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"Have you decided on a date yet?" Jormo asked as Hana moved to my side and slipped an arm around my waist.

My initial thought was 2016. Yeah, 2016... the late fall, or early winter of 2016.

"Certainly not before Christmas," Hana decided. "Maybe Valentine's Day?" she looked to me.

"How about the Spring Equinox - that is on a Friday, March 20th next year?" I suggested.

Hana hugged me. I wanted to curl up and die inside. The Man-Dog-Pig was not going to go quietly into that dark, monogamous night. Who was I kidding? This wasn't going to fly. All I had to tell Hana was that I was expecting three kids and that would be that.

Being a big proponent of putting off the romantically painful... I'd wait a bit. Maybe I'd put it in my Will; a kind of a post-dated apology letter.

"That sounds nice," Hana smiled. "Any specific location? Father married Misty in the Helsinki Cathedral." Hint, hint.

"Or we could use St. Stephen's Cathedral in Székesfehérvár," I tossed out there. Jormo and Hana were at a loss. "It is in Hungary." What I neglected to add was it was the traditional site for the coronation of Hungarian royalty for hundreds of years. "My homeland?"

"Oh," Hana allowed... then it dawned on her that I was an untrustworthy cad who loved hidden meanings.

She was going to Google that the moment we parted ways tonight.

"Try to remember this is Hana's special day," Jormo rumbled. It was good to know that two out of the three of us were sure I was getting married. Too bad, I was the odd man out.

"I will, Mr. Sulkanen. Now, I have intruded on your family time enough for now," I said. "I have to get on a plane for Europe at nine, so I need to be going."

"Where are you going?" Jormo poked into my life.

"Transylvania. Havenstone has some unfinished business there that my boss, Katrina Love, wants me to resolve. It is one of those learning-as-you-go assignments." I didn't lie.

"Do you conduct any normal business?" Jormo was clearly unsatisfied with my answer.

"Father," Hana put her foot down. "Let me see Cael to the door and then we can talk. Cael, I'll see you out." We left Jormo to mull over the vagaries of fate. We almost made the door before Misty, aka soon to be my Mother-in-Law caught us. My, my, my, she was hot. I could hear Dot Ishara mocking me. That reminded me...

"How did it go?" she asked us both.

"Cael gave me this," she showed off her necklace - a mixture of pressed gold, lapis-lazuli with an onyx cameo of a woman with a long braid - who might have been my ancestor.

"I'm unconventional," I responded to Misty's confused look. "It's been in my family for quite a while." That satisfied her. Misty and Hana shared a familial hug. Misty definitely knew that Hana was her ally in the family.^{(w)urw.(n)@VeiLwoT-M.com}

"Have you heard from Casper?" Misty looked my way while still hugging Hana.

"She is in town seeing a specialist," I was pleasantly surprised that someone had asked. "Brooke, Libra and Casper met me for lunch." She and Hana released one another.

"Cael... I... um... I love my daughter very much and I would like to think that if she was ever in trouble, there would be people like you, Libra and Brooke to look after her," Misty made her opinion known.

Misty had been perfectly aware of what a diseased parasite Brennan was, but had never been able to get Jormo to see it. She wasn't mourning the loss of her youngest stepson at all. There was no diplomatic response for that. I nodded and let Hana take me to the door.

"Cael..." Hana struggled. I kissed her. I gave her the total Cael full-body kiss experience.

Misty was still looking our way. Hana was caught off guard as I gave us a bit of sexuality to our otherwise sterile courtship.

"Whoa," Hana sighed when we finally came up for air. Her body was tightly pressed against mine and my body was certainly aroused by hers. "Mmmm... that was nice.^{www.no@EiLwOrM.COM}

"Well, we can pick up from here when we get back," I grinned, then kissed her forehead. "I gotta go." The GL-550s were in front of the townhouse, engines turning over. I gave one last wave before boarding. No one said a thing for a while. I imagine I looked pretty discombobulated.

"We need to stop by my place," I told my driver - one of Velma's team.

"Why?" Buffy inquired. I noticed we were missing Pamela again. Shit.

"I forgot a promise I made to Dot Ishara," I gave a tired smile. When I heard Dot laughing I realized I had forgotten my fortune cookies. "It won't take me five minutes."

"I'm coming with you and Wieslawa takes point," Buffy stated. She waited for me to push back.

"Do you agree?" Buffy inquired as we rolled to a stop, double-parked in front of my apartment building.

"Yeah," I nodded. "Buffy, this isn't an ego contest. If I think you are right, I'll go along with it. If I think you are wrong, I'll do my own thing."

(Endings and Departures)

We kept to the plan, although Buffy and I were all of five steps behind my Polish protector. Ten feet from the door, Wieslawa waved us to take shelter. She pressed herself against the hallway wall next to my door. I took a peek out to see what spooked her. My door was almost - almost shut. Odette wouldn't be home for three hours. Timothy would never do that.

I pulled out my phone and showed it to Buffy, who ruminated over my silent strategy, then nodded. I dialed my home number while Buffy slipped past me, STI Perfect 10 automatic pistol drawn and moved along the wall opposite my door. Wieslawa drew her FN-P90. It took four rings.

"Cael," Timothy's cool reply had an undercurrent of anger. "What's up?"

"I forgot a few things, so I'm coming by in a few minutes. I figured I could grab you and Sovann, if he's hanging out with you tonight," I lied.

"Thanks. That would be great," Timothy began clueing in that I was worried.

"Your choices are #1 Thai, #2 Egyptian, or #3 German," I made some crap up.

"Thai sounds fine," Timothy answered. I hoped and prayed that meant one hostile person inside. I flapped my hand out, getting my two Amazons' attention. I tapped my heart, then showed two fingers - two friendlies. I made a fist (new number), then showed one finger - one hostile.

Buffy got Wieslawa's attention then started a three count.

"Timothy, get down," I commanded as Buffy went from two fingers to one. One finger went into a fist, Wieslawa pushed the door open and went to a crouch, weapon at the ready looking in. Buffy went to the other side of the door, pistol aimed over Wieslawa's head.

"Don't move," Buffy said in a soft yet menacing voice.

Wieslawa slipped into my room. I ran over to her position while Buffy kept whomever she was aiming at in her sights.

"Down," Wieslawa commanded. "Clear." Buffy went in and I followed.

My Polish guardian had Anima face first on the carpet, her knee on the evil bitch's butt and her barrel pressed into her shoulder blades. I shut the door. Buffy picked up a cheap-looking 32 cal. revolver and stuck it in her jacket pocket. That must have been the weapon she used in order to keep the much larger Timothy and Sovann as hostages.

My roommate and his boyfriend were still getting over having some crazy chick threaten their lives, only to have two other crazy chicks show up to save them. A quick pat down later and they had Anima on her feet, face to face with me. The pampered, perpetually-bored torturer was gone.

The creature before me still lacked anything approaching empathy, but she was worn ragged, her clothes were filthy and personal hygiene was a thing of the past. She had become a feral, hunted human animal, now at the end of her tether.

"Cael?" Anima cast about fearfully, then, "Cael! Cael, please help me," she pleaded. "I'm so sorry about what happened to Casper. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Please call them off." Casper? Anima wasn't sorry about what she did to Casper, nor was extending an ounce of sympathy for all her so-called friends she'd led off that moral cliff, placing them into early graves^{wWw.n@véQWOrM.com}

"Them?" I asked.

"The people - those women who've killed everyone else," she related desperately. "I've learned my lesson. Please make them stop. I'm the only one left."

"Your lesson was to get a gun and hold my roommate and my friend hostage?" I stared at her.

"I couldn't find you... and I was afraid of hanging around one place for too long... I had to hide here until you came back," she babbled.^{wWw.n@véQWOrM.com}

"Anima, I'm about to leave the country on business," I studied her. "I came back here by accident. What would have done if I didn't come back?"

The answer was either she'd break down and call me on the phone, or she'd kill Timothy and Sovann and search for another angle.

"I would have kept running," she lied. She was a very good liar, except holding my friends hostage was an 'end of the road' ploy. Clearly, life had not ceased to be all about Anima.