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There was a long hiccup in the conversation. Rachel and Esmeralda had both been right, but Esmeralda had been 'more' right. For Esmeralda, it was another awakening. It was unlikely that she was in Security Services, so her 'expertise' wasn't combat.

Different from other secret societies, every Amazon was taught to think tactically. A security detail guarding a Head of House had just validated her opinion, and in front of a Head of a First House. That had to be especially satisfying.

"Where are we going, Tiger Lily?" I asked my driver. Esmeralda gave me a curious look. I shrugged.

"We are going to the Hotel Burnham," she informed me. Groan.

"You do know that the Hotel Burnham is nowhere near the town of Burnham, right?" I sighed.

"Then why do they call it the Hotel Burnham?" Rachel rebounded.

"The hotel is named after the famous Daniel Burnham, not his far less famous cousin, Telford Burnham, who founded my home village," I related the elementary school facts.

"I suppose we should have asked Esmeralda first," Pamela teased.

"Wouldn't have done any good. I'm from Yakima in Washington State. I've only been in Chicago three years," the local shrugged.

"Do we deviate to a closer location, or stay on course?" Tiger Lily requested.

Rachel, Pamela and Esmeralda were looking at me.

"Havenstone will be sending our gear and reinforcements there, so we stick with the Hotel Burnham," I decided. "Also, Tiger Lily, what's with the name?" She gave a long suffering sigh.

"My mother was adopted from the Shoshone tribe one hundred and fifty years ago, I have no worries about crocodiles, pirates and ship anchors, and I do not wish to kiss a flying boy," Tiger Lily clearly retold her constant source of teasing.

"I am named for my grandmother, who was named after her mother's ally during World War II. As far as I know, that woman never read Peter Pan, though I wish she had," she finished up. Without a doubt, an Amerindian Princess named Tiger Lily was giving me, C  l aka Cabbage-Head, and Bomophoto a run for our money in the 'cruellest names for kids' category.

(Hotel Burnham One)

"E... fuck it all if I'm calling you Esmeralda every time - might be best utilized for close contact with C  l," Pamela spoke on our final approach to the hotel. "I'll be out and about."

"We need a second team in town immediately," Rachel spoke. With her blue tooth in Federal custody, she had to get a new set of toys to communicate off the grid.

"I will not tell you how to do your job, Rachel," I was telling her how to do her job. "Why do you need extra people? I have faith in the team we have."

"Ishara, were we not a few minutes ago liberated from governmental containment by agents of the Illuminati, who most likely murdered your father and tried to steal his body," Rachel responded patiently.

"Rachel, they will not try to kill me because I am a member of the Illuminati," I said straight-faced.

"Ishara, that is a poor jest," Rachel politely scolded me.

"The jest is that he's not lying, Rachel. He is a member of the same faction that could have accidentally killed his father," Pamela spoke with chilling forcefulness.

"They didn't want my Father, the descendant of Vranus," I continued. "They wanted Ferko Nyilas, husband of Sibeal O'Shea." Oh crap... it had been so long since I'd used Mom's name. She was always Mom - Mom - Mom. "Sibeal O'Shea was the daughter of C  l O'Shea. C  l O'Shea was head of the Illuminati and the Amazon's assassinated him.

I have been warned that my Uncle wants me dead. My Aunts want me for... other things."

"What do they want?" E asked. It was the whole 'men as a true asset' problem for her.

"The whole repository of nefariousness..." Pamela started to explain, but then, "Double Word Score!" Pamela and I exclaimed excitedly then 'high-fived'.

Yes, you spiteful Cosmos, I had found my soul-mate and she was a near-octogenarian with a macabre sense of humor - who also had a telepathic ability to know my mind. E looked totally lost in the exchange.

"Yes... the whole repository of nefariousness was created to be sterile," Pamela picked up the conversation.

"Which makes the very existence of C  l here very noteworthy - virtually inexplicable," she mused.

"What have the labs at Havenstone think of this?" Rachel worried.

"I refused to go back in for any more tests," I met her gaze.

"But it could be important," E joined in.

"I will make it easy on you both - I'm a horrible person. I'm the Head of House Ishara and I elect to not put my fate in the hands of the same people who leaked my very existence to the Illuminati during the first set of tests," I stated. "Which is why I'm here in Chicago burying my Father, in case any of you missed it."

"Certainly knowing what is going on is more important than the risk of further exposure." E persisted. She got kudos for sticking to her guns.

"Esmeralda, I work for Katrina Love, Head of Executive Services," I responded. "By that I mean I have this nifty little glass table in a corner of her office.

Me stressing over my genetics isn't really important. Katrina is on the case and I haven't been out of college for two months yet. If the difference between Havenstone getting in a fight with the Illuminati and keeping the truce is my blood sample, she'll let me know," I added. "As far as Ishara is concerned, Havenstone had an information leak that got a house member killed."**www.noOElworm.com**

"Do you have other family?" E inquired hesitantly.

"Blood kin? Not in this country and certainly not anyone I could name," I sighed. "I case you are wondering, there are a grand total of three members on Ishara's roster."

"Is the rest of your family safe?" E was trying to sound upbeat.

"Safe? Of course they are not safe. They both work for Executive Services, Esmeralda. They were 'Runners' who I inducted into Ishara. They are Amazons of the Host and that means never being safe this side of the cliffs. Friday morning I presented them to our ancestors and they were welcomed as equals - as sisters to those who have the blood of Mycenaeans on their hands," I turned to look out the window.

"What was it like?" Tiger Lily inquired. "The induction."

"If you are looking for a vision of a stone hall with thousands of war-like Amazons holding me in judgment, you'll be disappointed," I recalled. "I had to create the ceremony from scratch - ash, tears and blood.

"I felt strong enough about that instinct I let Desiree slap me until I cried enough tears. With Desiree's knife, I cut myself, they cut themselves and our blood mixed," I finished.

"That is not how it is done," Rachel corrected me**www.noOElworm.com**

"No," I stopped. "It is not how you do it.

House Ishara has come back from the void that waits for all those who are dead and have no one living to recall them," I explained. "We are not the other Houses. We are both Love and Oaths and there is a lack of respect for each of those virtues in this World."**www.noVElworm.com**

"I never considered Amazons as overly romantic, but we are true to our oaths," Esmeralda was starting to bask in the openness of the exchange.

"I do not doubt the integrity of anyone in this vehicle, except for me," I gave her a weary grin. "The failure of oaths is mine. Ishara was bound by an Oath and has failed in her pledge. You are wrong about the romance and I am sure you have misunderstood my definition. I live for the day when no sons are sent to the cliffs as newborns - Love, Esmeralda. Love."

The hush pressed upon us until Tiger Lily pulled up in front of the Hotel Burnham. Rachel, E, Charlotte (from the second GL) and I went in. I wave the others back as I went to the desk. Rachel and Charlotte had grey duffel bags with 'stuff' inside. E had my minimal kit.

"C  l Nyilas with Havenstone," I introduced myself. Yes, I was in 'prison' gear.

"Director Nyilas... welcome to the Burnham," he recovered quickly. "Which rooms do you wish to use?" Thank you, Helena, no I'm a damn Director. He twisted the screen so I could see the list. Eleven doubles and a Lakeview Executive Suite with two adjoining Deluxe Suites.

"We'll use those," I indicated the Executive/Deluxe/Deluxe.

"Very good, Sir," he nodded. "Will you be ordering room service? I'm afraid the Atwood restaurant has closed for the evening."**www.NoVElworm.com**

"Sounds like a plan," I looked at his name tag. "Steve, or do you prefer Mr. McCabe?"

"Steve will do fine, Director..." Steve started.

"I will make it easy on you Steve," I sighed. "Call me C  l. All this Director crap is for the benefit of people I barely know. I am here, in my hometown, to bury my Father - who was murdered yesterday." Steve paled. "The FBI gave me these spiffy duds. If any law enforcement shows up asking for me, give me a ring first."

"Nyilas... from Burnham? I read about that," Steve seemed bemused. "The day shift Assistant Manager is from Burnham too." How wonderful, I thought sarcastically. Steven sensed my waning interest. "Your keycards, Sir - C  l and my sympathy for your loss."

"Steve, never miss a chance to tell your loved ones how you feel," I took the cards. "That is my biggest regret with my Dad. I didn't think about it the last time we talked."

Steve gave a final nod. I rejoined my group and headed for the elevator. The rest was a tired blur. The rest of the group showed up, including Pamela. I called Nicole to tell her the situation then called Timothy despite the late hour to make sure he was okay. Timothy informed me that two 'psycho-chicks' stopped by as a kind of 'meet and greet'.