know that?"

"We have an informant at police HQ. You aren't the only ones trying to catch these guys. They've captured your cat. The fireman told them where you live and I bet this SWAT team won't hesitate to shoot. So gather some clothing and other essentials, plus all of the data you gathered." Just then four black SUV's pulled into the drive way.

"Oh, my!" screamed Maria. "They're here."

"No, those are the good guys: four special agents and four marshals. They're here to protect you." Just then two humvee's pulled in behind the

SUV's.

“Now those are the bad guys. Continue to pack, I'll handle those guys.” The agents all formed a barrier as Agent Adams approached the SWAT leader. Before he could speak, the leader announced, “Out of our way! We have a warrant to arrest everyone in that house!”

“You're too late. We've already served a federal warrant and we will be taking these people into custody.”

Turns out they were both lying, nobody had a warrant.

“Well, it seems you have a problem. Our humvees aren't moving until we have our prisoners.”

It looked like a standoff until the sound of a large helicopter caused everyone to look up at the chopper with “U.S. Marshals” written on the side. In a swirling cloud of dust, it set down in the back garden. It didn't do much to help the flowers, but it provided an escape route. Using the back door, the four adults, one baby and three cats were escorted aboard. This infuriated the SWAT leader and he shouted above the roar of the helicopter.

“I could shoot that thing down, you know.”

“And in what federal prison would you like to spend the rest of your life?” hollered back Agent Adams as he slid the copter's door closed.

## Chapter Three

### Justice Is Done

The next few months found the team in witness protection as the wheels of justice churned away. Most of the charges were federal under the Organized Crime Laws. Several policemen, including the captain, were charged with murder and accomplice to murder. The hospital staff were charged as accessories to murder, fraud and endangerment. The town council was charged by the state police with fraud, embezzlement and corruption. The gangbangers were eventually caught on various drug trafficking charges. Not everyone got all that was coming to him since, as soon as the net started to close, many sought to turn state's evidence and rat out their former associates. The Chechen mob had managed to slip through the net, because the business owners were afraid to come forward on the extortion charges. This didn't sit well with the FBI or DEA as they had hoped for a clean sweep.

This brings us to the final episode. The firemen managed to get White Smoke released from police custody. Relations between the two departments would take a long time to mend. Agent Adams had hoped to arrange for White Smoke to be assigned to the FBI. They were very impressed with the job done by the undercover cats. He then approached Al about recruiting one of the cats, like Home Alarm; he had plans to nab the Chechen Czar. "We'll have to think about that. The cats have done a lot and having White Smoke locked in a closet wasn't a good thing. We'll get back to you."

A family council was held with Granny, Amy, Al and all the cats involved. Maria was now in a separate protection program. The two female humans were opposed, White Princess joined them. But Al and the rest of the cats were in favor, with Home Alarm unafraid to go undercover. However, Whiteknight had his own ideas. He was tired of his kids getting all the excitement. After all, he was the original hero cat. (No one outside the family would have understood this meeting. Remember, we are dealing with specially bred cats.) Thus, Whiteknight was assigned to the FBI as a special cat.

Adams plan was simple. He had learned that the Chechen Czar was a cat lover, having several in his house. Like a little kid, he would bring home

strays. So, Whiteknight was encouraged to wander near the Chechen-American Club where he would eventually be seen by The Czar. Before he was set loose, he was fitted with a state of the art transmitter that was placed under his skin – no bulky collar. It didn't take long for The Czar to spot Whiteknight, being a very attractive cat, of course. The Czar sent one of his thugs to capture Whiteknight, who, by plan, put up a limited defense before surrendering. The Czar was pleased even when Whiteknight hissed at him. "That's what I like, a cat with spirit. I'll call him Dirtz," which is Chechen for blizzard.

Dirtz soon became The Czar's favorite and he took the cat everywhere. For weeks nothing of importance was recorded, some minor drug deals but nothing worth exposing the plan. Some of the info, though, led to minor drug dealers arrests and the street supply of drugs was shrinking. This forced The Czar to order a huge shipment from his South American supplier. The supplier was wary of trusting subordinates with so much product. After hesitating, he elected to accompany the load, but only if The Czar was also present. This was more than the FBI and DEA had hoped for. The time, date and location were neatly transmitted to the control center. Now, all they had to do was get Whiteknight out of harm's way, they didn't want to risk their best agent. As feared, The Czar wouldn't let Whiteknight out of his sight. All agents were warned to do everything possible to protect the cat.

The meet was in a secluded area, where it was easy to see any approaching vehicles. The bad guys thought it was a safe location. The DEA decided to intercept the shipment in route and replace the drug dealers with their own agents. This worked fine and the truck still hauling the drugs arrived on time. But, as soon as it pulled into the location, agents poured out and shouted, "This is a raid. Put up your hands and drop your weapons." Of course, some of the bad guys did not comply and opened fire. The agents all wore bulletproof vests, the drug pushers did not, so it was an uneven fight. Yet in the chaos The Czar, still holding Whiteknight, slipped behind a truck. He drew his gun and was sighting on the back of Agent Adams. To steady his aim he set Whiteknight down on the hood of the truck. Whiteknight immediately let out a warning howl and sprayed a stream of urine right into The Czar's eyes, which caused him to drop his gun and grab his eyes. The next thing grabbed was The Czar, who was rudely cuffed and hustled into a police van. His accomplices all gave him plenty of room, not out of respect, but to avoid his smell.

Al and Amy learned of the mission's success via the news. The DEA and FBI were quick to brag of their success. As agreed upon, Whiteknight's role in the arrests was not mentioned. Neither the feds nor the cat's family wanted him exposed. Agent Adams was reluctant to return Whiteknight to his family; he knew how valuable an asset an undercover cat was. He thought that if he treated Whiteknight extra specially, he would wish to remain with him. Using the removal of the transmitter as an excuse, he held onto the cat for an extra week. 'Enough's enough,' thought Al, becoming annoyed. He called the FBI office and left several messages, none of which were returned. His frustration grew to where he finally went to the office in person. Agent Adams tried to persuade him that Whiteknight needed to remain with the FBI and would be taken well care of.

"Whiteknight can make up his own mind as to where he wants to live. No one owns him," Al informed the disappointed agent.

"Well, I think we'll keep him as a matter of national security. I'll arrange for you to receive adequate compensation."

"I don't want compensation. I want Whiteknight to be free to chose where he gets to live."

Whiteknight heard all of this and had already made up his mind. Al was forced to leave the building and threatened to get a lawyer. Agent Adams smugly told him, "It won't do you any good. He stays here." He returned to his office in which he thought Whiteknight was locked. Much to his surprise, the cat was gone. Searching his office he found a screen window had been forced open allowing the slick feline to escape. 'He'll never find his way home,' thought the not-so-slick agent. 'It's ten miles away through heavy traffic.' Agent Adams didn't know much about animals. The newspapers and TV stations frequently reported on pets who traveled hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles to find their families. And these are normal pets, not super cats. Because Al got stuck in rush hour traffic, Whiteknight was waiting for him when he got home. And there he would stay.

The FBI did try to get Whiteknight back, but were unable to convince a judge it was a national emergency. As a way to satisfy the FBI, when it was learned that Holy Smoke was pregnant, one of her kittens was promised to Agent Adams.

# *Black Night*





## Chapter Four

### Not What He Expected

When he was told he would receive one of Holy Smoke's kittens, newly promoted Agent in Charge Adams was delighted and anxiously waited for the delivery. He had to wait for the six week weaning period to end, but, at last, Al showed up with a bundled kitten. When he opened the blanket, Agent Adams was shocked to see a coal black, blue-eyed kitten. "It's black!" he exclaimed.

"He sure is," Al answered with a broad smile on his face. "The nuns aren't sure how Holy Smoke got impregnated or who did it. Maybe it was an immaculate conception. You did ask for a male, the other three are all girls and multicolored. Don't you want him?"

Recovering from the surprise, Agent Adams replied, "Yes, yes! I want him – as long as he's one of Whiteknight's grandchildren."

"That he is."

After Al left, Agent Adams admired the kitten. He was beautiful and was already purring. Having prepared for the kitten's arrival, he showed him his bed, bowls and litter box. The kitten tried the fancy food in his bowl, and emulating his grandfather, turned his nose up at it and looked at the agent with disdain. Having been briefed on this possibility, Adams quickly replaced the expensive food with the cheap supermarket brand and happily watched the unnamed kitten chow down.

Remembering his days as a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Adams told the cat, "I will call you Black Knight, the name of the academy's sports teams: the Black Knights on the Hudson." And now that he was Agent in Charge of the local FBI office, he was not bothered by whether he could have the cat in his office. However, if anybody asked, Black Knight was 'an agent in training.' After the successful activities of his relatives, who could argue with that.

After a few months, Adams began to wonder if Black Knight had inherited any of his grandfather's abilities. He was a great cat and was demonstrating his ability as a mouser, but nothing out of the ordinary. Then

one day as they were leaving the office, with Black Knight trailing along as usual, Adams pulled out his remote to open the car door. Black Knight leaped forward and knocked the remote from his hand.

“Hey! What’s going on? That’s not funny.” As he reached for the keys, Black Knight ran forward, grabbed the key chain in his mouth, ducked into a flower bed and proceeded to bury the keys. Adams started to holler at the cat, but his anti-terrorist training kicked in. The cat didn’t want him to open the door. Something was wrong and Black Knight sensed it. The word bomb leaped into his brain and he began to take action. He pulled the cellphone out of his suit and dialed building security. “Close down the parking lot. No one can enter. Evacuate the building using the front entrance. Keep everyone away from the back door.” He then called the FBI emergency response unit. “Send the bomb squad to the rear parking lot of the local FBI office. Bring everything.”

The bomb squad arrived with a remote controlled explosive sniffer, heavy duty fire suits and fire gear. “O.K., agent, what’s up?”

“My cat won’t let me open the car door. I think he senses something’s wrong.”

Of course the bomb squad guy was ready to call the psycho unit when another officer came over and whispered in his ear, “His cat is one of those special ones that nabbed the Chechen Czar. We better pay attention.”

Ordering everyone away, including Adams and Black Knight, the bomb squad went to work. Within minutes the team discovered a kilogram of plastic explosive wired to the car’s ignition. That much C-4 would have created a very large hole and blown out most of the windows on the neighboring side of the building.

“Should we detonate this in the bomb box,” asked the second officer.

Agent Adam, who was still nearby called over, “Not unless you have to. Send it to the FBI lab, maybe they can get evidence from it.”

As soon as the bomb squad had cleared the area, Adams turned to look for his keys. Not surprisingly, Black Knight was standing next to the car with the keys in his mouth. It was safe to go home.

The next day, Adams was notified that the lab had managed to lift one fingerprint off the bomb. The bomber had probably worn gloves while building the bomb but took them off to perform some intricate work. Being clumsy while building a bomb is not a good idea. The print turned out to be from a recently arrived person with a Chechen visa. The address given was the Chechen American Club. What a coincidence. A further check of immigration records showed three more Chechens living at the same address. This was enough for a search warrant of the Chechen American Club, which when executed produced a hoard of bomb making material, weapons, drugs and ammunition. Every resident and employee of the club was arrested and the club closed. All of the newly arrived Chechens were deported back to Chechnya with a red flag in their immigration records.

## Chapter Five

### What's in a Name

Eventually, Agent Adams received notice to report to Quantico, Virginia for his periodic physical and his arms qualification. Using a little pull, he was given permission to bring Black Knight. This was unusual, but many other agents were curious to get a look at this special cat. Quantico is actually a U.S. Marine Corps base that the FBI uses for training. After his physical, where he was told to lose a few pounds and lower his cholesterol level, he reported to the pistol range for qualification. He left Black Knight with the commandant, who was pleased to look after the cat. While conducting his normal inspection of the base, the commandant indirectly took the cat on a tour of the other facilities. When they arrived at the obstacle course, Black Knight was fascinated watching the Marines race over and under the different obstructions. In his peculiar way of having his feelings understood he conveyed to the commandant his desire to give it a try.

“I get the idea you'd like to be a Marine, even though you're named after the Army mascot. I'll see what I can do,” promised the commandant.

The next morning, the commandant conferred with Adams and the Marine drill instructor. With a gathering crowd of FBI officers and Marines watching, Black Knight approached the starting line. After a whistle blast, Black Knight took off. The low crawl section was really easy, since the only part he had to worry about was getting his tail caught in the barbed wire covering. Next was the embarkation net. The Marines, of course, needed to use their hands, but the cat's claws sped him up and over quickly. This was soon followed by the log walk, the barrier climb, and rope climb – all accomplished with ease. What worried Adams was the zip line, which ended with a drop into a pool of water. Cats are notoriously afraid of water. Of course, that is normal cats. Black Knight slipped down the wire and seemed to relish the drop into the pool and then swam to the end of the course. “I think he broke the course record,” exclaimed the commandant. “He's qualified to be a Marine. We could call him 'Green Knight.'” Agent Adams was proud of Black Knight, but was not happy with the suggested Green Knight title. The Army and the Marines have too much rivalry for that. However, he did accept the plaque which read “Qualified Marine.” He was actually a little jealous.

## Chapter Six

### A Different Assignment

Back in his office, Adams dealt with normal FBI affairs, like bank robberies, kidnappings and domestic terrorists. Black Knight had little to do and was enjoying normal kitten life, chasing mice and playing with balls of string. One day Adams received a request from their old friend, the commandant. "If Black Knight is not busy, could he help his green friends."

"What did you have in mind?" Queried Adams.

"Oh, nothing dangerous. We've had a series of break-ins on the base. Nothing valuable has been taken, mainly junk food and candy. Whoever is doing it seems to know where our patrols are and hasn't hit the same place twice. I was thinking about fitting Black Knight with a micro-camera and let him wander around the base at night. With his night vision and black coat he should be able to go undetected."

"I'm sure he would love it. How long do you think it will take?"

"A week, two at the most." So the commandant came to Adams home and picked up Black Knight and his things.

Back at Quantico, Black Knight was outfitted with the tiny camera that could record in almost total darkness. Nothing much happened for several days, but finally one night the camera picked up a slight figure climbing out a kitchen window. Black Knight stealthily followed. The perpetrator was carrying a peanut butter sandwich; the cat could have followed the tracks blindfolded. However, all at once, the figure disappeared. Puzzled, Black Knight nosed around and finally detected a small hatch which led into a deserted building. Following his instructions, the cat returned to HQ. The camera had been transmitting the whole time and the duty sergeant was on the phone to the commandant. The staff car took the whole crew, cat, commandant and two military police to the building. "I know this place. It's been empty for years."

Attempts at forcing the main door didn't work, it was bolted from the inside. Black Knight pushed his nose up against the hatch through which the individual had disappeared; it popped open. None of the Marines could fit through the opening, but the slender feline had no problem. Huddled in the

corner was a young girl about 10 years old. She was very dirty and her hair was very straggly. She seemed terrified. Black Knight crawled onto her lap and started to lick her face. The little girl started to cry and the cat continued to lick. Voices from outside called out to her. "We won't hurt you, we just want to help." Repeating this several times, and the cats constant licking and purring, finally persuaded the child to crawl out the hatch, but she never let go of the cat.

"We need to get you to the hospital to make sure you're O.K. But first, what's your name, sweetie?" the commandant asked softly.

"My name is Gwen. Please don't take me to my father," she pleaded. On the way to the hospital she never released the cat. The nurses tried to separate her from the cat, but the girl's screams were too much for them to bear.

"She seems alright, a little dirty and a bit dehydrated," was the ER doctor's diagnosis.

"Her family must be stationed here," decided the commandant. "But we have no reports of missing children or runaways. Have someone check the base housing list for a dependent named Gwen." Housing was able to search it's records and find Gwen's family. Master Sergeant Peter Cornwall lived on base with his wife Candice and daughter Gwen.

When Gwen was asked if her father was indeed Sergeant Cornwall, she immediately started to cry and beg, "Please don't send me home, please!" The child was obviously distraught and only the cat's licking and purring kept her still.

"Something is very wrong here. This child has been stealing food for over a month and living rough in that deserted building. But she has not been reported missing. We need to discreetly contact the parents and get some answers. But we won't tell them where Gwen is." The commandant's plan had to be tactful.

"Maybe we should check with the school first. She should be a student at the base school. I just can't imagine she attended classes looking like she did when you brought her in," suggested one of the nurses.

“Good idea. Why don’t you do that.” The nurse, knowing she'd been volunteered as soon as she opened her mouth, gladly contacted the school and learned that Gwen had been absent for six weeks. When her father was contacted by the school principal, he told him that his daughter was in South Carolina with her mother, visiting her aunt. So either the father was lying or the mother wasn’t in South Carolina. Now it was time for the commandant to contact the father. Using his ultimate authority, he told his clerk to place the call.

“Sergeant Cornwall, the commandant wishes to speak with you about your daughter.” Cornwall really didn’t want to talk to anyone, but had no way to avoid his C.O. The phone switched to the commandant. “Sergeant, where is your daughter?” Nothing like going right to the point.

“She’s in South Carolina with her mother,” came the expected answer.

“Have you been in touch with her?”

“Yes, I talk to her a couple times each week,” came forth his first lie.

“What is the phone number where she is?”

“I don’t believe that’s any of your business.”

“I’ve made it my business and I didn’t hear a ‘sir’ at the end of that statement.”

“Sorry, Sir, I don’t know the number; they always call me.”

“So your daughter calls you from South Carolina? And your wife is with her?” The third question hit home, “Would it surprise you to know your daughter is currently in the base hospital?”

The phone went quiet as Sergeant Cornwall headed for the door. He didn’t get far, as two MP’s were waiting for him. The commandant was ready to chew the sergeant to pieces. A check of his phone records showed no calls from South Carolina and the sergeant was unable to say where his wife was. Being on a military base and living in government housing, it was simple to get a search warrant. There was no evidence of an adult female living in the house and the girl’s room was untouched. They did find an area

of the backyard that was freshly turned. Further investigation would follow.

Back at the hospital, Gwen was telling her story, but only as long as Black Knight was snuggled up close. Her father had abused both she and her mother, raping both of them and subjecting them to repeated beatings. Her mother had disappeared months ago, causing her father to increase the abuse. Finally, unable to stand it, she ran away, but was unable to find her way off the base. She had found an entrance to the old warehouse and stayed there. Sneaking out at night and raiding kitchens, her selection of diet was anything but healthy and barely kept her alive.

Human remains were eventually found in the garden so, Sergeant Cornwall was charged with murder and child abuse and sent to the brig to await trial. His court appointed lawyer planned a PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) defense claiming his time in Iraq had caused him mental harm. This would take a long time to decide.

But the first order of business was Gwen. She certainly couldn't go back to her father and her mother was dead. There was no record of an aunt in South Carolina and Cornwall had no known living relatives. Gwen was healthy again and couldn't stay at the hospital indefinitely. There was a lot to think about.

Meanwhile Agent Adams wondered when he would get Black Knight back. He called the commandant and asked, "You said two weeks. That was a month ago. What's up?"

"We have a situation here and the return of your cat is not high on the list. He did find the person responsible for breaking into houses. It was a 10 year old girl who was being abused by her father. She has made a strong connection with Black Knight and gets hysterical when we try to separate them. You know better than I, if Black Knight didn't want to stay, he wouldn't. If you could see them, you would understand."

"I'll just do that, see you in the morning." Upon his arrival, things were as described by the commandant. Black Knight seemed happy to see him, rubbing up against his legs. But quickly returned to the little girl's side.

"We have a real dilemma here. Being a military dependent we can't turn her over to the state and really don't think she would do very well in foster



care. And there appear to be no relatives, other than her father.”

Agent Adams was a real softy. Seeing the poor wraith with Black Knight, his heart melted. He made a quick decision that would change a lot of lives.

“Well, I’m taking Black Knight home.” After a slight pause, he continued, “And that young lady is coming with us. I have plenty of empty rooms in my house. I can hire a nanny and provide a psychologist from our office. Between Black Knight and I, we’ll make her a happy little girl.” The commandant was shocked but delighted. What seemed like an unsolvable problem moments ago looked solved.

“Are you sure they’ll let you? You’re not married. Can you provide a good home environment for her?”

“What, are you kidding? I’m an FBI agent with an impeccable record and a bright future. Plus, one of the best cats in the world lives with me.” Of course, Black Knight understood every word and quickly resumed rubbing against Adams legs and purring.

“Well, I’ll certainly recommend it, Art (agent Adams full name is Arthur). If Guinevere agrees, she should be happy with you and Green Knight,” he said with a smirk.

“That’s enough of that green stuff. You Marines couldn’t solve a problem without a couple Black Knights of the Hudson to save the day.”

## Chapter Seven

### Guinevere's New Life

At first, Guinevere was bewildered. Could this really be happening? Not long ago, she was living in an abandoned building, stealing food to survive and terrified her father would find her. She still awoke at night thinking she was back in the old building. But feeling Black Knight snuggled up against her allowed her to shake the nightmare.

Until Adams could employ a nanny, it had been decided that one of the nurses from Quantico would accompany Gwen and the agent back to Adams' house and help Gwen settle in. Nurse Avalon had won the nurse competition and took Gwen on a shopping trip to provide new outfits. She wouldn't need anything fancy, since she wouldn't be going to school for awhile. Several pairs of jeans and matching colorful tee shirts were like Paris fashions to Gwen. Adams felt very fortunate to find a retired Navy nurse, Morgan Lake, who would act as nanny and tutor. That way, Gwen could be up to speed when the time came to attend school. Of course, Black Knight had final approval and a big lick sealed the deal. Nurse Avalon reluctantly departed promising to keep in touch. Adams had noticed how pretty she was, but now he was more concerned with getting the nanny settled into her duties. The thirty year naval veteran had a wealth of experience and, despite her hard-nosed exterior, was a caring person. She took the whole family on a shopping trip to IKEA and helped pick out the furniture for Gwen's bedroom with matching décor; a few dolls were also on the list. It was not known if Black Knight approved of the competition.

There were a few missteps, but Gwen proved to be an adept pupil. She proved this by exceeding the guidelines sent by the local school board to allow admittance to the fall term as a sixth grader. Now that Art's academic concerns were put aside, he now concentrated on her social and emotional well-being. He would have to wean her away from Black Knight. She would have to be separated from the cat for long periods of time. Morgan and Art came up with a plan for controlled separation. First Morgan would take Gwen and Black Knight to the park and while Gwen was busy using the playground equipment, the cat would silently slip away, not too far, but out of sight. If Gwen panicked when she noticed he was gone, he could reappear quickly. The first few times were scary, but eventually making friends with other kids made the disappearances acceptable. Black Knight

actually got jealous and went back to the park to play with the kids.

The time finally came to enroll Gwen in school. Art asked for and was given a private meeting with the vice-principal. “This is unusual, Mr. Adams. Why did you ask for this meeting?” not the warmest greeting.

“Gwen is my foster child. Her father is a marine presently awaiting a court-martial for child abuse, rape and the murder of Gwen’s mother. She is recovering from a very traumatic experience. I don’t expect special treatment, but I thought it prudent to advise the school of the situation.”

“I take it she’s been out of school for quite awhile, since you don’t have her records for last year.”

“That’s true, but we’ve been home schooling her and we think she’ll be ready for the sixth grade.”

“That will be up to her test results. Parents have a way of exaggerating their children's abilities.”

Gwen took the tests and with a less than happy face the vice-principal announced, “Your foster daughter will not be in the sixth grade. With her scores and aptitude she’ll be in the seventh grade with the advanced students. Despite her ordeal she is a very bright child and it will be an honor to have her in our school system.”

Morgan, Art and Nurse Megan Avalon were all delighted. Gwen took it as a matter of fact. Megan had kept a keen interest in Gwen’s progress and was calling regularly and making trips from Quantico. Art rather liked the idea and did nothing to discourage her. When Halloween rolled around, she made it a point to come up for the festivities and got caught up in Art’s first parenting dilemma – Gwen had been invited to a Halloween party.

“Will there be boys?” was Art’s bemoaned question.

“Yes, there will. It’s mainly the kids in my class.”

“But they’re all older than you.”

“Not really, they’re in the advanced class also.”

“How advanced are these boys?” ‘Boys’ was said with a lot of disdain. Morgan and Megan came to the rescue.

“Gwen is a sensible young woman. We’re sure she’ll do the right thing.”

“Did you say woman?”

Of course, Gwen got to go to the party and a fretting Art spent the night with Megan holding his hand, a totally pleasant activity. When Gwen was brought home by the hostess of the party, Art finally relaxed.

The next event was not stressful and occurred in private. One evening while he was checking her homework, Gwen turned to him, held his hand and said in her sweetest voice, “Do you mind if I start calling you Dad?”

Art’s face flushed, his heart filled with emotion and he reached out and hugged her for the first time. They held onto each other with tears streaming down both faces and barely noticed when Black Knight crawled up to make it a group hug and tried to lick away the steady stream of tears. Later that night, Art called Megan and told her what had happened. A couple hundred miles away Megan started to weep also.

“I wish I could have been there,” she said.

“Maybe next time.”

Megan couldn’t see the hope in Art’s eyes when he said that. There was to be a next time and many more to come. A month later Megan called to announce, “I’ve been transferred to your local naval hospital. I’ll be there next week to look for an apartment.”

The question was, which one of them was going to make the suggestion first. Art, being a gentleman, merely suggested that, “You could use the guest room while you’re looking. That will save you some money.”

“What will the neighbors, Gwen and Morgan, think?” whispered Megan.

“Well, we could make it a more binding arrangement?” came from Art.

“What does that mean?”

“It means he wants you to marry him!” Both Morgan and Gwen had been breathlessly listening on the extensions.

Since neither had any family and just a few work-related friends, the wedding was held in the backyard on a bright March day. Gwen was the maid of honor and the commandant flew up from Quantico and was best man with Black Knight as the ring bearer.

A little later, the word came that Sergeant Cornwall had been convicted on all counts and had been sentenced to life imprisonment in a federal penitentiary. That left the way clear for Art and Megan to adopt Gwen. First they had to ask her. They assumed it would be easy, but then they both had second thoughts. It's a big commitment for all three of them. Yet, after a lot of soul searching, they decided that they had to move forward. So after dinner that night, Art broached the subject. “Gwen, what would you think of becoming our daughter?”

Gwen was puzzled. “I am your daughter, aren't I?” Art could see she was confused.

“You're our foster daughter, we want you to be our legal daughter, forever.”

Once her understanding of the statement dawned on her, the tears started and eventually resulted in a group hug, which of course included Black Knight, licking the flood of tears.

“So my name will be Adams?” queried Gwen.

“If you want?”

“You bet I do. I never want to hear the name Cornwall again.”

The paperwork took some time. Meanwhile, Gwen settled into junior high school. The name on her certificate of advancement finally read Guinevere Adams. Morgan soon felt her services as a nanny were no longer needed and tearfully resigned to pursue other interests. The junior high that Gwen was attending was in walking distance of her home, so she was able to avoid the school bus. This pleased her and delighted Black Knight. He was

able to walk her to school. However, he was not permitted to enter the school grounds. So, he spent his days hunting mice and napping then met Gwen as she left school. (No, he did not have a watch.) One day, as Gwen casually walked toward home, an older boy with flashy clothes fell in step with her and started to chat.

“You’re new to this school aren’t you?” Gwen ignored him and kept walking. “Oh, the strong silent type. I haven’t seen you at any of the hot parties.” Gwen continued to stare straight ahead. “Hey, I can get you some invites. I’m a very popular guy. Tell you what, I think you’re a hot chick. I’ll fix you up with some good stuff. Have you ever tried Ecstasy? It’s really great – you’ll feel out of this world.” He held the drug out to her. “Here, have some. It’s free.”

Black Knight had been patiently observing what was going on. But, then, the punk made a serious mistake. He grabbed Gwen’s arm and snarled, “Hey, Stuck Up, you think you’re too good for me?”

The question was answered with a flurry of black fur as Black Knight quickly sank his teeth into the drug pusher’s arm and proceeded to claw at his face. The attack caught the creep by surprise and he fell to the ground with the enraged cat tearing away at him. Nearby a mother was walking her baby in a stroller and saw the attack. She quickly dialed 911 and reported a wild cat attacking a young boy. Being near the school, a patrol car was only a block away and roared to the scene. Upon the arrival of the police, Black Knight released the jerk and went to Gwen’s side. In the tussle, several glassine packets had fallen to the ground. The police didn’t hesitate; they grabbed the druggie.

The woman was mystified, “Not him – the cat. It attacked him without cause.”

Any hope the bad guy had of reprieve was soon dashed. One of the policemen bent down and picked up the packets. “See this lady? It’s Ecstasy, a powerful narcotic that has been messing up our kids for months. Some have even died. We’ve been trying to locate the source and it looks like this cat just did. It’s punks like this one that will be trying to pedal this stuff to your baby in a few years.”

Before the woman could react Black Knight walked over to her stroller and

began licking the baby's hand. The mother was frightened, but when the baby grabbed a fist full of the cat's fur and nothing happened, she relaxed and allowed Black Knight to lick her hand.

After handcuffing the drug dealer and placing him in the patrol car, the police turned to Gwen. "Are you all right? This guy didn't hurt you, did he?"

Gwen remained silent for a moment with scenes of the violence she had endured at the hands of her father still fresh in her mind. Then Black Knight rubbed against her leg and she managed to find her composure.

"I'm fine," she said. "I just want to go home."

"O.K., just a few questions. What is your name and where do you live?"

Gwen was very proud to say her name was, "Gwen Adams of 322 Peach Street."

"Well, that's nearby. Is anyone going to be home now?"

"My mom should be; she's off this afternoon. She's a nurse and works shifts."

When Megan saw a police car in the driveway, she hurried out to meet the occupants. Seeing her daughter in the back seat caused her to imagine all kinds of bad things.

"Are you O.K., Gwen?"

The woman police officer who had been summoned to the scene answered for her, "She's just fine, thanks to your cat."

With this, Black Knight leaped from the patrol car. It took awhile for the officer, with Gwen's help, to fill Megan in and relieve her anxiety. No sooner had the officer finished than Art pulled up. Being a law enforcement officer it didn't take long for word to get to his office that his daughter had been involved in an altercation. Leaving it to Megan and Gwen to fill him in, the officer returned to her vehicle, but not before giving Black Knight a vigorous rub.

After Art was debriefed and relieved, he announced, "I'm not happy about this drug situation. It hits home to me. I'm going to check with my friends at the DEA."

What he found out was disturbing. The local school district was a hotbed of drug activity. Black Knight's intervention resulted in the only arrest in a long time.

The DEA agent that had worked with Adams on the Chechen cases knew of Black Knight's abilities. "It would be great, if your cat could help out."

This, along with the cooperation of the school district, brought about operation 'Sniffer Cat.' Black Knight was sent to the DEA's program, which trained animals to sniff out drugs. The course normally took a month; Black Knight graduated in two weeks. The plan was to allow him access to the locker room areas of the schools after hours. When he located a locker that contained drugs, he would signal to the accompanying law enforcement officer. The owner of the locker was then forced to open it in the presence of police and school officials. Every time a locker was opened, a stash of drugs was discovered, mostly small amounts for personal use. However, some large amounts, obviously for distribution, were uncovered. The students with small amounts were suspended from school and sent to juvenile court, resulting in sentences ranging from reform school to probation. The distributors were arrested and stood trial in adult court, many were sent to prison. No one ever knew how they had been found out.

By the end of the semester, the whole system was a drug-free zone and Black Knight was given a plaque naming him "Drug Agent of the Year." Art put it next to his qualified Marine award.



## Chapter Eight

### Your Grace

Just when Art, Gwen, Megan and Black Knight thought things might be normal, a very proper English gentleman called at their home. When Meg answered the door, the man presented an embossed business card, which read,

***Billings, Willings and Able***  
***Solicitors***  
***London, England***  
Mr. Percival Lot  
estate management

He seemed very pleased with himself. “Lady Cornwall, I presume.”

“There’s no Lady anything here. What is this all about?” The stuffy Brit was taken aback by Meg’s attitude.

“I am here on royal business. I was led to believe that Lady Guinevere Cornwall resided at this address. Have I been misinformed?”

“In a way you have. Gwen no longer wishes to be called Guinevere Cornwall. Her name is Gwen Adams and she is my thirteen year old daughter.”

“Well, be that as it may be, she is entitled to be addressed as Lady Cornwall, Duchess of Gwyen.”

“Just how is that to happen?”

“Madam, might we continue this discussion inside? It is rather sensitive.”

“Good idea. I’m going to call my husband, he should hear all this. He works nearby and hopefully can get out of the office soon. If not, you will have to leave and make an appointment to meet in his office.” Art was able to shake loose and was home in a few minutes.

“We need to get this done quickly,” Art said. “I won’t have this dumped on Gwen.”

“This is hardly being dumped on anyone. Due to two deaths in the Cornwall family, Guinevere has been elevated to the title of Duchess.”

“Well, here are the facts. Anything to do with the Cornwall family is of no interest to Gwen or us. Are you aware of the circumstances of Sergeant Cornwall’s death?”

“Not really, it is of no concern to the succession. Guinevere is the sole surviving Cornwall and that is all that matters.”

“For your information, Mr. Lot, Cornwall died in prison after being convicted of murdering his wife and repeatedly raping and beating his daughter. He was killed by a fellow prisoner. It seems even convicts hate pedophiles. Gwen is still recovering from that trauma and doesn’t need to have it drug back up.”

While this was going on, Black Knight strolled into the room, took one look at the solicitor and hissed at him. It was unusual for him to be home at this time, he was usually at the school waiting for Gwen. This reminded Art that they needed to get rid of this twerp before Gwen got home.

“O.K., here’s the bottom line. We are not interested in the Duchy, so return to where you came from and don’t bother us again.”

“I am afraid it is not that easy. It is not your decision to make, it is lady Cornwall’s and I will not leave until I have spoken to her.”

“Well, you won’t be speaking to her. I suggest you come to my office tomorrow and we’ll resolve this situation.”

“If you insist.”

So an agreement was made to meet at 10 o'clock the next morning. Half an hour after Lot’s departure, there was a call from the school principal. “We have an incident here and you need to come to the school immediately.”

Art didn’t hesitate and drove to the school. When he arrived he found Mr. Lot backed against a wall with Black Knight hissing and spitting at him. Gwen is a few feet away and cannot understand why the cat is so upset. Art sees all this and heads straight for the lowlife lawyer.

“What do you think you’re doing? I told you not to approach her.”

“I found your demands to be unacceptable. You have no right to deprive this orphan of her natural entitlement.”

“She’s not an orphan and we’ll see about this so-called entitlement. Be at my office in the morning.”

Now that Lot had spilled the beans Art would have to explain things to Gwen. When she had heard what was going on, she said, “I don’t want anything to do with the Cornwall name, ever.”

In the morning, Lot was surprised to find himself in the office of Special Agent in Charge Adams. It made him very uncomfortable. Proceeding anyway, he pulled a folder from his briefcase and presented the official looking papers to Art. “As you can see, Guinevere is entitled to Cornwall Hall, a manor house with five acres and assorted outbuildings located in the southwest of England. All she has to do is sign this agreement of tenancy and it’s all hers.”

“First of all, Gwen is thirteen years old and not legally able to sign anything. Also, she has expressed a desire not to inherit any Cornwall property.” But as he talked, the lawyer in Art couldn’t help perusing the documents. “What is this part you avoided saying anything about ‘including encumbrances?’”

A very pale Percy Lot mumbled something that eventually came out as, “There are some debts that come along with the estate.”

"Go on," prompted Adams.

Sir Harry, the last Duke of Gwyen, ran into some financial problems and mortgaged the property to pay his debts.”

“And how much exactly is this mortgage?”

More mumbling, “about 200,000.”

“Is that dollars or pounds sterling?”

“Well, pounds sterling of course.” (The British pound is worth approximately

1.5 US dollars.)

“Why, you conniving creep. You’re trying to stick my daughter with over a quarter million dollar debt. I believe that constitutes fraud. I think I’ll turn this over to my fraud division. Lets see what they think about this scam. You may be staying in the U.S. a little longer.”

“NO, NO! You’ve got it all wrong. I’m an honest man just trying to do the most for my clients.” It looked like Mr. Lot wanted to swallow the last few words of that statement.

“And just who are your clients?”

“Ah, well, Midland Bank. They hold the mortgage. But, I assure you, this is all above board.”

“Will you collect a recovery fee for this deal.”

“Ah, yes, 10% of the recovered amount.”

Mr. Lot soon exited the office and headed straight for the airport, never to be seen again. Arthur, Megan and the almost Duchess Guinevere went on with their lives, always protected by Black Knight.

Art soon learned that Megan was pregnant. Gwen wanted a brother, but Megan, a girl. Art just wanted everybody to be healthy. Other members of Whiteknight’s expanding family also had news. Black Knight’s sisters: Checkers, Chess and Domino (named for their black and white markings), had not been idle. The nuns at the orphanage honored a request from the local hospice and volunteered them to spend time with the seriously ill children. Their gentle and loving manners went a long way toward brightening the lives of the sick kids.

Amy was also expecting she and Al’s second child. They hoped for a girl they would name Whitney.

While the humans were having to wait the remainder of the nine months, Black Knight took things into his own paws. One evening he and a female calico cat showed up with three not quite weaned kittens. A white male and two females, one black and white and the other calico. After they were

weaned, the mother disappeared. The adoption process was done quickly. The commandant desperately wanted a cat for Quantico and because the male had green eyes he would name it Green Knight, after a character in a 14<sup>th</sup> century Arthurian poem. The local police took the black and white female and named her Patrol Car because her coloration matched their cars. The school system was happy to select the calico and have her trained as a drug sniffer, so they called her Sniffer.

## Chapter Nine

### A Medical Miracle

Earlier last year, six year old Jimmy started showing signs of fatigue and listlessness. His family doctor diagnosed anemia and prescribed a better diet plus supplements. These remedies did not work and Jimmy got progressively worse. He was taken to a specialist who ran a series of tests and diagnosed him with early stages of leukemia. Over the course of a year, he was given chemotherapy, radiation treatment and even homeopathic remedies, but he continued to fade. Months went by and Jimmy showed no signs of improvement. His oncologist finally told his mother there was nothing left to do and suggested Jimmy be placed in a hospice where he could receive palliative care. Medical professionals often appear heartless when making these decisions, but normally have the best interest of their patients in mind. Like most parents, Jimmy's mom felt this decision was premature; it was giving up hope, something she did not want to do! However, a grievance counselor at the hospital convinced her that Jimmy would be better off and would be treated with care and respect. When Jimmy's mother told Jimmy about the decision, she tried everything to portray the hospice in a positive manner, going as far as saying, "And they even have cats to play with. I know you miss Pesky, maybe a cat will make up for him." Pesky was Jimmy's mongrel dog, who he had rescued from the pound, but hadn't seen for months.

The three black and white female cats enjoyed their time in the children's hospice. Spending time with sick kids was sometimes depressing, but knowing they were adding some amount of enjoyment to the kids' lives made up for it. Chess took a particular interest in one severely ill young boy. Jimmy wasn't getting any better, but his time with Chess helped him get by. His mother was there to visit him daily. With the cost of the hospice and no positive predictions, she asked the doctors if there was any sense in keeping her son there and they agreed he would probably be just as well off at home. When she told her son she was going to take him home, he became very upset. "I don't want to go, I want to stay here with Chess." His mother, not knowing the cat's name, was confused.

"You don't play chess; you're too young,"

"Not the game, our cats are named Chess, Checkers and Domino. Chess

is my special friend.” Not wishing to cause her child more grief, she agreed to let him remain at the hospice.

On her following visit, the little boy's mother was thrilled to see a smile on her son's face and a glow on his cheeks. “Oh, look!” she said to the boy's nurse. “He's getting better. I can see it in his face.” The nurse was quiet; she had seen this too many times before. The hope of the parents was hard to stifle, but she knew from experience encouraging them just set them up for a bigger disappointment.

A week later, the mother was euphoric. “Look, look! You can't tell me he's not getting better.” The boy did have a brighter look in his eyes. The doctors, however, told her he was terminal and they thought he would have died by now. The nurse had a moment of sorrow for both the mother and the boy. She thought she had hardened her heart to these emotions, but this one was tough. She watched as Chess crawled up on the boy's chest and gave him a big lick. The boy seemed to glow when it happened, his whole body seemed to have a halo around it. She shook her head, but it was still there. ‘I must be getting old,’ she thought.

The next morning, she was shocked to see the boy walking down the hall after the cat. He hadn't been out of bed for a month. It was time to notify the oncologist.

The doctor was, to say the least, a little put out, ‘The nerve of this nurse summoning me to see a hopeless patient.’ “Well, you got me here off the golf course, what's the big deal?”

“The big deal is that this patient shows every sign of recovering. I can't order the tests to prove or disprove this miracle, so I called your service. I forgot it was Wednesday.” Doctors always play golf on Wednesday.

Having gotten over his hissy fit, the doctor asked, “Where's the patient? He should be in his bed.”

“Down the hallway playing video games.” The doctor was stunned. He had personally started the procedure to have the boy's body sent to the university hospital for study. If he was ambulatory, they would have a hard time keeping him on the slab. Catching sight of the boy with a full head of hair and plump rosy cheeks, his reaction was, “That is not my patient.

Someone has pulled a switch.”

The now smug nurse produced his chart and pointed to the boy's wrist that wore the non-removable electronically read bracelet. A full battery of tests was ordered and they showed no evidence of cancer. Blood cell count was perfect. The boy's mother had been secretly called and she arrived in time to hear the results. The doctor, having collected his wits, spoke to the mother. “I am proud to announce that we have cured your son. The hospital is very proud of this accomplishment.

“Well, I'm sure you are, since you told me he would be dead a month ago. My son thinks the cat is responsible for his recovery and, as strange as that sounds, I think the cat gets as much credit as you.”



## Chapter Ten

### Million Dollar Cat

Jimmy's mom was a single parent who hadn't seen the father since before Jimmy's birth. She was also estranged from her parents who had wanted her to have an abortion. A reporter from a local paper had witnessed the miracle recovery and the mother giving credit to a cat. Seemed like a good human interest story. He wrote it up and it was picked up by the wire services and then went viral on the internet. In the meantime, Jimmy's mom was trying to get Jimmy to go home. There was no reason for him to stay in the hospice. "I'm not leaving without Chess. If I do, I'll get sick again." With all the attention being given to the "miracle" the hospital was reluctant to force his departure.

"What if we take Chess home?" suggested Jimmy's mom. Jimmy eagerly agreed. However, there was a problem. The cat was on loan from the orphanage and the nuns weren't sure they could give it away. The owners of Holy Smoke, the cat's mother, were in witness protection and couldn't be contacted. Jimmy's mother was barely scraping by and, with all the medical expenses, was tapped out. She wouldn't have been able to offer any money even if the nuns would except it.

Meanwhile, in a large mansion on the outskirts of town, an elderly woman was in the process of giving her husband a tongue lashing. "Look at that. Your only grandchild is making headlines and could use some help and you sit here watching 'Jeopardy.'" It had been at the grandfather's insistence that they had ostracized their daughter and it had worked on the elderly woman's conscious all along. This was her chance to make things right.

"What do you want me to do?" The old man wasn't immune to his daughter's plight.

"Go offer a large amount of money to get that cat for Jimmy."

"How much?"

"I don't know, make it in the form of an endowment for building improvements."

Jimmy's mom was shocked when her father called her and offered to pay whatever it cost to get the cat for Jimmy. The hospital administrator was very interested in his offer to enlarge the hospice and orphanage and donate enough to cover the construction. It eventually totaled a million dollars, more than the old codger thought it would, but his accountant's shrewd manipulation lessened the hit. After that, it seemed that a whisper into the ear of the mother superior and a secret phone call from witness protection was all it took for Chess to have a new home. Jimmy and his mom moved into the mansion and started making up for the years the family had been apart. Checkers and Domino were left to care for the kids, and were equal to the task. It would be great to write that all the kids they cared for experienced miraculous recoveries, but alas, that wasn't so. One little girl did improve considerably, but not to the degree Jimmy did. However, it did seem that the overall atmosphere of the unit improved, adding a better quality of life to the kids' last days.

## Chapter Eleven

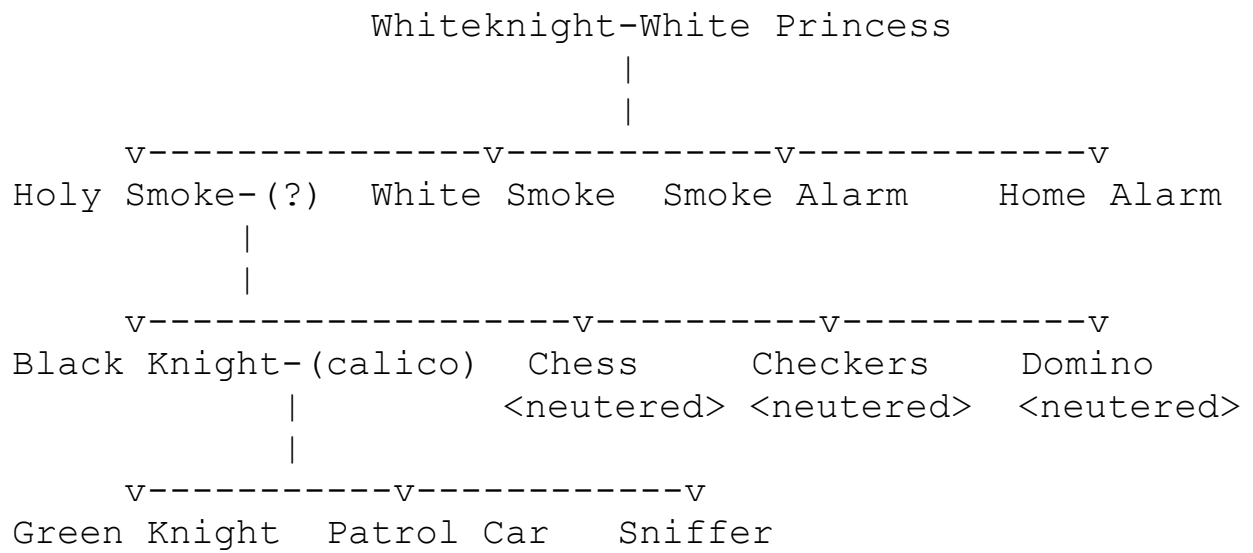
### The Family Tree

An early caller at Jimmy's grand parents mansion was Millicent Cummings a writer for The Cat Lover Gazette, a magazine whose content is self-evident. Millie said she was sent by her editor to capture the true story behind Jimmy's recovery. Her approach was to trace Chess's history. She knew from earlier reports that Chess had two sisters, Checkers and Domino, who spent time at the hospice. What she hadn't known was that she had a brother named Black Knight who had worked for the FBI, the U.S. Marines and the school board, posting an exceptional record in law enforcement. Black Knight had his own family: one white male named Green Knight (due to it's eye color, and he was a marine mascot); a black and white female called Patrol Car, who was a drug sniffer for the police; and another calico colored female, who performed the same function for the school board and was called Sniffer. Their mother, also a calico, disappeared as soon as they were weaned. Holy Smoke, a pure white female who lived at the orphanage, was mother and grandmother to that whole brood. The father was never known but it was assumed he was black. Holy Smoke has three siblings: a male named Home Alarm, because he helped catch a jewel thief; White Smoke, a male who had actually adopted the fire department and had been seen rescuing kittens from a burning building; the last female was Smoke Alarm, named because she had helped the editor of a newspaper stop smoking. This generation of snow white cats with the help of the DEA, FBI and State Police had brought an entire town of corrupt individuals to justice. The patriarch of the whole clan was Whiteknight, a pure white male who's history of heroics are legend and documented in the press. Along with White Princess, he started the family. Whiteknight's past history is kind of murky, a druid and some witches seem to be involved.

Millie's efforts to learn more about the different cats' exploits was hampered by their availability. Whiteknight's immediate family was in witness protection since they had been instrumental in bring down the Chechen mafia and it's czar. Black Knight's role in certain operations was protected by the FBI and DEA. Sniffer and Patrol Car's identities were kept secret by the organizations they sniffed for. This left Green Knight. His activities at Quantico were as a mascot; he hadn't gotten involved in any heroics, yet. A group photo was out of the question, so the best she could do was print a

family tree.

Family Tree



## Chapter Twelve

### Millie's Real Mission

Having checked in as a journalist with the officials at the federal prison, Millie was escorted to the visitor's room to meet with the Chechen czar. Her cover story was that she was working on a piece as to how a cat had led to The Czar's arrest. The prison staff were amused and saw no problem in giving her total access to the high security prisoner. When she sat down and showed The Czar the family tree, he was not pleased. "This is all you have? I'm not paying you for charts. I want to know where that miserable white cat is."

"I'm sorry, uncle Ivan, the cat is in witness protection. I hope to locate him through his family. First, I need to become friendly with all the other cat families and then get one of them to slip up and tell me."

Millie was not her real name, her name was Sasha Blokorova, a Chechen immigrant who was in the country illegally. Since the big crack down on the Chechen mob, no one related to The Czar was granted a visa. This greatly reduced the mob's ability to do its underhanded business. The Czar was spending huge amounts of money in an attempt to get a new trial. The lack of income coupled with the legal expenses was draining the mob's bankroll. "By the way, you haven't paid me anything."

"Don't be smart, you know I'm good for it. Now get out of here and find that flea bag. If we can kill him, we might get the others to change their testimony."

Millie's next move was to approach the nuns at the orphanage. Holy Smoke is Whiteknight's daughter and they might know where Whiteknight is. The Mother Superior was helpful at first answering Millie's questions, happy to explain how Holy Smoke kept the orphanage vermin free and provided company for the kids. However, when it became obvious that the writer was more interested in the whereabouts of Whiteknight, she politely but firmly denied any knowledge of the cat's location. Didn't this woman understand witness protection?

Finding a dead end at the orphanage, Sasha turned to Quantico. She felt this was her only alternative. Sasha wouldn't dare approach the cat families

that were involved in law enforcement, as they would be very touchy about questions concerning witness protection. The commandant, like others she approached, was initially helpful, but since his cat was pretty new to the Marine base, he had done very little beyond normal cat activity. And, just like the Mother Superior, when the questions turned to Whiteknight's location, he was unable and wouldn't have told her anything if he could. Being a professional military man, he wasn't satisfied with just saying "no" to the insistent woman, so soon after she left he called Agent Adams.

"Hi, Art. I just had an interview with a woman who claimed to be writing an article for some cat magazine about our cats. The bottom line is that she really wanted to know where Whiteknight is and didn't appreciate being told it wasn't her business."

Adams was equally interested and a little disturbed, "What's her name and who is she working for?"

"Millicent Cummings, a writer for The Cat Lover Gazette," was the commandant's answer.

Adams got on his computer and after an exhaustive search could find neither the writer nor the magazine. This set off alarm bells, so his next call was to the U.S. Marshal who was responsible for Al and Amy's extended family. The marshal, likewise, was concerned and promised to take the necessary steps to protect his clients. Millie (or Sasha) wasn't done trying and decided to go back to Jimmy's. Jimmy's mom welcomed her into the mansion, but wanted to know when the magazine article would be published. Jimmy had been waiting anxiously to read about his recovery and Chess's role in it. Millie tried to put her off by claiming publishing difficulties. She was unable to illicit any more info and promised to see about the article. She had given Jimmy's mom a business card with the name of the magazine and a phone number. When she left, Jimmy's mom took things into her own hands and called the number on the card only to find out it did not exist and Google could not find any reference to The Cat Lover Gazette. If Google couldn't find it, it probably didn't exist, so she decided to call the police. Normally, the local police tend to ignore such calls, but when hero cats are involved, they pay attention. So, it was no surprise that Agent Adams gave her a call.

"I understand you have been approached by a woman calling herself

Millicent Cummings and asking questions about the cats.”

Jimmy's mom was impressed by the quick response. “Yes, I was, but I don't think it's anything the FBI needs to worry about.”

“On the contrary, we believe there is some sinister intent in this woman's questions. I would like to send a team over to check for fingerprints. If you can show them anyplace the woman might have touched, they'll gather what they can.”

After the forensic team checked for prints and eliminated non-suspicious ones, they searched the huge array of FBI fingerprint files and got a hit on a refused visa application for Sasha Blokorova, a relative of the Chechen czar. This led them to check the visitors log at the federal prison where The Czar was being held. Sure enough, Millicent Cummings had made several visits to see him under the guise of interviewing him about his arrest by a cat. The prison officials thought it was funny and never bothered to check her credentials. Being told she was probably a member of the Chechen mob had left the prison staff shamefaced. Luckily, however, a redeeming check showed Millie was scheduled for a visit the next day. So FBI agents were waiting in the parking lot and placed a homing device on her car while she was inside. The prison turned on the listening devices in the visiting room and recorded the following.

Czar: “You still don't know where that mangy cat is?”

Sasha: “I tell you, these people are very serious about witness protection. And they are getting suspicious of me.”

Czar: “I don't care how suspicious they are. Find him.”

Sasha: “You still haven't paid me. I need money for food and rent.”

Czar: “Contact Yuri, he'll give you what you need, once you've found the cat.”

When Sasha left the prison, the FBI followed her to the seedy motel where she was living. Now they could follow her and gather more info on the mob. A week of surveillance yielded no more information except the identity of Yuri. He was second in command of the dwindling mob and it's treasurer.

Sasha contacted him, but nothing was learned by the FBI from that meeting, except Sasha did not appear to have obtained anymore money.

During the meeting with Yuri, Sasha told him The Czar instructed her to get money from him so she could continue her search for Whiteknight. This wasn't quite true, but Yuri didn't know that and immediately became angry. "I'll not give you money to look for this cat! The old man is crazy. I'm going to put a stop to his nonsense." After Sasha left. Yuri called one of his lieutenants. "Who do we have in the federal pen? I need someone to carry out a hit." The deal was made and one of the Chechen inmates was assigned to kill The Czar. His family would be compensated in the event he was caught.

A law enforcement meeting was held in Art's FBI office. Art and two members of the US Marshal's team attended. Art spoke first, "We don't appear to be making any headway. Sasha has made no more approaches to cat owners and The Czar has little contact with the mob. As far as we know, no one has committed a crime. Sasha is an illegal and we could deport her, but then we would lose our contact with The Czar. We don't want to keep a team following her indefinitely." The marshals who were present had little to contribute. In the end, it was agreed to give the operation another week.

That turned out to be enough. Two days later, The Czar was stabbed to death in the prison shower. Undercover police agents got wind that a contract had been put out by Yuri. It seems The Czar was bankrupting the mob with his legal fees and Yuri wanted to put an end to his cat search. Sasha disappeared. Reports had it that she was smuggled into Mexico and flown back to Chechnya, another piece of baggage the mob didn't need, but didn't feel she deserved to die. Additional rumors from the mob were that they had no agenda against any member of the Whiteknight family, they just wished to go about their criminal activities in peace. Of course, that wasn't to be. The hit man was caught and gave up the whole mob with bitter reason. Since the mob was so poor, they did **not** compensate his family and this had made the hit man very resentful.

Six months later, it was agreed that witness protection was no longer needed, so Al, Amy, their children and cats could return to normal lives. If that was possible with super cats as part of the family.



## Chapter Thirteen

### A Firehouse Chat

One day, at the firehouse, the discussion turned to White Smoke and the other members of Whiteknight's family. The fireman who had retrieved White Smoke from the corrupt policemen was very high in his praise for the whole family.

"Well, Whiteknight started saving lives and helping people when he was still a kitten."

"How can a kitten save lives? You're exaggerating," this coming from Bill, a new member of the team.

"You tell him, Jim. You were working the location where the the car wreck happened."

"Yes, I was and it was the darndest thing. This little white cat was in a car buried under this tanker truck. We didn't even know that the car he was in was under there. Then we hear this horrible yowling – sounded like a banshee from Hades. My partner at the time, Joe, looks underneath the tanker and there's this Swedish car with a guy in it and a kitten planted on his chest. The cat was licking the guy's face and interchangeably purring, then howling. Without the cat we would have left the guy there. But we moved in the big hoist and got him out. If the cat hadn't alerted us, the guy would probably have died."

The stories continued from there and the new guy was eventually impressed.

"Wow, what kind of cat is he? I would sure like to get one for my kids?" The question was answered with silence as the firefighters looked at each other and shrugged.

A few days later, Bill came into work with a broad smile on his face. "Cornwall Rex!" he announced.

"Who's Cornwall Rex?" chorused the other firemen.

“White Smoke and his family. They’re a rare anomaly caused by a mutant gene. They’re related to the British Longhair, but are very intelligent, clean, brave and resourceful. They are normally black but an even rarer subspecies are white. They are really good for people with allergies because they are so clean.”

“And how did you learn all this?” asked Jim.

“On the internet. My wife is a cyber junkie.”

Another fireman asked, “What’s a Cornwall?”

“Cornwall is on the west coast of England. It’s where King Arthur was from, and Rex means king. Whiteknight is really royalty.”

“Baloney. King Arthur is a legend. He never existed.”

“Maybe so, but it makes a great story. Anyway, I still want one.”

This started the gears turning in several heads.

“Well, White Smoke has all his parts. He should be able to produce some partial Cornwalls with or without the Rex. All we need is a fertile female and we can start our own breed.”

“Where do we get a fertile female?”

“How about the animal shelter? They have plenty of cats.”

This brilliant idea was met with skepticism at the shelter. “We’re trying to reduce the number of cats, not multiply them,” was the answer from the shelter manager. “And don’t be bringing us any extras from your experiment.”

Two days later, a woman showed up at the firehouse carrying a cat carrier containing a gray cat. “I’ve been told at the animal shelter you gentlemen are looking for a female cat in season. Dolly here is ready to go. I’d like pick of the litter and you can have the rest.”

“Well, that sounds all right, but, if there is a white male I would really like it.”

Bill really wanted a Whiteknight clone.

“I can live with that, how do we do this?”

“We can put the cats in an empty storeroom for an hour. That should do it.”

White Smoke had been a very interested observer and was very happy to follow the carrier to the storeroom. Dolly looked a little suspicious. But after a few hisses the storeroom became quiet. An hour later, when they opened the door, White Smoke exited with a superior gait to his stride and Dolly followed looking well satisfied. Dolly’s owner, Agnes, left with Dolly and promised to keep the firemen updated.

Sixty-six days later, the woman called to announce that Dolly had given birth to three kittens: one white male and two mixed gray females. She said she was satisfied with one of the females and would call in about six weeks when they were weaned. Bill couldn’t wait and insisted on going to see his male. The discussion as to who got the other female was heated and finally decided by a coin toss. The loser insisted they go back to the shelter and tell the manager they were in the market for another ready female. The manager agreed. People wanting unregistered cats were rare and she totally disbelieved this Cornwall nonsense.

When the six weeks were over, Bill got his kitten and took it home. Jim was satisfied with the female kitten. The other firemen wanted to know the names of the cats. “We’re calling ours Tintagel,” announced Bill.

“What kind of name is that? We’re calling ours Lady of the Lake, after the King Arthur story,” said Jim.

“Tintagel is the name of the castle where Arthur was born.”

Shaking his head, Joe said, “You guys are really into this Arthur stuff.”

After a week both Bill and Jim reported that their cats were doing well. They were great with the kids, allowing a lot of pulling and petting and never causing a scratch. However, when necessary, the kittens would demonstrate a paw to let the kids know to ease off. The wives enjoyed the feline company when their husbands were working night shifts. Plus, once cat flaps were installed, there was no need for a litter box. These reports

were well received by the firemen and increased the desire for more kittens. So, when two females were made available, White Smoke got to perform his desired function.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Reba Finds a Home

Agnes named her cat Reba; she was into country music. Reba had the run of the mobile home park where Agnes lived. The male manager tolerated her since she seemed to be a good mouser. One day Reba stopped at a particular double-wide trailer. As she approached the front door she began to howl. The next door neighbor was not happy. 'The manager said that cat would behave itself and here it is howling in the middle of the day. Those folks aren't home, they've gone on vacation. I'm calling the manager.' When the manager arrived, Reba went toward the rear of the mobile home and gave the manager a knowing look.

"What's up cat? You're disturbing the neighborhood." A few steps closer and the manager gasped. "Gas!" he hollered. "Get away."

He rushed into a small shelter containing propane bottles and quickly shut off the valves, obviously one of the gas lines was leaking. "No smoking until the air clears," he cautioned as he turned to the woman who had complained. "This cat probably just saved your home and maybe your life." The irate woman was not mollified.

"Don't give me that. It's just a coincidence that gas was leaking. No cat could figure that out."

The manager had picked up the kitten and was stroking her. "Agnes told me this kitten was from a litter of special cats from the firehouse that had extra senses and could detect danger. You better get used to her, she'll be here a long time."

Agnes cheered when she heard of Reba's actions and informed the firemen, who were elated. The mobile home park manager appeared at the firehouse and offered to buy the next litter. The firemen didn't know what to do. So far, all the cats had been given away either to firemen, policemen or the female's owners. "Why do you want a whole litter?"

"I own five mobile home parks. I want one of these special cats for each one. Reba all ready saved one from possible fire and I want all my parks protected." An agreement was reached and, for a \$500.00 donation to the

Policemen and Firemen's emergency fund, Dolly would be brought back to see White Smoke again.

## Chapter Fifteen

### A Cat Meeting

One morning, Art received a phone call from the marshal who had protected Al and Whiteknight's families. They were no longer in witness protection, but he always kept a wary eye on his formerly protected clients. He called to discuss a sudden increase in the number of cats related to Whiteknight.

“Are you aware of all the births occurring at the firehouse? It seems the firemen are using White Smoke as a stud.” Art was surprised to hear that and a little concerned to hear the rest of why he'd called. “They're telling people that the cats are a special breed called Cornwall Rex. And, with your daughter's history with that name, I thought you ought to know.”

“Yes, I am interested to hear that. And I'm concerned that Gwen might find out and think it has something to do with her. I'm going to contact Al to see what he knows. Thanks for calling.”

Al was also in the dark, but felt the situation needed looking into, so he suggested, “Why don't you come over and I'll get one of the firemen to come and we'll hash this out?”

“Sounds good. Just give me a day or two to talk it over with Megan and Gwen. I'll get back to you.”

Art's discussion with Megan was guarded and concerned. However, Megan was more open to telling Gwen what was going on since it wasn't anything sinister. So that afternoon, when Gwen came home, they were prepared for a serious discussion. When the feisty teenager burst through the front door, they had no time to tell Gwen about the cats. She quickly exclaimed, “Our cats are all over 'twitter' and they're calling them Cornwall Rex. I can't believe they named them after me.”

Art was dumbfounded. He'd been trying to shield Gwen from her birth name due to the horrible experiences she'd had with her father. Apparently she'd outgrown her childhood trauma. When he mentioned the possible meeting, Gwen was ecstatic.

“Great! Can I come and bring Black Knight? He can meet his grandfather.”

The meeting's attendees included Al, Amy, Art, Megan, Gwen, the fire chief and firemen Bill and Jim. The Chief opened by offering an apology for his men, in case anything uncomfortable had happened because of their actions. “Oh, nothing bad has happened. It was just that we were surprised to find out that our cat's offspring were growing exponentially.”

Bill was embarrassed, so spoke for the firemen. “We would have asked your permission to use White Smoke in that way, but you were in witness protection. We just wanted to have nice cats for our kids, but word spread and it got out of hand.”

Art answered, “Well, I guess there was no harm. Do you know how many were produced?”

“We think there are 20 Cornwall Rex's from White Smoke, but aren't sure if any of his litters have reproduced.” Art saw a strange gleam come over Gwen's face.

“Now that may be a problem. Where did you come up with that breed?” asked Art looking at Gwen as he did.

“My wife found it on the internet. She even found a picture that looks a lot like White Smoke.”

Before Art could respond, Gwen spoke up. “Well, I happen to be the Duchess of Cornwall and I didn't give you permission.” Art and Megan were shocked, but relieved when Gwen laughed and said, “Just kidding guys. I think it's great.”

Megan sternly spoke to Gwen, “We'll discuss that when we get home.” The meeting of Whiteknight and Black Knight was anti-climatic. They did stare at each other and do a little sniffing, but then just ignored each other.

When Al, Amy and Gwen got home, things were not so tense and the issue was soon put aside. However, Gwen couldn't stop talking about how Black Knight and Whiteknight looked so much alike despite being opposite colors. “How do you think that happened?”



“I have no idea,” Art said out of blissful ignorance.

However, Amy had similar concerns and she had a way to find the answer. “I’m calling my grandmother to see what she has to say about all this, including the Cornwall bit.”

Amy’s grandma was quite amused by all of the interest in the cats and did know a lot about what had happened.

“Well, first of all, your firemen figured out most of it and I’m impressed by their skills on the internet. Both of Whiteknight’s parents are pure black Cornwall Rex’s. His mother had five kittens, four black and Whiteknight. The plan was to provide black kittens to the five members of my druid coven. However, none of them wanted the white one. When Al’s girlfriend visited me and asked for a charm to get him to propose marriage, I sold her the white kitten, never imagining what would happen. Of course, once White Princess had her brood, we came up with the plan to vindicate your dad. And, I guess I better confess to having a hand in Holy Smoke’s litter. I smuggled another black Cornwall into the orphanage and he mated with Holy Smoke. This explains why Black Knight looks like Whiteknight, he’s three quarters Cornwall, while the others are half or less.”

“Well, that clears that up. But we still aren’t sure what powers they all have?”

“I would assume the powers diminish with each additional mating with non-Cornwalls.”

That may have solved one problem, but there were more serious problems to address. This was brought to Agent Adams’ attention by a phone call from the Commandant at Quantico.

“Well, Art, I’m sure you’re as aware of the terrorist situation as I am. It’s stretching our resources around the world.”

“I certainly agree with that. Are you trying to obtain some individuals from the FBI?”

“Yes and no. I’m not after any active agents, but some smart cats might help.”

“Your not getting Black Knight, if that's what you mean.”

“Well, not him, permanently. I know he and some of your other Cornwalls have been trained as drug sniffers. It's not a lot different to train them as explosives sniffers. I've already had Green Knight trained and the bomb squad is impressed with his skill level. What I really have in mind is training as many of the Cornwalls as possible and use them in emergencies. I'm also interested in using Green Knight as a stud here to increase the population.”

“Very interesting, but I'm not sure how far that special gene will propagate. Yet, I think it's worth a try. I can speak to the fire captain and the owner of the trailer parks to see if they'll volunteer their cats. How long will the training take?”

“For the untrained ones, about three weeks; for Black Knight and the other sniffers, only a few days.”

So two weeks later, after Black Knight, Sniffer and Patrol Car received their updated training, a group of twelve rookie volunteers were taken to Quantico for training. The Marines were put to work providing a cat barracks, which was a new experience for all concerned.

## Chapter Sixteen

### Training Put to Practice

While the rest of the cats were off being trained, Art and Gwen had another mission to accomplish – college visits. As much as Art dreaded it, Gwen would be attending university next fall. Her superior intelligence and work habits had put her two years ahead of her peers. Art had hoped to hold her back, but the school adviser felt it would be detrimental to her development to do so. They had narrowed the search to three schools and were on their way to check them out. Black Knight would accompany them, since the whole family had agreed Gwen was too young to be by herself. Therefore, she would not be living in a dorm, but a family residence. It had been difficult to find one that would take pets, but they had located one near each campus. As is usual, they had arrived at the airport way too early and keeping Black Knight in his travel box was unacceptable, so Art let him loose knowing he would behave himself. The cat immediately began a stealthy patrol of the departure lounge. Art was unconcerned, some passengers even gave the cat a pet. However, when Black Knight began circling a man with a large briefcase, he got Art's attention. The man noticed the cat and appeared to be getting nervous. When Black Knight nudged his case the man became agitated, and looking at Art asked, "Is this your cat?"

"Yes, it is. He seems to be interested in your case."

"Well, tell him to stop."

"Actually, I'm an FBI agent and I'm going to ask you to follow me back to the inspection area so we can recheck your bag," showing the man his identification in the process.

"I won't be following you. My bag has already been checked. You have no authority to do it again."

"As a federal agent, I certainly do. So, please do as I ask without creating a scene."

The man reluctantly did as asked. After showing his ID to a TSA agent, Art and the man entered a private room. Gwen and Black Knight remained in

the lounge. The TSA agent, who was dubious about what was happening but respected Art's badge enough to cooperate, accompanied them. Art asked the man to open the case, but the man who was sweating profusely refused to do so.

"If I open this case we will all die." This got everybody's attention. The TSA agent headed for the door.

"This is your bust, I'm out a here."

Art smiled, our border protection at work. "Before you retreat, can you tell me if there is a bomb disposal unit in the airport?"

"Yes, dial 911 on the internal phone."

Art did so and in a few minutes two bomb technicians and the TSA supervisor entered the room. The TSA supervisor was not happy.

"Who are you to pull this man out of the lounge?"

Once again, Art pulled his badge, but this time added a little bravado of his own. "I'm the special agent in charge for this entire region. This airport falls in my jurisdiction. This man claims that if we open his case we will all die. I think we need to believe him."

The bomb boys looked at the case and said, "We need to have this fluoroscoped. We have one in the basement."

"Before you do that I want to find out what this guy is talking about. According to your ticket your name is Robert Smith. Why do I think that is not your name?"

"If you kill us all, what difference does it make?"

"If you intended to detonate a bomb, why are you worried about us doing it now?"

"I do not intend to blow myself up, someone else is supposed to set it off once he is on a plane."

“And who is this person?”

“I don't know the person's name. He will use a code word and I will simply leave the case and walk away, then collect my money.”

This gave Art a lot to think about. First, was this guy lying? Secondly, was there really another person involved? Thirdly, what to do about it? His thought process was interrupted by a loudspeaker announcement that the airport was being evacuated, which probably was protocol, but also meant that if there was another individual involved he/she would be leaving the airport and free to plan another bombing. Art desperately wanted to reverse the evacuation but realized the safety of the airport came first. He hoped he could use Smith, if that was his name, to lead him to the terrorists.

“Well, you will not be going anywhere except to prison.”

“I haven't done anything, you can't arrest me.”

“Oh, yes, I can. If there is a bomb in that case, it will get you twenty years. If there isn't, you'll get five for perpetrating a hoax. Now if you're smart you will start by giving us your real name and telling us exactly what is going on.”

“NO, NO! They told me I wasn't breaking the law, just delivering a package. My name really is Robert Smith. I was stopped at the curb and offered one thousand dollars to bring that case into the terminal. But if anyone tried to open it, to tell them it would explode.”

“O.K. You said 'they.' Start with how many were they and their descriptions plus any other details you can remember. Like what kind of car were they driving? Did they have accents?”

The bomb squad took the case away and examined it. There was a bomb, which was triggered to explode when it was opened. After it was disarmed the FBI forensic team discovered evidence, which eventually led to a terrorist cell that was planning several attacks. Mr. Smith cooperated with the prosecution and received a five year suspended sentence. Black Knight's success impressed the big wigs at Homeland Security and they wanted to start a program to create a nationwide cat patrol. The accountants figured a thousand cats could replace five thousand TSA

agents at a fraction of the price.

Once operations at the airport resumed. Art, Gwen and Black Knight completed their college evaluation and eventually decided on the University of Pittsburgh. It was a close call, but Black Knight liked Roc the Panther, the university's black mascot. Art liked the medical school and the fact that Pittsburgh wasn't that far away. Gwen was willing to concede to the other two participants, but it was secretly her choice also.

## Chapter Seventeen

### Not So Fast

Art was very pleased when he contacted the commandant to inform him of Black Knight's success. The marine was happy to hear their plan worked. But had a sobering report to make to Art.

“Good for you, guy. However, things aren't going so smoothly down here. The group of cats you sent us did well and you now have a cadre of bomb/drug sniffers. But the first group of Green Knight's kittens failed all the tests, a complete wash out. You mentioned that the Cornwall gene might be diluted and I think that's what's happened.”

“Wow, sorry to hear that. It means we have a very small nucleus to draw from. The females from the first litter could produce some possibly special kittens, but that's a slow process, like one litter every six months or so. The firemen have White Smoke working full time and Home Alarm doesn't seem interested. Black Knight will be going away to college with Gwen. So we'll have to see.”

As an afterthought, he phoned Al to fill him in on developments. Of course the information went to Amy and then her grandmother.

The slow process of cat procreation continued, but the small number of kittens prevented implementation of the plan.

## Chapter Eighteen

### Grandma to the Rescue

Six months had passed by and the commandant was still frustrated. Terrorists still continued to threaten the peace. No major acts had been committed, but he felt it was only a matter of time. A knock at his door announced the arrival of his sergeant.

“Sir, there's an old lady out here with a box full of cats. Should I send her away?”

“No, sergeant. You will be polite to that senior citizen and mind your manners.”

The embarrassed man led the mature lady into the office. And she did indeed have a box full of kittens – six coal-black ones to be exact.

“Good afternoon, madame. What can I do for you?”

“Well, I hope it's what I can do for you. This box contains six purebred Cornwall Rex male cats. I believe they will help solve your problem.”

The commandant was dumbstruck but still wary. “How did you come by these Cornwalls and how do I know they really are purebred?”

“Because, I started the whole Cornwall family. Whiteknight was born in my shack and I sold him to Al's former girl friend.”

“Where did you get these guys?” Pointing at the six perfectly beautiful cats.

“I have my ways. My coven has taken care of the breed for centuries. It was only that Whiteknight had an extra mutated gene that I let him go. We Druids are especially partial to black. I made sure this litter was black and all male.”

“And how did you do that?”

“I have my secrets. Do you want the kittens or not?”



“Yes, yes! How much do you want for them?”

“Why, nothing. It's my contribution to national security. They are all identical, by the way. You may have trouble telling them apart.”

The commandant didn't bother asking how she knew they were identical, because the answer would be obvious. Just about then, Green Knight wandered through the cat flap. He immediately jumped on the desk and eyeballed the kittens. He seemed impressed and paid the kittens a compliment by not attacking them for being on his favorite spot. Since his cat was satisfied, so was the commandant. He then paid more attention to the woman sitting in front of him. Contrary to his sergeant, she was not old but an attractive mature lady. “I'm afraid we've never been introduced. My name is Cai and yours is?”

“My druid priestess name is Igraine, but everyone calls me Grainey. It just sounds like granny. However, Isn't Kay a woman's name?”

“If it's spelled K-a-y it might be, but my name is spelled C-a-i, an old welsh name.”

“Well, then I'm sure you know all about us druids?”

“No, not exactly, but I would love to know more. And I would like to take you to dinner as some small payment for the cats.”

Igraine was delighted with the idea and they agreed that Cai would pick her up at the Camelot hotel after he took the kittens to the cat barracks and turned them over to the head trainer.

When Cai turned up at the hotel, he had his best civilian clothes on and held out a box of candy. Igraine accepted the offering and said, “Is this now a date?”

“I hope so, you're the most fascinating woman I've ever met and I would like to see more of you.”

“Whoa, Cai. Let's see how tonight goes.”

It went great and one of the things discussed was the cats, of course, and

the trainer's plan as to how to tell them apart. Since there were already a White, Black and Green Knight, why not a Red, Blue, Orange, Brown, Gray and Silver Knight? The trainer was in the process of having collars made in each color with their names spelled out. Igraine approved and the cats were put in training. It would be several months before they would be able to sire more bomb-detecting cats, but six new sniffers were a significant improvement to airport security.

While the cats were progressing, so were Cai and Igraine, seeing more and more of each other. Their wedding was attended by all members of the extended Cornwall cat families. And like marriages in medieval times, this further united the families, guaranteeing a continual supply of guardians in the fight against terrorism.