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"Put the stun gun on the table then back up nice and slow," I eye-balled the shocked man.

I was pretty sure that was the moment Brennan wet himself. No one said a thing. The guard did as I requested, then backed away. At three meters, I dropped out the magazine then put it on the table. Next, I removed the chambered round from the pistol and put them both on the table.

"Mr. Sulkanen, you don't know me so I'm cutting you some slack right now," I sighed.

"Dad, his father was murdered Monday night in a gunfight," Hana interrupted. "Pointing a gun at him probably wasn't the best course of action."*www.Novelworm.Com*

"So it appears," Jormo glared at me.

"G - get your gun back, you idiot," Brennan squawked at the guard.

I slid the stun gun to Hana then reloaded the pistol before handing it back to the guy, grip first.

"Keep your distance to two meters, or more, unless you have a partner ... and whoever taught you to keep the safety engaged is a moron. Guns aren't toys, so don't treat it like one," I told him. The guy took his gun back.

"You served?" he muttered to me. Me? In the military... I guess I now qualified.

"Nah, I work with a bunch of girls at the Customer Complaint desk at a major telemarketing firm. After a few weeks on the job, you learn to get squirrely when you see people coming into the office with trench coats in this early summer heat," I said. So much implied with no real information.

"Oh God," Hana snorted in amusement. "You really do that job thing all the time," she giggled, "don't you?"

"At Havenstone, my sadistic task-mistresses often require me to think on my feet, so I've learned to share the love at work and abroad," I nodded.

"What?" Jormo scowled.

"Cáel Nyilas is on the Board of Directors at Havenstone, as well as an intern for their Executive Services division," Hana stated. "He is learning about the corporation from the bottom up."

"Bullshit," Brennan snapped.

"Can you prove this, Mr. Nyilas?" Jormo challenged me.

"Normally your recognition would mean nadda to me, but Hana has gone out of her way to be nice to my friends," I agreed. "Who do you want me to call that you will believe?"

"I don't actually know anyone at Havenstone Commercial," he admitted.

"Wait!" I had a brainstorm. "Call Javiera Castello. She'll verify who I am and she's pretty much as 'an unimpeachable source' as I'm likely to get."

"Who is she?" Hana pulled out her phone.

"She's an United States Attorney for the District Court of the Northern District of Illinois," I babbled.

"Are you sure we can reach her on the weekend?" Hana was already networking. She wasn't a lawyer - she was a power player, if a small one.

"Tell her you think Cáel Nyilas is involved with some crime, and she'll be in touch ASAP," I assured her.

The call went in to her team of corporate lawyers and the countdown began. Brennan decided it was time to migrate away from the danger, so he and his buddies decided to take the yacht out after changing - by way of using its crew to escape. Anima elected to remain behind. She kept expecting a reaction from me. She wasn't getting one.*www.novelworm.com*

No anger, sullenness, contempt, or pity. I'd save my anger for those a bit farther from the grave. I wasn't sullen because her victory wasn't a victory. It was a loss for both of us. I had requested that she exert some self-control in my presence and she hadn't - end of discussion. I certainly didn't pity her. Anima was evil, not merely a creature ruled by compulsions.

She had thought I was bluffing. I wasn't. Anima thought she was in an emotional endurance match and if she waited long enough, my façade would crack and she'd get her first taste of my pain. Twenty-four minutes. That was the time it took Javiera to call back.

"Yes, Ms. Castello," Hana answered, "I have Mr. Nyilas here with me right now."

"What's he done wrong... that's difficult to explain," Hana began. I heard the laughter coming from the other end. "You sound like this happens to him a good deal." Talking. "That doesn't sound promising." Talking. "I'm not a criminal legal talent, but I'll give it a shot. Theft, theft of a firearm, assault, obtuse death threats and possible possession of a stolen object." Talking.

Hana gave me her phone. At the same moment, Estere dropped down in front of one of those beautiful French doors with their southern exposure and sauntered back into the dining room. Her hastily applied clothing additions suggested she was better armed. The guard gave a startled jolt as Estere drew even with him.

"Don't worry about him," I told Estere while covering the phone with my hand. "I chambered in the first round backwards." Estere smirked. The guy tested his piece and, sure enough, a normally chambered round popped out; I had lied. The poor bastard gave me a nasty stare. Estere's look to me was pricelessly appreciative.

Ninja were all about stealth, the Black Hand was all about making use of whatever weapon was handy... and the Hashashin were all about misdirection and deception. Estere was a Mistress of M&D giving a young trainee a congratulatory nod. Would the guard search Estere for weapons? Not anymore. Now he was worried his pistol would fall apart and Hana had never returned his stun gun.

His confidence had been shattered before combat had actually begun.

"Hello, USA Castello," I spoke into the phone.

"How are you going to get out of this mess this time?" she began.

"Can't I simply be innocent?" I pleaded.

"No," Javiera asserted with authority. "Now tell me what is going on."

"For the sake of the interested parties swarming about - some with guns - I'll use pseudonyms. 'A' invited 'B' to his domicile for the weekend. 'B' invited me and 'C' to come along. 'A' had a friend, 'D' plus a cast of assorted losers."*www.novelworm.com*

'A' and 'D' also had 'E' here for the weekend. She trusted them so ended up drugged and sexually assaulted - a great deal. Video was made," Estere tapped my left upper arm and exhibited her phone suggesting to me she'd gained access to the video the group had taken of Casper. "F" showed up and decided to help myself, 'B' and 'C' get 'E', only to be outmuscled by 'G'.

'H' shows up, takes charge, and decides that myself, 'B', 'C' and 'I' (new friend) should leave while he sits on 'E' and waits for the bought-and-paid for doctor to show up. Goodbye any evidence, trot out the legion of lawyers, crucify the victim and justice dies," I related.

"What do you want me to do?" Javiera sighed. She believed me.

She also believed that I was going to seek revenge for the young lady and while she had to publically chastise me and privately urge me to stop, she knew what motivated me.

"The caller wanted some confirmation that I'm a Big Wheel at Havenstone along with being an intern," I stated. "Personally I could care less, but 'E's fate is in jeopardy."

I handed the phone to the guard after motioning toward Jormo. A few seconds later, he had his own little chat with Javiera. I had a feeling it was rather heated. Was I who Hana claimed I was? Yes. Was I a criminal? No comment on ongoing investigations.

"Is he dangerous?"

I imagine she said "What do you consider dangerous?" because Jormo wasn't pleased. After a pause, the conversation from Javiera's side picked back up.

"What do you mean, 'have I crossed him'? You are a part of the Federal law enforcement process. You are paid to handle those things. Now answer me," Jormo simmered.

I imagine it boiled down to 'yes, I was a dangerous human being' and 'no, I wasn't a homicidal maniac' which didn't help him much. That concluded Javiera's participation in events.

"Do you think you can inconvenience me, young man?" he shot his steely gaze my way.

"Mr. Sulkanen, there are precisely two things keeping me away from you; basic civility," I enlightened him, "and Hana."*www.novelworm.com*

"I have discovered in a few short months that there is nothing as precious a resource as nice people. The world is overwhelmed with assholes with a highly overestimated sense of their worth in the greater scheme of things. I do not hate you, or like you. You do not register on my interpersonal radar," I said.

"You think you've learned some harsh life lessons, Mr. Nyilas? You don't know anything," Jormo met me anger for anger. Hana, in her short time, had gained a far better picture of me.

"Cáel, he is my father," Hana called to me. "You know about paternal respect, don't you?" That was a good shot on her part; painful, but not crippling.

"You are right, Hana. I am in your father's house and I owe him both that respect and the respect for how he treasures your person," I responded. The tension began to bleed away. Jormo wasn't an ass-hole, just driven by an iron determination to get his way. It had made him stinking rich and, I was beginning to think, outwardly ruthless.

Why weren't Brooke, Libra, Estere and I being flung out of his home after our collision? Hana. That man had the same honest and trusted affection for the step-daughter that wasn't even his offspring as my father held for me. You don't mistake it once you've witnessed it. He knew this wasn't her vagina talking. He held Hana in higher regard.

Hana saw something in me that made her stand up to both him and Brennan. I doubted that happened often. Hana made the call and her step-father honored it - end of the debate for now. That meant Hana, Estere and I went to find Casper and the others. Libra was helping the focus of such angulsh shower off. It had been accepted there would be no police rape inquiry.

Another advance, if you could call it that, had occurred in my relationship with Brooke and Libra. Their quick glances said it all- 'Get the bastards' and they expected it to get done. Like Odette and the now-deceased Latin Kings, those two didn't truly understand what that meant. In this case, most likely messy, painful deaths for those who would learn too late that a little law is a good thing - it keeps the really nasty things, like the truly lawless, at bay.

There was no mention of events passing beyond my control. Those two had no idea where their wealth came from, what homes they owned outright, versus still under mortgage, or rented, and what their actual tax rate was - as opposed to the mythical 'tax bracket' the masses dreamed the rich were in.

Casper came right at me, even slipping out of the towel Misty, and the newly arrived maid, tried to get around her. Why? I had gained an unanticipated affliction. Girls in the worst possible mindsets wanted to trust me. Oneida, Cameron, Wiesława and now Casper homed in on me being a gentle, honest and trustworthy soul - but damn it! I wasn't!

I wrapped my arms tightly around Casper, making her feel snug, safe and warm. I lied to her. I told her things were going to be okay. We'd work things out and she'd get better in no time. No one was going to get to her while her 'real' friends were around and we promised to stick around as long as it took. This was supposed to be my vacation. I need to stop making plans for the future and avoid the disappointment from having my hopes trampled by cruel reality.