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Less I forget I was still on the list of approved prey animals the door opened on the first floor and Brielle, her buddy, and Oneida stepped onboard.

I had no clue where Wieslawa was supposed to go. I guessed she was along for the ride.

"Good morning, C  el," Brielle greeted me before licking my left nipple. Wieslawa was confused - could she have been licking me, and getting licked by me, half an hour ago?

"What are you doing?" Oneida squawked.

"Yum; someone has been to the gun range this morning," Brielle smiled at me. "Oh, and... sorry about your paternal person," she hastily added.

"They are called Fathers," I sighed. To defuse Oneida, I slipped a hand to the small over her back then wiggled three fingers between the top of her skirt and panties.

It was 'dangerous' enough to give her pause before going after the other women.*wWw.nov  elw  r.com*

"It is good to see your new, exalted status hasn't gone to your head, C  el Ishara," Brielle looked very naughty.

"Sisters first, last and always," I responded. "I'm not going to take credit for my ancestors being kick ass."

"They must have been very courageous women," Wieslawa stated. I snorted.

"Wieslawa, my Ishara lineage goes down the male side of the family, so those lethal ancestors were all male," I chided her.

"When the Dacian-Thracians moved into the region, they joined with those tribes fighting the Celts. Later, they joined with the Dacian kings and fought against the Romans. Germans, Avars, Bulgars and finally the Magyars came their way - my ancestors impressed them all enough to be accepted.

I know this because my Father's name was Nylas, which means Archer in the Magyar tongue. We were fighters under the Arpad dynasty the same way we had gone to war with our Amazon War leaders thousands of years earlier. I also know this because of my bloodline - if the female folk had been raped, the bloodline would have perished," I explained.

"Where exactly was your family from?" Wieslawa inquired.

"My grandfather said we Nylas' were from Sz  kelys Lands in Northern Romania," I replied. "My great-grandfather grew up under the Romanian King, hated it and died fighting as a Hungarian soldier against the Soviets in World War II," I continued.

"That is why my great-grandmother took her children and came to America. They had lost their homeland in her opinion. Dad said she was bitter until the day she died," I sighed over my forerunners intransience. "She even wanted to be buried at her home town of Sz  szr  gen," I let them know. "That never happened."

The elevator door opened, I waved good-bye to friends new and old then raced to Katrina's bathroom. Katrina was at her desk, working away.

"C  el," Katrina acknowledged my passage with a wave of her hand. "Hayden and I have been examining a list of possible..."

"That boat has sailed, Katrina," I cut her off. "I'll take care of my business without Hayden's help, thank you very much. I know you tried to warn her. I should have known there was no use dealing with the Council in any way, shape, or form. There isn't." I paused. "Tell your allies that there will be many in House Ishara and Warrior-Fathers too."

"Aren't you worried in the least?" Katrina requested.

"We both know that some of these bitches want to face their end like the lead characters in a Wagnerian opera. All we can do is remind them they are traitors to their Race, not patriots to some modern day concoction of a cult of gender blood purity," I stated, "as we work to save our people."

"Those 'Old Guard' broads have forgotten what an Amazon is supposed to be," I explained.*wWw.N  v  elw  r.com*

"And a man is going to show us the way?" Katrina studied me with emotionless intent.

"Yes," I muttered. "A man who prefers love over hate and counts his worth by the lives he saves, not the one's he takes."

"Do you ever fear this 'softness' will weaken your masculinity?" Katrina mused. That hurt - not because of her words, which could be true for any man. It hurt because the bastion against such thinking had just died.

"My only fear is that I won't live up to my father's example," I responded.

"Not only as a man and a father in my time, but as a human being," I delved into the wounded portion of my soul. "He never went to college, served in the military, or even got into a fight until that last minute of his life. He covered for co-workers with family issues, never failed to answer a call out to work in inclement weather, and did all that normal boring shit few here even understand.

He let me be weak and let me be strong. His greatest lesson was that no matter where my life led, I had to take responsibility for it. The strong ask for help. The weak ask for someone to do the task for them. Love is not a word. Love is the star you chart your life by. The worst weakness is letting fear stop you from pursuing what you want.

That is what I have to measure up to," I finished. In the interim, several of the new hires showed up and were observing the spiel.

"I would think he would be happy if you measured up to what you wanted out of life," Katrina said.

"I aim to do both," I grinned. I went to the bathroom and quickly changed into my work attire. The meeting started on time with the additional of a gnat-bite - Dora was two minutes late. At the time, nothing seemed out of sorts to me. It was a day on the job with Rosette.

Around 3:30 pm, Pamela stopped our knife training (her with her wand and me with my weighted, wooden blade). She went to the corner of the room, ran her finger along the central point and drew back a finger with dust on it. She raised the finger so I could clearly see it.

"It's dust?" I shrugged.*www.N  v  elw  r.com*

"Normally they do a much better job," Pamela noted and back to training we went.

The nightmare became real with one phrase in common usage: 'I'll get to it when I can', one Runner told Desiree when Desiree gave her a task. One of the most fascinating things in my book about Havenstone was that it hummed along like a well-oiled, organic machine. Tasks were completed, back-ups were always on call, and promptness wasn't a virtue - I was the absolutely expected.

"What did you say?" Desiree asked for confirmation.

"I said I'll get right on it," the woman sighed. I caught the look in Desiree's eyes. Something was wrong, but she couldn't put a name to it. Oaths and obligations - the lubricant for patently lethal Amazon society.

Those words tossed out without too much consideration were now fraying around the edges. This wasn't the Plague, boils, lesions, leprosy, rickets, or the Home Loan bubble bursting. Those you could fight. How did you counter the devaluation of someone's word? Ishara's curse was crawling toward a very bad end unless I did something, but what?

Personal respect would remain. Hierarchy? Amazons would begin to question why they were prioritizing their lives around someone they didn't know, or knew and didn't like. We weren't at that final destination, yet it was coming, and best of all, every woman in the company had a weapon, or quick access to one.

A phone call grabbed me before I went in for the 'end of day' meeting. It was Brooke.

"Christopher C  el-umbos," I murmured. "Economy Class Oriental tours. How may I help you?" Laughter ... and more than Brooke's.

"Libra and I were getting ready to head out to the Hamptons and wanted to give you one last chance to come along," Brooke pleaded. An impressive dicking indeed.

Thousands of reasons not to go - safety, responsibility, risk for other...

"Sure, I'd love to come along. Can you pick me up at Havenstone at 6:10 pm? We'll make a quick run to my place to pick up some stuff and then head out, unless that's too late?" I offered.

"See you then, C  el," Brooke purred.

"See you," Libra called out as well. It was a loathsome indicator of how out of control my life was ... that me, a working class kid, was going on a romp with two rich, high society girls to some mansion for a weekend of hedonistic fun... because that was more 'normal' than my week had been. I entered the meeting, took my teasing and made for the gym.

This hour was devoted to a hardcore workout and nothing but. Rapid repetitions, quick shifts, rolling through the muscle groups. Even a few of the dedicated lifters gave me appreciative looks. I didn't have the time today. I hit the showers and made the doors before I hit a snag. Security held me up yet again. They seemed nervous, so I asked and got a bottled water and made some jokes.*wWw.n  v  elw  r.com*

These ladies were going to be my allies, damn it, before I was done. Troika caught up with me a minute later. She extended a handful of round, brownish-yellow balls in a necklace. Each ball had a symbol inscribed on it.

"We received this and a message this morning," she snapped. "We have decided to reject it."

"It is horse-hoof," Pamela whispered in my ear. The gears went spinning. There was one person I knew who would send me keratin scrimshaw jewelry. Those nasty bitches were piling on the stupid. I looked it over - it was old, maybe going as far back as Timur aka Tamerlane to the English-speaking world. The 'cord' was made of hair - probably horse tail hair.

I had no reciprocal gift to offer; absolutely nothing this valuable. But wait, I did! Somewhere there was a Havenstone bureau, department, or office that hung on to the artifacts ALL the Houses had accumulated over the passage of years. Some of that shit was mine - Ishara's. Our house had expired before the colonies became states.