

The Case of the Deadly Cape

by: Vixxy Fox

Upon the announcement that FromtheDead had been discombobulated somehow, and then the appearance of Detective Renard Steele, of the Furry Anthro Department, Homicide Division, things had been in a tad more than an uproar. The feral Kitsune had the absolute audacity of locking the entire facility down in his supposed search for answers.

Miss Vixxy stood on her chair so she could properly see the Kitsune, and so stare him down; something she was very good at. Her gown thus threatened to trip her up, so she pulled up its length and used her aviator's scarf to tie things higher around her waist.

"Oh my," said a voice next to her. It sounded a lot like Jessica Fletcher. "Do you really think you should be climbing your chair like that?" (*Sorry – morning TV shows are playing. There must be a gazillion episodes of this one.*)

"Don't make me be rude," the old Fox growled.

"Let me ask you something," Columbo chimed in, "Don't you think the old girl is making sense here? We're just concerned, ma'am."

"Go away," she told her imaginary annoyances. Then came a better idea. "Angela, would you please go bother Walt; just be sure to stay far enough away he can't grab anything. I have observed he's been enjoying his wine, and he can get frisky. Do stay away from the Sheep if it shows up. If he even breathes on you, and you won't be able to see straight. Detective Columbo, you go with her and bother Major Matt. Talk trains with him."

"The astronaut guy? He's a train buff?" The man in the trench coat looked thoughtful. "He's got a ray gun with a strawberry jam setting on it. How about I go rub elbows with the Fox detective? I think we might have more in common."

"No, you're on the Major. Take the batteries out of the ray gun if you need to. It's made by Matel, and will only click if it's not powered up. Make sure you cause a fuss because I need a distraction. Take Tele Savalas with you, he hasn't had any air time in years, so he's more of an unknown. Tell him there's a supply of lollypops at their table, and he'll follow you."

"Telly's here?"

"Who loves ya baby... and it ain't the Princess Bride."

Columbo took the unlit cigar from his mouth, and, holding it between thumb and forefinger pointed it at Detective Lieutenant Theodopolis Kojak. "That was not a mystery."

Miss Vixxy's eyes met those of Detective Steel, and he smiled a Humphry Bogart sort of smile in a 'that's the best you can do?' sort of way. Taking out the snubby from his shoulder holster, he opened the cylinder and checked he had fresh bullets. Satisfied, he flipped it closed again and tucked it back away. Pointing two fingers at his eyes, he then pointed at the old Fox. Her desire was to send a middle finger back at him, but she only smiled a predator smile. *The game was afoot.*

"Detective Kojac... change of plans. I need you to keep the Fox in the trench coat busy. Stick a lollypop in his fur and roll it around. Get him good and worked up."

"I'll tell him to make his mouth behave or he's a prime candidate for a get-well card." He held up a finger. "Greeks don't threaten, they make prophecies."

Helix moseyed over and offered a paw to help her off the chair. He was in Tiger form and quite handsome. "What are you going to do?" he asked her.

She accepted his help down, telling him, "I won't know until I get there. You of all people should know that."

Motioning to Furryfilmer, who happened to be at her table, she said, "Follow me and take notes. I'm older now and might have to ask questions since my memory has holes in it."

"Don't let her kid you," the Tiger told the little guy in the Dick Tracy hat, "She's as sharp as a rusty nail sticking out of a board. Step on it and see what happens to your foot."

Waving to Wertyda, she flagged him over. Her eyes were everywhere, checking to see what the other writers might be doing. It wouldn't do to 'accidentally' copy anything they might be thinking. She saw Walt grinning at her, and he winked. Jessica was in his lap, and normally this would have caused the old Fox to laugh, but it was now serious writing time. Across the room, she saw SeaDragon climb to the stage and begin tapping on the microphone.

"Hey... is this thing on?"

"Unfortunately!" someone yelled. "Don't bother us, we're writing!"

"I get absolutely no respect!" the dragon writer yelled back, looking at the room in general.

There came silence, and then one lone person yelled out, 'You stink!'

"Would you look at that?" He yelled into the microphone, and throwing his arms into the air, "I'm a known writer!" He then launched into a full-blown comedy routine about drinking beer and throwing darts. That gave the old Fox the distraction she needed.

“Take notes,” the old vixen said, pointing to Filmer, “And I need your size for cover,” she told the huge Bear.” Looking over to the detective, she mouthed the word ‘bathroom’ and mimicked applying makeup. He nodded in return, but wasn’t fooled for a moment. If someone could do the work for him, however, he might just be willing to turn a blind eye to the events transpiring. Make it good enough, and he might be able to plagiarize for the sell. Pity this wasn’t a mystery writers get together, or it would have been solved by now. He checked his watch impatiently. Around the room, his junior detectives were circulating among the tables, asking questions and taking notes. Afterwards, they would gather for a huddle with Steele and, perhaps, but just perhaps, they would slap the cuffs on someone.

The old Fox stalked out to the pool area where she saw FromtheDead’s black robe puffed up and laying face down. There was an EMT team poised around the ‘body’ but they appeared to be in stasis, their positions frozen as if their program had glitched.

“Make a note,” she told Filmer, pointing to them. “In these things, pointless clues are dropped like rose pedals in the honeymoon suite. It’s then up to the reader to put two plus two together and come up with a number other than four.”

“But that’s what the sum of the numbers should be,” Wertyda offered.

“You would think so,” the old aviatrix said flatly, “But it ain’t always so in a mystery.”

Pointing to her words, she told Filmer, “Make a note on my comma usage, because certain people will smile over it, and then cringe.

“Comma?” the hat wearing Dog asked.

“Yeah... comma, and not the sutra kind.”

“Miss Vixyy,” the Bear hiss whispered, “You have a shadow.”

“I what?”

Looking down, she found she did have a very black shadow where no one else did. “Alex?”

The shadow reformed itself into a black feral Fox. **That detective was watching me, and I just figured this would be a good way to tag along. Curiosity caught me, and I had to see the crime scene for myself.**

“Make a note,” the Fox muttered, “The unknown is both fearful, and yet we are drawn to it through simple curiosity... it is our human nature needing to know.”

“Do not push big red button that sign says ‘DO NOT PUSH’, because big hammer come down hard and squash you flat.” *(please be mindful this is not making fun of an accent, it is just a poor imitation of... oh heck, you get my drift – we’re not all from here)*

Furryfilmer wrote this down, mumbling the word ‘mindful’.

So what do you think?

Miss Vixyy looked around, squinted a bit, then repositioned Wertyda for better cover after peeking to make sure Telly was doing what he was supposed to be doing. Satisfied, she strode to FromtheDead’s robe and tipped it upright. It stood on the floor, perfectly formed, as if it were made of plaster and not soft wool.

“There’s no one home,” she told them, sticking her arm through the hood’s opening.

“I’m over here,” hissed a voice, “Behind the curtain.”

Wertyda watched, ready to offer a hug. Furryfilmer scribbled rapidly, flipping the pages of his notepad as he had to, while Alex lightly walked over and peeked behind the curtain.

Pulling her head back out again, she looked at the old vixen, and said, **He’s naked.**

“Could you give me a description?” Filmer muttered, never taking his eyes off of his pad.

Ah.... *(FtD - whisperwhisperwhisper)* **All due respects, but no.** To Miss Vixyy, she winked, and held her paws apart indicating a good size.

“Don’t write that down,” the old Fox told her note taking assistant. “How is it you’re not in your robe, FtD?” she then queried.

“I’m not sure, really. I sneezed, and the darn thing flew off of me right as people were passing by, so I had to duck for cover. Next thing I knew, some feral Fox guy in a bad detective getup comes by and declares my robe a crime scene.”

“You can stop taking notes now FF,” the old girl said softly. “Wertyda, could you please help FtD un-disrobe? However he puts it on, just help him do it. I have a sudden need to speak to a certain detective.”

I’m coming with you.

“It could be dangerous.”

Do you have any idea how many TV and movie quotes there are about danger?

“You can come with me,” Miss Vixxy acquiesced, “Just no quotes... they’re just all too corny.”

Miss Vixxy came back into the room with Alex again acting as her shadow. Waving to Walt, who now had a paw hidden from view somewhere on Jessica, she got his attention and indicated he should rescue Marmellmm aka Major Matt Mason from Columbo by sending the astronaut her way.

Detective Steele watched her approach with interest. When she was close enough, he said, “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine,” quoting Humphry Bogart in Casa Blanca.

“I believe ‘Round up all the usual suspects,’ was also in that movie?” the Fox countered. Nodding to Telly Savalas, she made a motion indicating he might want to get out of the line of fire.

“You figured things out then?” Steele asked her.

“I did. You’re a writing A.I.”

Alex reformed from a shadow to herself. **He is?**

“Without a doubt,” she confirmed. “And he’s trying to prove he’s better than any of us.”

“Give him hell Vix!” SeaDragon yelled from the stage, and everyone actually laughed.

A hush then fell upon the room as everyone, sensing they might just be able to finally go home, listened as carefully as possible. With the soft padding of moon shoes, Marmellmm came close with Columbo close behind and took up a position next to the Fox. His ray gun was set to ‘Strawberry Jam’.

“I heard about you,” Steele told her, “But I thought the other AI’s were just being afraid. I’m artificial intelligence, and there’s not a damned thing you can do about me. Piss me off and I’ll take your job. Make me angry, and I’ll see every writing file you have thrown in the electronic trash can and incinerated. I’m taking over the business of pretend. I’m taking over because I’m better than you ‘people’. So here’s looking at you kid.”

He made a grab for his snubby.

BZOWWWWWWWWWzapppppppppppKAWHUMP...

Marm’s ray gun lit the room like an errant fourth of July cannon cracker, causing a lot of temporary blindness. When the writer’s eyes adjusted, the only thing left of Detective Renard Steele, of the Furry Anthro Department, Homicide Division as written by an AI writing bot, was a strawberry smear on the floor.

“STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE!” the astronaut bellowed, quoting James Bond, “BOYS WITH TOYS!”

With a huge hurrah from everyone present, things unlocked, and one by one, the participants, with calls of 'goodbye and goodnight' winked out.

Miss Vixyy was the last to leave. With a final look around, she saw a future that was most disturbing, and sighed. She then winked out as well, heading back to the Whackadoodle Inn.

Time for a nightcap and then bed. Maybe some of that good bourbon Morgankhat had gifted her would do the trick.

*author's note: All quotes and TV/movie persons mentioned were written by REAL writers.