Lycan Pleasure / 925

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"Do I want to know what has happened to me?" I groaned. I reached for a boob because if it was a toxin-induced delusion, what was the worst that can happen?

"Careful, I haven't been with a male in 1800 years, my Preciously Odd Amazon," she laughed.

"I like challenges," I bantered with my mental conjuration. Definitely mind-reading.

"I am not the creation of your fevered dreams, my Cáel," she flicked my nose. "I have pushed you near death to place a curse on the Host. As a side benefit, I am able to have metaphysical contact with you."

"To date you, I have to have a near-death experience? I don't know if I should admire 1800 years of male common sense, or that last guy who risked everything for one night with you," I shrugged.

"So much compassion... and so little fear," she petted my scalp.

"Since you clearly aren't getting into the name game and I am more than happy to doubt everything I've experienced in the past five minutes," I smiled at her, "what am I supposed to do?"

"You know," she smiled back.

"No, I don't," I insisted. "Something extra-concise that doesn't come from a fortune cookie." $\mathbf{w} \mathbf{w}$ w.ñ $\mathbf{o} \mathbf{v}$ él $\mathbf{w}$ oR $\mathbf{m}$ . $\mathbf{c} \odot \mathbf{m}$ 

"I've always wanted to eat a fortune cookie," she looked away.

"I'll start walking around with one in my pocket so next time you nearly kill me, you can indulge," I offered.

"Save my people, Cáel," she placed her hand over my eyes. "Save their spirits."

"A bit of help would be nice," I pressed forward blindly.

"I've given you help," she whispered on my lips. Since I didn't consider that to be helpful, I opted to give a gentle twist to her nipple.www.NôVé⊕w∂Ř...c(∘)M

Either something was really going on inside my head, acting as a conduit between me and

something else, or I was experiencing a psychotic break with reality. If it was the former, I was a Class-A idiot. If it was the latter, it was me being me, rolling the dice with the pretty girl. "I wanted you to be brave," she laughed melodically, the echo of every woman I'd ever given a

on my behalf." Sensing my dissatisfaction, she added "I cannot give you 'the' truth, so I will give you 'a' truth. Nothing is set in the future while much is foreseen." "As long as you know I've disappointed every women I've ever been with," I reminded her, my eyes

reason to sing out with joy, "yet now I find myself wishing you would expend a tiny bit more caution

still shielded and her lips tantalizingly close to mine.

"Oh, you like to think you are selfish, Cáel Nyilas of Vranus and Ishara, but you justifiably take pride in the sensuality you bring to so many women's lives," she pointed out.

"Many lovers are far more truthful yet far less giving," she said.

"Pain heals while an education is forever," I countered. Another joyous note.

No one did anything - no reaction, or assistance, so it fell to me to save myself.

"It is time for you to wake up, my Cáel," she sighed. "Go now." Wakefulness required a return to the putrid qualities of my current surroundings. I forced myself to my knees.

"What... what was that?" Troika nearly retched at the stench. Katrina stood, visibly pale and shaken.

"Hayden?" Katrina requested of her leader.

"Cáel, what have you done?" Hayden snapped. She also stood up so she could look down at me from her desk. I mumbled something. Even I wasn't sure what I was trying to say. The last touch of a lady far chillier than the one in Chicago caressed me and I knew the gist of what had happened. Why was I the one suffering at the hands of my Goddess?

I was the easiest to get at because I was already devoted to her, her chosen children and I was

Patron and Head of the house dedicated to her honor. The forecasted ass-kicking wasn't aimed at me, though. I was the necromantic shotgun barrel into this reality. Too many bitches had spat on me, her hand-picked patsy and punching bag, and her temper was beyond sending some vague signs and portents to the Host. I didn't know the particulars of this curse, yet I didn't doubt for a second it was both fiendishly evil

thoroughly drenched in my vomit was already decaying into filth, soon passing into nothingness. I tried speaking again. "Having exhibited no faith in me, you have committed apostasy to Ishara," issued the words from my

and well-deserved. My jacket, shirt and tie were goners. The lower part of my tie which had been

I fumbled and stumbled to Hayden's door, weakly opened one of the two double doors and left. The confrontation I had departed outside remained in force - Naomi and detail versus Rachel and Buffy.

Helena, and a former 'Runner' named Madori who worked at Havenstone HQ with us, had not been sent up.

"I am going home," I rasped. With no orders to keep me there, Naomi let me pass. Rachel and Buffy closed in.

"Boss, you smell like..." Buffy searched for words.

acid-scared throat. "You are condemned to live with that choice. Good night."

of horrible smell."

"A red tide," Rachel said. "All those dead fish floating on the water for days and days - it is that level

understanding you have given me in this trying time." "I am a member of the Host, Ishara. I would do no less for Hayden herself... but you are welcome,"

"Rachel," I stated as we got on the elevator, "thank you for the loyalty, intelligence and

"How about we postpone our date night until I've cleared up a few things with the Council and Ishara?" I suggested. Rachel nodded. I briefly talked to Helena over the phone, went with Buffy to the basement where she checked out a car then sat back as she drove me home. I must have

town, 'just above the poverty line' apartment was definitely home now. I would suspect that business travel was like a clothes dryer - you mystically pulled out less clothes than you put in. I was coming back with twice the amount of luggage I had departed with Odette would be home in an hour, so it was me and Timothy for a bit.

Home was home now. There was a house with my name on it now, but it wasn't my hearth; this mid-

"Hey Bro," Timothy greeted me. He set down one of those fanciful Asian vegetable mish-mashes that he liked from time to time, stood up and gave me a hug. "How bad was it?"

highlight of the trip," I mumbled.

Saturday morning.

looked like a disaster because Buffy didn't give me an ounce of grief.

she sighed.

"Let's just say I finished it up this evening by vomiting all over the Big Boss's rug, and that was the

"That would explain your bare-chested look," Timothy snorted. I had been so out of it, I had spaced on the need to put on clothes like a normal human being. "Something to eat?"

"Nah, my insides were spewed forth, so I'm foregoing food for a while," I mumbled. That reminded

me. I went to the bathroom and gargled repeatedly with mouthwash. I could still smell the aromatic

abomination, but at least I couldn't taste it anymore. "Do we want to go down the lists of women who have called you?" Timothy was trying to cheer me

up. I wanted to be cheered up so I told him to go right ahead. Brooke and Libra - an immediate call

back with the briefest of details - no weekend date for Brooke and I yet. Jason, the bar-back I had met chasing down Katy Lee, had called. I dialed his number and we had a short chat. He and his buddies were coming along well, I was invited back any time, and the Latin Kings had gotten the message because they hadn't been around since. I requested he and his friends keep

those LK's were dead and the remainder scattered, I wasn't worried about Jason. Nikita... I called and she 'agreed' to come over. I was too fatigued to fight her off. Ulyssa called and I had to inform her that this weekend didn't look good for me - funeral and all. I initiated contact with Nicole. She was still wrapping up some of my business in Chicago and would be gone until

their eyes open just in case and I'd be around for another pick-up game soon enough. Since most of

Timothy crashed for the evening, I was nibbling on some of his fodder and the doorbell rang. A check at the peephole revealed Nikita. She came in, hugged and I could sense something was definitely wrong. We were back to first date material. We hadn't been separated long enough... crap. I gave us space on the sofa.

"What do you mean?" Nikita tried to scoot down the sofa to me. I held her off with one hand.

"That was incredibly fast," I groaned. "What tipped them off?"

"I am hardly one to uphold honesty in a relationship, but I normally consider it a selfish endeavor and not done for the benefit of a third, unrelated party," I sadly met her eyes.

"You are not a very good liar," I pointed out. "You are wearing a wire of some kind?" "Have you done something wrong?" Nikita evaded.

"Cáel, what do you...?" Nikita stammered. (w/w/w). No(v)éI(w) or m. c(o) m

"My loss," I moped. "All I wanted was the semblance of a normal life and now that's gone down the tubes."

politely show Nikita the door and be with someone who did care about me. We made slow, passionate love. I gave her orgasms and giggles with the added benefit I felt more human when we finally fell asleep. (Friday)

"Nikita, what do you want to drink?" I restarted the whole fiasco. Drinks were served and we kept to

our separate ends of the sofa talking about mindless shit until Odette showed up. Then I could

The morning started out with the same routine. I pulled up various routes for my bike ride into work,

chose none of them and off I went in the pre-dawn dark blue/grey sky. I came within 20 seconds of my best time, so I was feeling pretty positive about what lay ahead. Security was a full 180 from their normally sour selves. $\mathbf{w} \mathbf{w} \mathbf{W} . \tilde{\mathbf{n}} (\circ) \mathbf{v} e \mathbf{L} (\otimes) \mathbf{R} (\otimes) . com$