

## Chapter 781

"I'm Odette Sievert," she smiled. She took my drink order then sashayed away. I sat down opposite Katrina. The lady was smirking at me. In a flash, she grew deadly serious.

"How?" she redefined intensity for me. I wish it hadn't been in Hittite.

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"Excuse me?" I responded. I was afraid I knew exactly what she was asking for me to both admit to and explain. Katrina's eyes were flinty and heartless.

"I really don't want to repeat myself, Cáel," she said in a chilling voice. "You trusted me this afternoon. Trust me now."

"How far am I going to get if I get up and walk away right now?" I sipped my water.

"What makes you think I mean you any harm?" Katrina asked.

"You are evil," I began to match her gaze. "You are all evil fucking caricatures of human beings - monsters really."

"The worst thing about you is that you don't think you are like the rest. You think you are somehow more humane yet you don't have a fucking clue what that means," I accused her. "The 'how' is really tragic. The woman who took my virginity, my first love, devoted her life to the study of Near Eastern Ancient cultures."

"Not the early city-states, or the well-worn Greeks; she spent her life delving into the first nation-empires including, obviously, the Old Kingdom and Neo-Hittites. She didn't care about ruins; she loved the literature, art and culture of those people. She would read me poetry in a dozen dead languages. Later she taught me those tongues so I could let her hear those words in a voice not her own," I continued.

"By the spring, we would walk around her house all weekend speaking only in voices long stilled by the passage of time. She loved that. To her, it was the closest she'd get to being in some ancient marketplace; Babylonians haggling with Egyptians over beeswax, Assyrians arguing religion with Phoenicians, and Hittites and Cretan lovers sparring with poetry," I fondly recalled.

Katrina's gaze had slowly softened until it became a mixture of wonder and envy.

"She sounds like a remarkable woman. Why did this not come up in your background search?" she questioned.

"I listed her as an acquaintance," I said.

"I never took any of her courses since that would have threatened her job. I didn't hide anything. If anyone asked me if I spoke any dead languages, I don't recall it," I softened as well. "You have to admit that it is rather bizarre that I am one of a dozen men in the United States that knows the language of the Amazons and I ended up in that board room."

"Amazons," she said in Old Kingdom Hittite. "You really figured it out."

"It took me a while," I responded in the same lingo. Katrina jolted. It then occurred to me she'd never heard her native language spoken by a male. In English, "that's when I realized you were all raving psychotic lunatics and if I didn't play along, I was going to be murdered."

"So all that obedience and kneeling was an act?" Katrina studied me. wWw.n0v£I©0r®.co©

"The respect wasn't false. I do admire you. You are rather pleasant to work for, but it is telling that not one of your group realized that an outsider male wouldn't act the way I did," I related.

"I was hoping there was a foundation for my project," Katrina sighed.

"There is," I asserted. "Body posturing and obedience are normal, healthy male activities, Katrina. The military and Boy Scouts are built on it. All you have to do is create something males can believe in. Loyalty and obedience will follow."

"The problem is my culture takes a dim view of male martial activity," Katrina informed me.

"You only got away with your actions today because the others believed - mistakenly believed - you were obedient to me," she reinforced my view.

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"What makes you think I wouldn't obey you again?" I countered.

"Would you?" she mused.

"Do I still have a job?" I gave a lopsided grin.

"Yes. Is that what motivates you? Pay?" she studied me.

"Katrina, you do not understand men," I chuckled. "There is not enough money in the world to make me keep this job." Katrina looked menacing once more.

"I'll show up to work tomorrow because if I make a run for it, the others will take it out on you," I enlightened her. "You saved my life today - twice. You risked your social position by intervening on my behalf and I imagine there are some freaking stiff penalties for not telling your sisters that I know Old Kingdom Hittite."

"Very true," she admitted. "My sisters would not be pleased. It is also nice to have confirmed my thoughts about the 'New Directive'. Men can be trained to be helpmates and stand at our sides, even if it is a half-step behind." She contemplated some things. "Why do you consider us evil?"

"You are holding onto a blood-feud for three thousand years even though the genetic descendants of those crimes have most likely died out eons ago. You use your hateful, paranoid religion to justify every atrocity under the Sun. What is even more insane is that your activities are no longer warranted. There are places around the globe where you can live freely, own property and have all the legal protections enjoyed by men," I stated.

"The majority of the globe is still dangerous for us," Katrina reposed. "Even in this country, women are enslaved, brutalized and murdered simply for being the 'weaker' sex."

"If you are waiting for a perfect world all I have to ask is 'when will it be my time?'" I regarded her sadly. It was obvious to both of us I was in a hopeless position. My fate was in her hands.

"Come home with me tonight," Katrina ordered.

"No," I replied. "It is against corporate policy. You'll have to wait 82 days like the rest."

Katrina snorted, snickered then laughed out loud.

"Remembering that we have to explain things to you men will be an exasperating experience for most of us," she chuckled. Katrina motioned Odette over, signaling our conversation was over for now.

The 16 oz. Porterhouse steak was heavenly and I made sure to keep the beer-drinking down to two steins. Katrina teased me about my appetite though she was no slouch. I explained that I'd need my strength - I was having sex tonight. She insinuated I was conceited. I laughed. Short of her embarrassing Odette, our waitress was going to be waking up at my side come dawn.

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