

Chapter 885

"Buffy, you are the most amazon-Amazon I know,"I told her."You like Helena and she said nice stuff about Daphne which showed her character, so I chose her next."

"Hey, this means I can finally slap Fabiola around,"Buffy's eyes grew bright.~V~w.~d~(v)~(v)~Q~w~RM.C0m

"Which reminds me -can I get any volunteers forOld Kingdom Hittite lessons for these two," I begged my 'new hire' companions.

"I'll take two nights a week," Daphne offered.

"I'll take one night," Paula added.

"I'll take a fourth," Violet completed the set.

"Damn it," Desire e cursed."This means Buffy mustbe taught the Prayer of the Ancestors."

"You are right," Buffy gasped."I accompany Cael toCouncil meeting s now."

"One note-I don't vote," I informed them."I madethat decision. House Ishara has never had a male vote for it and I'm keeping that tradition. I can speak, but not vote. When my daughter comes of age, she will have full rights."

Desiree, Buffy and Helena were confused.

Danhn e Vionlet and Paula on the otherhand wer

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enraptured. This was the only life-only traditions -they had ever known and I had sacrificedsomething of importance to them out of respect to their sensibilities.

"Cael's decision makes it easier for you, Buffy andHelena," Daphne explained.

"This allows the other Heads of House to get usedto him being there -less of a culture shock," she continued. "In a few years he may end up getting a vote anyway as they learn to respect him and House Ishara. You are one of the First Houses-reborn, I imagine." Buffy's eyes grew wide and her mouth gaped open.~W~w.noVeL~w~ORM.co~@

"Yeah Buff," Desire e shook her head."One of thefirst twenty war leaders of the Host. You have the blood of Mycenaean warriors on your hands."

"Cael, I..." Buffy began.

"I gave you nothing, Buffy. If you think there issomeone more deserving than you, please point them out," I touched her tear-drenched cheek.

"I do want something from you," I saidcompassionately. Buffy was attentive. "I want you to undergo a sex change operation and become a real woman." Ow! Buffy punched me.

"Buffy, you might not want to damage your HouseHead in public. It is bad for his prestige," Paula pointed out.

"Good point," Buffy frowned."Cael-bathroom-now."

"Uh-oh, no way, no how," I back-pedaled."Todayhas been painful enough. I had a run in with some Security Detail and House Guard on the way to the podium."

"What did they do to you?" Helena inquired.

"For starters, they haven't given me back myvalise,"I complained."Also, who do I report these additions to House Ishara to? Finally, Buffy promised me she'd wear a thong and those little, circular Band-Aids if I got her into the Full-blooded gym again.~D~w~(w).nav~@~£~wo~(t)~M.com

"Decorum, Buffy," Desire e stopped Buffy frompunishing me."Decorum."

"Why don't you have to behave?" Buffy glared atme.

"I'm the ghost of a man dead for over 2500 years,"I winked."I'm allowed to be eccentric."

"I'll start calling around to find out who gets toldwhat and where your stuff is Cael," Helena grinned. She was full-blooded now; the goal of every Runner who joined.

"What is next for you now?" Daphne questioned.

"I imagine I have a job to do," I replied."I mean,

Katrina works and she's head of House Epona. I'm an intern, just like I was yesterday. That hasn't changed."

"Oh goodie," Buffy smacked her hands together,"you can still work for me."

"Oh -yay," I groaned sarcastically.

"What's wrong now?" Katrina said as she waltzedinto the room. I caught sight of a few SD chicks hanging around outside. "There are for your protection if you feel you need it."

"Nah,"I shook my head."I have that taken care of.I brought Buffy and Helena into House Ishara."

Katrina stopped and looked at me. There was definitely some tension between us.

"You might want to consult with -others beforeyou do something like that again," Katrina cautioned me.

"I'll definitely consider your offer. For now, I chose the best for the future of Ishara,"I said, "as is my duty and responsibility."

We locked gazes once more. Things had changed between us. They had to have.

"I seem to have missed my Firing Range practice today as well as the morning meeting,"I reminded Katrina. She'd known what fate awaited me when I

walked in the door and not warned me. I didn't blame her. That was what she was looking for-the anger.

Before, I couldn't have acted on it.

"Cael, get dressed. I saw Helena running off onsome sort of errand which I imagine is your fault, so you are working with Daphne for the rest of the day,"Katrin a resumed her pace to her desk. She examined the nearly empty glass.

"My tears," I answered. "It is part of my ritual forinduction into House Ishara." In case you missed it, I never said 'my house'. This was on purpose. As long as I made no open claim to such a loft y spot, they could ignore me hanging around a bit better.

"You may want to talk with House Arinniti, orSauska about such rites," Katrina advised.

"He burned their old names to ash, scored theirleft cheeks with his tears to remind them of his ancestors and mixed his blood with theirs so they would be known to all as members of House Ishara from this day forth," Daphne related."It was very touching-simple and to the point."

"That's Cael for you, simple and straight to thecultural jugular," Katrin a shook her head.~w~w~w~w~.~N~d~V~e~l~w~o~@~M.co~M~

"He did nothing wrong," Buffy protested. I wasgetting dressed.

"Buffy, I have wanted to initiate you into HouseEpona for years. Family politics have prevented that. Sixty years after the First Initiative, fewer than a fifty 'Runners' have been brought into the Host. Mutual condemnation has kept each house in check-restrained from recruiting new blood into the Host."

"And now we have Cael," Desire e groaned.

"Who does care not one bit about socialramifications of bringing a hundred runners into one of the oldest houses of the Host," Daphne sighed.

"But, we deserve this," Buffy proclaimed.

"That, Buffy, is the point and the problem -youand others like you do deserve it," Katrina fondly regarded her 'now-Full-blooded'friend."Most of the other houses would disagree though, but they won't be able to convince Cael of this-thus begins the next quagmire of Cael's creation." It was the prejudice laid bare.

The 'Runners'knew they had very little chance of being accepted into a House. They had a long history of neglect to look back on. The few who had graduated had been virtually superhuman to be accepted. Then I came along. Suddenly, for some of the best and brightest of the 'Runners'there was a serious likelihood they could be brought into a highly prestigious House, because its leader was a nutjob.

This morning, when the meeting adjourned, House Ishara had been a tiny blip on the Council's radars. Those women so disregarded the 'Runners'they hadn't even thought about my reaction to the dilemma of the miniscule size of my house, despite the answer being all around them (though safely contained upstairs in their minds).

House Ishara with a lone member, a male at that, wasn't a threat-not really. The specter that Katrina foresaw was something different. She saw a House Ishara with a thousand members, and all hardened, dedicated and trained Amazons-formerly 'Runners'. Loyal to me? No. Loyal to House Ishara? To their dying breaths.

The reasoning for this was Amazon-simple. They weren't fighting for, or honoring, me. They were doing it for my unborn daughters who would one day rise up to lead them. Daughters they would train to respect both Full-Bloods and Runners equally. That was the rejuvenation of our House. In the interim, they would do what I said because that was the will of their ancestors.

There were 52-now 53-existing Houses and 7-now 6-extinct ones. One house having a thousand members would be a serious headache and concern for the others. I didn't know the numbers of any of the houses. Working in Executive Services, I had the faintest inkling of overall Havenstone numbers.

They hid their secrets well so the best I could do

was between 15,000 and 40,000 souls and I was starting to think the latter number was more accurate. Having a 1000 members in House Ishara was bad. What made it worse was that half of that total number were 'Runners'. If I made Ishara the largest House, the others had few options.

They could suck it up, attempt to des troy me, or begin their own recruiting program-making the First Directive finally successful.

"Katrina, I beg two more favors from you," Ilooked at my Boss. She nodded.

"I need nine names of people who can help mescreen recruits for House Ishara," I began.

"I want them to join with Helena to work out asuitable number of prospective members as well as the ones to be initiated," I requested. "Which is the second favor-needing Helena freed up to take care of House Ishara business."

"What is in it for me?" Katrina regarded me with awitty smirk.

"I'll... I'll go visit Aya at Summer Camp," I sacrificed.Katrina blinked.

"Unexpected," she nodded."I can see you areserious about this. Done." No one who knew me would think me going to see Aya was a concession of any kind. It was still a favor for Katrina. I was getting to go because, while they had refused the

male intern, they could not refuse a House Head.

"It will take me some time to makearrangements... how do you want to be referred to now?" Katrina inquired. She meant as 'Cael Nyilas', orCael Ishara'.

"Oh -oh, cool," I gleefully rubbed my hands."BigMack Daddy-no, wait-Big Chief No-Tits-no, wait-how about..."

"Everyone look away," Buffy snarled."Ignore theblood splatter, sound of breaking bones and the screams of terror and pain." She smacked her right fi st into her left palm. Katrina arched an eyebrow.

"It is considered damaging to Cael's prestige to bepublic beaten by his 'First'," Daphne clarified.

"There is no 'First' position in the house structure,"Katrina noted.

"It's not my fault. I haven't gotten the 'Resurrectinga Dead House' guide yet," I retreated."Daphne we should be going. Buffy, keep looking promiscuous... and our House's chosen form of punishment shall be defenestration."

As Daphne and I fled, I heard Buffy say something behind me.

"What's defenestration?"

"Throwing your victim through a closed window,

preferable from a fatal height," Katrina informed her.

"Cool,"Buffy mused then we were gone.