

## Chapter 773

I didn't rush getting dressed. Looking good was something I had to emphasize since that was what they were looking at in judging my ability to fit in. So I hoped anyway. I had to turn sideways to get past Katrina. In the office itself, four of the female new hires had already gathered: Daphne, Paula, Dora and Tigger.

They were surprised to see me, early and coming from Katrina's private lavatory, followed closely by Katrina. I stood by my little desk because the others were forced to stand by circumstance and I was playing at solidarity. Fabiola and Violet barely made it in before seven.

"Yesterday went well," Katrina started the meeting. "Most of you received very positive reviews, completed tasks ahead of schedule and exhibited team-building skills."

"Cáel, unfortunately, you appear to have difficulties adapting to our corporate culture and repeatedly had to have tasks defined for you. I appreciate you having some difficulties with this environment. I would hope you will take yesterday's lessons and apply them to your future endeavors with us," she continued.

"Finally, you filed a complaint against one of our clients. I've reviewed it and found your complaint without merit. I will allow you to withdraw that complaint before it becomes part of your official record," she finished. The other newbies seemed curious about this tidbit.

"Of course, Ma'am," I nodded.

"Katrina," she corrected.

"Yes Ma'am, Katrina," I bantered right back.

"Katrina will do," her gaze challenged me.

"You make the rules," I glared right back.

"It is part of the corporate culture you are having problems with, Cáel," she stressed. I nodded and smiled. "Don't you agree, Cáel?" she pressed the point.

"I apologize, but Desiree told me not to lie on, or about, an assignment. Do you want me to lie and say I agree with what's going on here, or do you want me to ask why my trainer was rolling around on the bed, her shirt half open, exposing her bra to me?" I stared.

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"Do we need to get into Fabiola sneaking up to the door and proving that she'll never make Broadway as she attempted to act surprised? I didn't bring this up earlier because I assumed this WAS your corporate culture," I smiled.

"If this bothers you, I will accept your request for reassignment," Katrina grinned.

"Why would I want to leave? This place is a laugh riot," I chuckled. "I swear, all of you ladies have been working overtime to make this job as enjoyable as hell. With all the efforts made to make me feel welcome, bailing would be the height of ingratitude."

"Are you attempting to be amusing?" Katrina smirked.

"I am attempting to be as honest and genuine about my desire to stay as you are in your desire to keep me on," I kept going. Her smirk turned into a grin.

"Cáel, I see your retention in my department to be a personal challenge," she replied.

"Thank you," I nodded. "I find your personal attention to be inspirational."

My translation? She was trying to get me to jump ship, or do something that would get me shuffled to some office even worse than this one. My polite response, more bravado than common sense, was 'bring it bitch'. It was of no comfort that it wasn't personal – they were going to axe all us men. In hindsight, I shouldn't have been making so many assumptions.

"Now that has been taken care of; on to our next order of business," Katrina continued.

"I want all of you to reacquaint yourselves with our sexual liaison policies. Interns are forbidden, for the sake of job review status, from engaging in romantic and/or sexual activity with an employee, or client, of Havenstone Commercial Investments. We had an unfortunate incident last night and had to relocate an intern," she related.**w@w.NoV@LW@Rm.cOM**

"I would like to think we can avoid that here, ladies," she stated decisively.

"You can count on us," Daphne stepped up. I nodded along with the rest. I was trying to figure out which guy they had nailed. I noticed that only one intern had gotten 'relocated'. For that matter, what did 'relocate' mean? Couldn't they just say 'fired'?

We got our assignments and off we went. I had Buffy again.

"How did your date with the mime go?" Violet teased me.

"It turned out we had nothing to talk about," I grinned.

"You should have gone out with us," Daphne pressed in from my other side. "We met several cute guys." Ah, the old 'prove you aren't gay' thing again.

"Were they really handsome, hard and buff?" I stared hungrily into Daphne's eyes. That caught her off guard for a second.

"Very," she licked her lips.

"Oh," I sighed. "I'm not into guys but if I was, it would be old, fat, bald men – the rounder the better."

"You are a real joker," Violet mused.

"I prefer to think of myself as a guy who panders to the most pathetic moral characters he's confronted with," I smirked as I glided past them to Buffy's desk. Buffy looked to me then past me to the two new hires who beamed hate at my back.

"Is there something I need to be made aware of?" Buffy questioned me.

"Children shouldn't play with matches, run with scissors, or verbally spar with someone who knows that the Vampire Diaries is not the best our culture can do," I informed her.

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"New hires in the same department are encouraged to create relationships that will last them for as long as they are with Havenstone," Buffy stated.

"That was in the Handbook, wasn't it?" I tried to recall.

"It is not only a good idea, it is corporate policy," Buffy said as she stood. "Let's get to work."

I followed along. This was my job though being given advance notice about what I was supposed to be doing would have been nice.

"Today we are caretaking a meeting," Buffy told me after we had taken the elevator to one of the top floors. "That means we pay attention to the top brass," she downloaded some faces for me to memorize, "figure out what they want before they do and interface with the caterers when they arrive so no non-corporate employee is ever near our top tier."

"Why isn't this a teleconference?" I inquired. Buffy gave me a condescending look.

"Do you always assume you know more than everyone else," she mused.

"I think that if I don't know, I should ask, if I'm given a mentor, I should utilized their experience, and the best way to fail is to pretend you know what you don't," I related.

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"I'll tell you what you need to know," Buffy informed me.

"Par for the course, Buffy," I grinned mindlessly. She shot me a confused look. Checking out the room was more important to Buffy than satisfying her curiosity. We finished our checklist right before the first participant arrived.

I worried how we were going to meet their needs while out of the room. It wasn't like they would want some schmuck like me listening to truly critical information. Buffy and I remained in the room, so I assumed they'd be talking about their vacation experiences. As the late-forties/early fifties looking women walked in, they all flashed me looks.

The looks varied from A to B; sublime hostility and contempt, to outright sexual desire. I made a mental note to thank Buffy before I nipple-twisted her into cardiac arrest. I was also gifted with the same looks from the young women that followed the major players around. A few things filtered through my perceptions.

The various women were talking to one another, mostly in English but with a few other languages bantered about. The collective artifacts around the room were genuine. I knew this because my first lover taught Archeology at Bolingbrook. I never signed up for any of her courses because that might have cost her professorship.