

## Chapter 794

"Cáel, she was making stuff up again," Loraine attempted damage control.

"No, I didn't," Aya protested. "I want Cáel to live."

"That can be answered with two questions, Loraine," I locked eyes with the sixteen year old.

"Cáel - do not do this," Desiree ordered.

"Sorry, Desiree; I think this falls in the 'I need to know' category," I defied her. "Loraine, do malformed female babies get tossed off the cliff alongside all the male babies." Loraine paled and gulped. Europa looked equally worried. Aya was afraid - afraid of my reaction.

"I apologize, Cáel. This is not something I can talk about," Loraine murmured.

"This is the point where you decide if I'm a human being, or some servitor creature," I studied her.

"I can't," Loraine repeated. I nodded then faced forward. There was silence for a while.

"Cáel, are you upset with us?" Europa inquired nervously. I looked back at her.

"My emotional status is of no relevance to my assignment, Europa," I replied dead-pan. "Will there be anything else?"

"Why are you acting this way?" Loraine groaned.

"I am a Havenstone employee, Loraine," I answered.

"I have no instructions to behave in any other fashion. I am sure if I have done anything inappropriate, you may report me to my boss, Desiree, or my department head, Katrina, so that I may be suitably disciplined," I informed her.

"Please don't talk like that," Aya sniffled.

"Aya, if I have upset you, please request another Havenstone employee on your next service order," I said. Aya began bawling. God, she was emotionally volatile.

"Desiree, make him stop," Loraine pleaded.

"Make him stop what? You don't want a man, you want a cuddly toy with 101 programmed warm, fuzzy responses," Desiree responded. "Toys don't go above, beyond, and even against their instructions to do a better job. You are getting exactly what your Mother has requested. You have a Havenstone employee. You can't afford the man who befriended you."

That was more than Desiree coming to my defense. She was trying to teach the children the harsh reality of life. Amazons, due to their conduct toward men, had to think of them as lesser beings. The sickness was more than tossing male and unfit female babies to their death, it was mothers handing their children over to be murdered.

"I apologize, Cáel," Loraine said softly.

"Okay," I replied crisply. More silence.

"Are you still angry with us?" Europa asked.

"I can still do my job, if that is what you are worried about," I told her. Aya wailed. I was starting to feel that Aya had mental issues that went beyond wanting a father.

"Yes," Loraine finally answered my question. I remained quiet. "Isn't that what you wanted to know?"

"No, Loraine; I wanted you to treat me as if I had some worth in your eyes," I sighed.

"I love you," Aya pleaded. I struggled and struggled and only one other societal model made sense.

I turned half-way around to look at the group once more.

"When is the trial?" I probed. No answer. "At some point as you are growing up, you ladies have to pass some sort of basic test. When is it?" My model was male yet still fit - Sparta.

"How do you know any of this?" Loraine wondered.

"I was actually hired because I'm bright," I stated in all seriousness, "along with good looks and being in excellent physical condition."

"Twelve," Europe filled me in. I didn't need to say anything. The two older sisters shot worried looks Aya's way.

"Your Aunt's are sterile, correct?" now Europa and Loraine flashed quick glances between them.

"Yes," Loraine muttered. "How did you...?"

"That's not important. What is important is that I will do my best to stick with Aya as long as I can," I informed them. I tapped Aya's nose. "Stop that crying. You are better than that."

"Sorry," she sniffed.

"No, you 'apologize' to show regret. 'Sorry' is for a flaw," I reminded Aya. "Don't go around school telling your classmates I'm a spy either."

"What do I tell them?" Aya gulped.

"Tell them I am not a spy. Insist that I'm not a spy. Loudly declare to everybody who asks that I am not a spy," I grinned. "Do you understand?" Aya didn't, but Europa did.

"Aya, by insisting that Cáel isn't a spy no matter what, everyone will believe he's a spy. It is the art of misinformation," Europa hugged her younger sibling.

"By saying he's not a spy, everyone will think he is a spy?" Aya appeared confused.

"Yes," Loraine assured her.

"Okay," Aya accepted the illusion. "You are still going to marry Momma, right?"

*w@w.no@lw@Rm.C@m*

"I never said that," I protested. Aya smiled sweetly. I frowned. She became absolutely cherubic.

"I make no promises," I turned forward.

"Go for it," Desiree whispered. "Caitlyn is only one of Katrina's sisters." I make a point of trying not to cry in public. I continued to be depressed on how I failed to make crucial connections. Whose family, besides her own, would allow me this close? Damn, I couldn't keep playing catch-up.

wwŴ.©OVelw@rm.com

"Katrina is your aunt?" I inquired quietly.

"She's my sister," Desiree stated. Watching Loraine, Europa and Aya acting together helped that make sense. Katrina felt responsible for Desiree in the same way Loraine looked out for Aya. Katrina's Mom had abandoned her when she fled with the man she

loved.Www.No(v)E(i)ŴOrm.c(e)m

When an aunt brought her back, Katrina had stood by the sister she'd never seen before because that was what sisters do. You saw a lot of that in Celtic societies. Epona was a Celtic name - a Goddess in fact.

"If you and Mom go on a date, I can come along as a chaperone," Loraine offered.

"I'm surprised you even know what a chaperone is," I grinned back.

"Sure we do," Europa giggled. "That's the one who holds the leash." Loraine blushed furiously.

"Don't say that," she chided Europa. @w@w.©ov(e)LwÓrm.©ô@

"Sis, I think he knows something is going on beyond Aya's Daddy issues," Europa countered.

"I deny everything," I proclaimed.