

Chapter 856

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That would have been a far greater treasure had that been my work report instead of Aya's. Everyone else did well, save Tigger. She had forgotten a security sequence and had half a floor locked down for 15 minutes. At the conclusion, Buffy came in, slammed a flimsy, but aromatic, box into my chest then stormed away.

"Cáel?" Katrina questioned.

"Yes. Thank you," I then turned to Fabiola."Do you wish to have the ceremony here, or out on the main floor of Executive Services?"

"I --what are you going to do?" Fabiola grew suspicious."This is a trick to make me look foolish again."

"Fabiola, it is Hayden's wish you hear him out," Paula spoke."He's troublesome, not stupid. I don't think he's stupid enough to defy Hayden on this."

"Swear to me you are not going to make me look bad," Fabiola stared at me.

"What do I possess that you believe is valuable?" I countered. She had to think about that.

It couldn't be Aya. Fabiola was stumped. She had been so busy looking down her fine Roman nose at me, she had neglected to notice everything I had done and said.

"Your mentor," Daphne offered.

"She has forbidden me to see her again, but thank you," I winked at Daphne.

A quick list of less than helpful suggestions followed. It turned out the only thing I valued was my freedom and I couldn't give that up to Fabiola because that decision lay with Katrina. I would rather defy Hayden than give up sex, I lied continuously for little, or no reason. Fabiola wasn't looking for Lent, she wanted something concrete. It simply didn't exist.

Out we went with a very distraught Fabiola and me with a bunch of small boxes. I didn't worry about expensing all this crap. I wasn't spending my own money anyway. I had Fabiola stand in the largest open area Es had. Even people who only had business on

this floor were joining the growing body of my co-workers here to witness the spectacle.

Three small brass bowls and one small oil lamp went to the four compass points--I even had a compass. I put sand in one, water in another and dry ice in the third. I lit the lamp.

"This symbolizes me calling the four corners of Terra to bear witness: Earth, Air, Fire and Water," I explained. Next I wrote down Fabiola's name on a slip of paper in Old Kingdom Hittite.

I burned it. Fabiola frowned. She was the only one. I dropped the ashes into a glass of water.

"With this, I take back my curse. I swallow it, thus swallowing my words," I explained to Fabiola. I drank the whole thing. That accomplished, I pulled a small silver owl out of an unopened box to a series of murmurs. "This is a gift to your house. Minerva (the Roman Athena) is your patron Goddess. I do honor to her for bringing you back." I handed her the owl.

Her expression told me she was still waiting for the trap to be sprung on her. I wrote out my name, in Magyars then held it up to Fabiola. *Www.ND@elworms.c@M*

"This is my name, Cael Nyilas, in my native tongue," I told her. I burned it, ground up the ashes with my fingers. With a little bit of coordinated effort, I drew the word 'forgiveness' in OKH over my heart.

The last box. It was Dobos Tortas, a sweet treat from my native land-- Hungary, not Chicago.

"Please accept this gift as a symbol of my apology and my desire to seek your forgiveness," I looked into Fabiola's eyes. The weight came crushing down on her. Virtually all the women around her wanted me to be forgiven.

Not because they hated her. Most barely knew her-- or me. It was the ceremony. Simple, relatively quick yet individualized by the giving of gifts designed for each participant. Deep in her twisted little soul, Fabiola still expected a trap, trick, or joke at her expense. She probably thought the 'cookies' were poisoned.

"I forgive you," Fabiola stated. She put her hand on my shoulder. "Share a treat with me." I even let her pick out the one to stick in my mouth. Maybe she thought I had the antidote, or maybe she decided I was on the up-and-up. The crowd of Amazons made happy, communal noises and we all parted as friends... okay, friends and their dancing bear--me.

Katrina snuck up on me as a handful of women thanked me for the insightful ceremony. I told them they were welcome while neglecting to inform them that I made all of that up. Part of it was Wiccan. Part was some 1960's Italian movie I'd seen. A few things I pulled out of my ass, like normal.

"Put on your clothes," Katrina handed me my things. "You did well. I am sure Hayden will be equally pleased."

"No problem," I looked at her appreciatively. I felt a cerebral connection evolving between us.

"Put on your shirt before I start licking your nipples," Katrin demanded. Damn it.

Wait, things got better. As I looked away from Katrina and started getting dressed, Buffy appeared before me. I bet I could have melted an ice cap with the head of steam she'd built up.

"Do you like dressing as a male stripper? Do you like women drooling all over you?" Buffy sizzled.

"No--yes," I responded.

"I hate you," she snapped.

"I admire the fact that you can pull off the lead in Madame Butterfly," I bantered back.

"Let's get to work," Buffy growled. Off we went.

(Elsa Round Three) *Www.nd@elworms.com*

"Hello Stanica," Buffy greeted the SD guard at the gym facility door. That was new. Normally it was a card-swipe and in you went. Buffy and I were dressed for a workout -- per orders.

"Full-bloods only," Stanica stopped Buffy. Ah, racism was raising its ugly head.

"How am I supposed to get in?" I countered. This appointment was in our queue for 11 a. m.

"You have been summoned," Stanica clarified.

"Cool... I'll be back in 70 days. Good job Chuckles," I grinned.

"You have been summoned," she threatened with a great deal more menace.

"He works for me today," Buffy yawned. "That means he goes where I go. Cael doesn't have a queue today, I do. He's my intern. If you won't let me in, then he doesn't go in. Let's go Cael."

Stanica grabbed my arm.

"He goes in. You stay," she insisted.

"Cael-- resist," Buffy ordered. To Stanica, "Knock yourself out." Stanica briefly tried to move me. Then she went for some kind of control-hold/lock. Brazilian jujitsu. Baby.

It is not some kind of 'super' martial art. As far as I knew, none of them were. If you

were trying to break, or establish physical control over another person, it was pretty spectacular though. Along with the Amazon 'house' style, she knew something akin to Kra v Maga. Stanica was hampered by her unwillingness to do me serious harm, as was I toward her.

The difference was, all I had to do was stay in the hallway, while Stanica had to get me through the doors. The stalemate was broken by two fresh full-bloods coming from the changing room to the facilities.

"Sisters, assist me," Stanica called out. "Help me wrestle him to the ground without undo damage." They came forward and jumped me.

"Are you on official Havenstone business?" Buffy politely inquired as they dog piled on me.

"Shut up," Stanica yelled. *www.nd@elworms.com*

"Failing to adequately explain the situation," Buffy quickly drew her pistol and pressed it to the temple of one of the two new Amazons, "informs me you are willingly interfering in official Executive Services business."

"By all means, give me an excuse to file an incident report," Buffy grinned feral.

"Do it and you die, 'Lost Blood' (OKH)," the threatened woman responded.

"Boss, may I suggest an alternative?" I ground up. They had me pressed down in the hall.

"I'm willing to accept you were hired for your intelligence," Buffy allowed.

"Trust me. I got this," I snickered. Buffy didn't trust me, yet she knew my tone well. Buffy holstered her weapon and stood back.

"This isn't over, Buffy," the Amazon she'd pulled down on snapped.

"Go for it," Buffy chuckled. "You are running off with Katrina's male. I was trying to assert her rights and you have defied her. I gleefully await her judgment."

The woman snarled then grunted as my three captives pulled me up. Buffy was on her phone, typing away a text when the women realized my feet weren't planted under me. I started to topple over.

"Stand up, damn you," Stanica demanded. I looked to Buffy for confirmation of that order. She smiled while indicating nothing.

"Stand up," the third Amazon insisted. She backed that up with a jab to my left kidney. Damn, this place was hellishly unlucky for the left side of my body. That did not encourage me to stand.

"Fine, we'll drag him in," Stanica changed up. I didn't resist one bit. I acted like dead weight.

This scene was made all the more precious by the audience Elsa had gathered for whatever exhibition she had planned for me. The whole sparring area was surrounded by Amazons clearly waiting on me. Most were cross-legged though a few knelt behind the first rank. I could see Elsa, spear in hand, watching those three lugging me in from her position in the Southwest corner of the mats.

"What's wrong with him?" Elsa inquired calmly.

"He is afraid," Stanica answered. I would have replied, but I knew silence would be

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far more cutting. See --everyone expects me to have a comeback. My quiet unsettled them. The three unceremoniously dumped me next to the Northeast corner. I lay there.

I had noticed two axes about a meter in on the mat. I pulled myself into a position where my butt was resting on my heels.

"My Sisters," Elsa began. "There has been some interest in Cael's two-axe style as well as various theories on how to defeat it. Today, I will display the long spear technique's ability to overcome this problem."

"Cael, pick up the axes and prepare yourself. I will wait until you indicate your readiness," Elsa nodded my way. Very friendly. I looked around a bit, rather bored. "Cael?" she repeated. I looked at Elsa.