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"What did you do wrong?" Marsha inquired.

"Buffy?" I passed the buck.

"Three possible choices: C  l elevates every sexual encounter he is in to unforeseen levels making him indispensable to any happy home.

I have a feud with the head of Havenstone HQ's SD - Elsa, and Cael chose me over her.

And thirdly, he physically molested Elsa to orgasm," Buffy finished.

"Ugh..." I sighed. "Wasn't sure you knew about the last one."

"I own you," Buffy scolded me. "Get used to it."

The psycho-bitches all chuckled. I was back as undisputed Head of House Ishara - because a bitch owned me. Yay democracy. I could give a futile stab at trying to convince Odette not to spill every detail of my sex life to Buffy. That would be unfair. Buffy scared me and I had an actual chance of not dying at her hands. Odette would be p  t  .

Making my way back to Aunt Stella was a relief. She was back to being a Nyilas; stoic, thoughtful and level-headed.

"C  l, what is going on here?" she took me by the forearm while being quietly insistent.

"Dad was murdered and I'm going to kill the people responsible," I replied. "V  r a v  r - blood for blood," I translated.

"Can you possibly win this feud?" she asked next.

"See those women I've been hanging out with?" I started to explain.

"Do you mean that street gang who look like they are ready to start a fight, your mother's ten sisters, or those... three... I can only see two now... odder than the rest of the women?" Stella cut to the heart of the matter.

"Ten!" I gulped.

"Yes. They all have come by and talked with me; very polite. They remind me of octopi - looking somewhat harmless with a fiendish intellect cleverly concealed behind their eyes," Stella informed me. Oh yeah, crab-fisher-folk and octopi didn't get along.

"They are also all soaked in evil," I cautioned my last living kin, "just so we are clear."

"Of course," she nodded. "That have that off-killer, squirrely look your mother always had."

"Some people think she might not be dead," I sighed.

"She's not," Stella patted my hand.

"Your father once told me that if he was ever killed, I was to take you in until your mother showed back up for you. That is all he ever said on the matter. I was not sure why she pretended to die - until today when I met the rest of the family - the ones not killed in that freak Arctic Sperm Whale Hunting accident."

I felt like Uncle Lumpy had rammed his monster fist through my midsection and ripped out my spine. I couldn't think of why my mother would... ah shit. My dad, who had been a giant in my life, rose to ranks of the titans in my love and respect. He earned that status in that moment for not hating me with all his heart for most of my life. I had driven Mom away*w(w)w.n(ov)E  Wol(r)  .com*

Not an ounce of resentment, or anger, had ever shone through. As I grew up, all that addictive crap that Granddad had woven into my genetics must have started to kick in. I may have looked different, but I had his eyes. I could only imagine what that conversation between Mom and Dad must have been like when she decided she had to go.

They had shared nine years of bliss. Before my grandfather's madness overtook her once more, she had to leave me, thus my father. Dad couldn't have created the cover story, but the daughter of C  l O'Shea would have done it effortlessly. My father sat there, month after month, paying off a debt he'd never earned so that when they came looking it would all make sense.

When someone jumps in front of a bullet for you, you know they've given up everything for you. My father had bled inside for fifteen years, gone down swinging with a floor lamp in his hands, for a wife he would never see again - not even knowing if she was alive, or dead - and a son who didn't know what price his father was paying for his son's safety. I patted Aunt Stella's hand and wandered past the faceless well-wishers.

[Akkadian] "Vengeance is my fire that consumes my enemies. Let those we tread in my dust eat their ashes."

"What was that?" Javiera caught me off guard. Nicole and Street were keeping up with her.

"It is Assyrian," was my abrupt answer.

"What does it mean?" Street pressed.

"It means I hate, Special Agent of the FBI Street Moslin," I glared through teary-eyes. "I hate that certain people breathe. I hate that they block the sunlight from touching the ground. I hate that people take other people's lives for granted - you included, Butt-Monkey."

"What does that mean?" he tensed up and leaned in.

"It means I'm not stupid. It also means I can have the life's diary of any person I can think of on my tiny little desk in a week's time," I glared right back*W(w)w.n(ov)E  Wol(r)  .com*

"Are you threatening me?" he sneered.

"Mr. Nyilas did no such thing," Nicole defended me.

"Perhaps Mr. Nyilas can clarify what he did mean," Javiera studied me. Like Nicole, she knew something had twisted the proverbial life into my already wounded heart.

"I meant that the rest of you assume civility as a right," I reigned in my fractured emotions.

"Hunting wasn't always going where you pleased, tracking down a helpless prey, slaughtering it and taking that trophy," I continued. "Hunters have forgotten that once there were bears, wolves, lions and other hunters who took exception to such liberties. They have forgotten that it was often more efficient for the other predators to track him back to his lair and take him as he walked out of his cave, still thinking the world obeyed his rules. People need to really examine who we are and what are true role in life is.

What we are and what we choose to be is part of the philosophical war in the human psyche. Between the hunter, who roams, and the farmer, who is tied to one place. The invader, who seizes what he wishes, and the supplicant, who surrenders up part to save the rest. And, the solitary man, free from control yet unsafe, and the tribesman, controlled yet dwelling in shared security. We are torn," I finished.

"Nice obfuscated flourish to cover your ass," Street mocked me. Javiera yanked him around so that he was facing her.

"What is your problem?" Javiera hissed*w(w)w.n(ov)E  Wol(r)  .com*

"He is guilty as sin and behaving like some 1920's Mafioso," Street reposed. "He doesn't scare me." I laughed at that.

"Whoa," I chuckled. It was painful, but I did it.

"You keep sliding down the old smart-o-meter, don't ya, Street?" I shook my head. "You have knuckle-dragged your way right out of the game. I am now asking you to leave my father's wake. I'll give you a minute then I'm sending in the 'little girls' squad to show you the door."

"I am here to protect a Federal Attorney," Street glared.

"She can leave, or stay - her choice," I offered. "Javiera has been firm yet polite. She's certainly not been insulting to me and my guests."

"Special Agent Milson, please leave. Your official services are neither required, beneficial nor desired," Javiera dismissed the guy. Street looked angrily offended then left.

"So, which penitentiary are you sending me to?" I asked Javiera. Nicole arched an eyebrow.

"It depends on where I think my promotion will take me," she mused.

"Have I missed something?" Nicole inquired.

"Well, we can't have intercourse while I have him under investigation and I am going to arrest, indict, and convict him," Javiera answered.

"Not on my watch," Pamela shifted seamlessly through the crowd. "I take from the description that you are the new number one watchdog. I'm not glad to meet you. Stop trying to be C  l's match. You don't know the kind of contest you are getting into."

"Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition," Javiera countered.

"Did you use a man to make a feminist argument?" I regarded Javiera. "Timothy Leary," I added for Pamela's benefit.

"I prefer George Carlin," Pamela noted. "He - correctly - thought everyone was incompetent."

"You must be C  l's white shadow I keep hearing about," Javiera extended her hand.

"C  l," Pamela turned to me, not shaking the proffered appendage, "do I come across as a lesbian? I am curious because women are always asking for my name and trying to touch me."

"I wouldn't know," I sighed. "I've never looked at you as a sexual being. Normally, you so freak me out my balls crawl up inside my body and I start looking for the closest exit."

Total lie. Pamela felt more like family to me than Aunt Stella. Certainly more than my 'TEN' O'Shea aunts and Lumpy... if he was still bumping around.

"I've seen the size of your ginormous nut sack, C  l," Pamela chortled. "Said retraction is physically impossible." Seeing Nicole and Javiera's confusion. "We shower together (sigh). We have communal showers at Havenstone."

"That's rather egalitarian," Javiera commented snidely*w(w)w.n(ov)E  Wol(r)  .com*

"What? Havenstone is going to build a shower complex for the grand total of three men that still work there?" Pamela engaged her. "I don't think so. C  l, as fun as this distraction has been, I need you to do something for me. I want you to meet a friend."

"You don't have any friends," I reposed. "Except for me and I am hardly honored by the distinction." Again, total lie. Pamela was one of the three people in my life I considered to be a true friend. Timothy, my rock-solid, hard-working gay tattoo artist roommate, Odette, my passionate, young post-high school girl looking for more in life, and Pamela - my soul mate, if Ishara would let me have a soul.