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"He's not joking about the last part," Rachel enlightened them. "Cáel gets physically mangled on a fairly regular basis. Speaking of which, Ishara, several packages arrived for you today. We've gone through them. Most... we have no idea what they are for."

"You did get an armored long jacket and four tomahawks with a harness," she saved the best for last. My eyes lit up and I took a step toward Rachel's suite. "Ishara, please behave." Another hush.

"Can we, if we are accepted by Ishara, talk to you that way?" the normally silent one inquired.

"Sure. Try not to do it too much in public, but in general you may assume you know more about a given subject, or task, than I do," I nodded.

"Now I understand Buffy's call," senior stopped trying to leave. "She made an obtuse statement about having to save a person from herself. As long as you... promise to listen to your senior members of the House, I can do this."

"Great – done deal – can I go play with my axes now?" I looked at Rachel. She tried to look dour and disappointed but I saw that smile she tried to squash. I got another half step to my axes when Pamela yanked me back.

"Cáel – shower – take care of business," she reminded me*www.noveLW@rM.c@M*

With all this sex, how was I going to have any fun? Off to the naked girl in the shower.

"What about children?" A different 'Runner' poised.

"Unbutton a button, or two, and smile," Pamela counseled. "That should do the trick. Cáel's not complicated."

"I mean... with other men?" she clarified.

"He's not the jealous type either. Knock yourself out," Pamela filled in for me nicely. The rest of the discussion was muffled by my entry into the shower. Cameron was halfway through her shampoo. Her calf and thigh caressing my thigh told me my intrusion was just fine.

(Late Night Dancing and then Some)*www.moreLw@R.c@m*

"I'm still not sure about this," I said to Pamela as we stepped into the club. "When Rachel figures out I've slipped away, she's going to be furious."

"That's why you have your phone, my young padawan," Pamela assured me. The Latin rhythms filled the air. The Tango Club was Pamela's idea. My formal dance skills were subpar, to put it kindly.

"Padawan? I wouldn't have thunk it, Bwana," I grinned. "So, what was it like when the first talkies came out?"

"You know, you are almost funny when you try," Pamela patted my elbow.

"Really?" I played along.

"No. I was saying that out of pity for you," Pamela snickered. The cloak room attendant didn't know what to make of us. "She's my younger sister," I told the man. "I age well." I compiled his confusion by handing him my insanely heavy long coat. The weight damn near caused him to collapse against the wall. "It is my winter coat," I stated. "It is full of barometric pressure."

Pamela handed off her own frock without incident.

"You are a nervous wreck," Pamela prodded me. "That is why you are here – to unwind. If you go into tomorrow's gutter crawl as screwed up inside as you are now, you could start a war."

"Gotchya. I'll go find some women to kick my ass. That always works for me," I agreed.

The first two ladies I danced with did not kick my ass. They did politely help me polish my moves. Their 'I bet you are a quick learner' part had nothing to do with the dance floor. Life is a Big Meanie. I would have been perfectly okay with a few married/divorced dances and made my way home to a fitful night's sleep, but some chick had to run me and my partner down on the dance floor.

Rude? She not only didn't apologize, she didn't even acknowledged us being in the way at all. If she hadn't been dancing with the second hottest woman in the place, I'd have taken them to task then and there. Something about my insipid desire for a midnight three-way curtailed my anger. I mollified my partner, tossed some Spanish barbs their way and finished up.

Normally I'm this stupid and tonight was no exception to the rule. The dark haired, sultry Slavic chick took to her wicker-back chair like some sniper's perch. Her demur/bad girl Japanese companion had stepped away for some drinks. These two were definitely separate, but equal babes so a separated approach was best. My own wine glass about empty, I moved in.

Then those gateways to oblivion she called eyes registered my proximity. My inner marmoset was screaming at me to become one with the vegetation as the bird of prey's stare started skinning me alive. I registered her Japanese companion moving in with two glasses of what passed for Champagne in this place.

I was a meter away when I went 'full reverse thrusters' and began backing my ass out of there.

"What?" the sniper said in a cuttingly degrading voice. "Two women together and you assume we are lesbians?" Man; that exceeded Amazon nasty.

"Oh no," I shook my head and held my ground.

"Until you moved I thought you were a poorly dressed mannequin. Then your head swiveled and my Bitch-o-meter went off the charts," I explained. "I had just resolved to seek out some human company when you spoke and since I'm not a petulant prima donna like the person sitting before me, I chose to extend to you the common courtesy of a response."

"You are an ass, cloaked in a safe little cocoon you call life," she stood. "Does it amuse you to insult people in languages they might not understand?"

"Your ability to speak, or not speak, Spanish is not my concern. Comforting my dance partner was, so I slathered on your justly deserved vulgar descriptors." I smiled.

"What do you do for a living?" she grrred, not purred. That was a prelude to pain of some kind.

"Ugh," I sighed. "I do quality control for Jays Potato Chips. I pick out the bad chips." Remember now, I lie like a bastard with +10 skill modifier where emotional chicks are concerned.

"Are they going to miss you tomorrow when you don't show up for work?" Slavic Bad-Ass stroked my tie.

"Wow, that wasn't good gallows humor, or even a convincing threat," I scoffed. That pissed her off. Yay me!

"I want to dance," she twisted my tie, half-choking me.

"Oddly enough, I came here to get my ass kicked, so it looks like we are both going to get what we want," I rasped. That she found amusing. I seriously run into way TOO many psycho-chicks. It is like a gift – but the opposite.

I polished off my wine and as a spontaneous gesture to remind the Japanese Bad-Girl that I hadn't left her out, I tossed it to her. Having a glass in each hand promised to... she caught my glass between the other two glasses without looking. Holy Fuck!

"Try to keep up," Slavic Babe demanded. "You will fail. Try anyway."

The music burst forth and the dancing began. To make my footwork that much more difficult, Bird-of-Prey chick kept up a running banter.

"If you weren't circumcised, would you accept the procedure now?" she started. Whoa.

"Fuck no. I have plenty of ladies who would gladly castrate me. No way am I letting some people in masks hover over my privates with a blade," I replied.

"Have you ever been with a man, or a woman, who truthfully found your performance in bed at least acceptable?" I reposed.

"I don't know, or care," she mused. "I kill them all when I'm done."

Weeee...*w@w.no(v)@fwOrM.c@m*

"Man-o-man, I bet E-Harmony has a backlog for you," I whistled.

"Wait, do you do E-Harmony, or Cougar. com?" I added to the misery.

"Has anyone ever found you amusing?" she sighed, somewhat bored.

"Before, or after I took my clothes off?" I countered.

"That answers that," she yawned.

"What happens if I toss you out that window?" I motioned with my eyes to the closest portal.

"Let's try and find out," she was clearly at the end of her toying with me, but then, "Interesting."

"Thanks," I shrugged.

"Not you," she snipped.

One of the Gospels of Quentin Tarantino: Put two, or more, lethal chicks in a room and they are going to fight. For my part, things became truly fun. See, I was taller than the Slavic Nightmare so she tried to steer me in the Tango. Nope, not happening. Even when she applied the Vulcan Death Pinkie Hold, I refused to surrender despite my searing agony.

The dance ended and I shook myself free. I'm sure only the surprise of the situation allowed me to make a clean break.

"Who are you?" Slavic Pain Pandora glared at me.

"None of your Goddamn business, Princess," I sneered*(w)Ww.n-velw@rM.C@M*

Was I picking a fight? Hell yeah, I was picking a fight. I certainly hadn't gotten any enjoyment out of that place so I was going for option two – getting my ass kicked. I didn't see Pamela. That was okay. I knew she'd mapped out every stupid move I could make and went for the least complicated. I prefer my pain served up by a short order cook, not a five star restaurant.

I got my coat out and tipped the poor guy a \$20 for the back pain he'd be feeling tomorrow. I slipped it on then loosened my tomahawks. Last Place for Mother of the Year and her Japanese tagalong were right behind me. I felt my cosmic connection with my supernatural guardian and... I went straight into the street because I was too pissed to think of anything else.

Pain and Pain's Best Friend had followed me to the curb when Pamela spoke. She was behind them, leaning against the building.

"Let's call it a night, shall we?" she said with an amused lilt. Those two spun around. Apparently I didn't warrant monitoring.

"I don't know you," the Slavic Menace regarded Pamela, "and I think I should."

"You don't know me and it is better that way," Pamela smiled back, "for both of us."

"I am Selena and my companion is Miyako," Selena made introductions.