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She would have had a better time of it if, fifteen seconds into the fight, she hadn't heard Pamela taunting the second back-up opponent behind Caprica's back»Ww.noœelW(o)r(e).cO@

"Squeal you little bitch," Pamela mocked. "Squeal, or you're going to have a miserable summer walking around with your shoulders dislocated." Next.

There was a 'thump' followed by the sound of a body going down and something metallic hitting the ground.

"You cunts need to learn to count. Most unwise," Rachel threatened someone out of sight. Pop-pop and a woman screaming in agony.

"I warned you, Dumbass," Pamela chortled over the screams of her victim. "Câel, let's put this pig to bed. I'm hankering for an early dinner." Pig meant Caprica. Caprica pivoted to keep us both in her line-of-sight. The woman who had started it all was back on the ground, rubbing her temple.

"What is your stake in this fight?" she addressed Pamela»Ww.NoœelFwOrm.cœ(m)

"You are a humiliation to our People," Pamela grew deathly quiet. "Câel's stupid action should have been dealt with by you, his superior, not by your underling. She attacked him first. End of story. That should have been your only consideration as a leader. You failed.

You compounded that failing by attacking the wronged party. That you would consider us a burden, not as guests, is an even worse insult. You know our superiors in the Host have given us over to you as charges well within your capabilities to accommodate, so why are you presenting us with something far beneath any perceptible level of hospitality?" Pamela seethed.»W@.NôœéŁw(o)Rm.côm

"It is okay, Pamela," I sighed. "They hit like ***** anyway." That meant 'casteless' which in Amazon was the status a young Amazon held before joining a caste - aka 'little girls'. Pamela laughed.

"A League of their Own," she countered.

"Amelia"," I snickered back.

"Ouch! That's hitting below the belt," Pamela pouted.

"Excuse me," Caprica simmered. "We are still fighting here."

"Are we still fighting these swine?" Pamel asked me.

"I'm willing to call it a draw. I'm kind of thirsty. You?"

"Sunshine and applesauce," Pamela nodded. "I'd kill for a cocoanut smoothie. I mean that; I'd really kill somebody for a cocoanut smoothie."

"Oh, no," Rachel groaned.

"Alright you two, cut out the shenanigans," Rachel asserted herself in a loud, authoritative voice, "grab your bags and let's find out where we are sleeping tonight - then food. Hop to it!"

"Wait!" Caprica turned on Rachel. "We are not done here."

"Yes we are," sighed Rachel.

"I'm stomping out a campfire before those two turn it into a raging inferno that burns this place to the ground. Trust me, you can't win. None of us can. The best we can hope for is that they play nice in whatever corner of the room we can herd them into and pray they stay there."

"Jawohl, mein Sturmsharführer!" Pamela and I Nazi-saluted as one. I swear, we do not rehearse these thing - the thought appears and we blab it.

For the morbidly curious, we showed our respect for Rachel by referring to her as 'Sarge' (actually Sergeant Major because we both adored her) as well as backhanding the pernicious, poisonous Amazon racism/sexism we were blatantly facing by likening it to that of the Waffen-SS's Aryan Supremist doctrine based on blasphemous pseudo-science. We exaggerated that slightly, but not by much.

Caprica could have smacked me a good one as I walked past her, but what would have been the point? Pamela was right. By continuing to fight, all Caprica could have done was prove Pamela more right. Miyako glided our way, retrieved the 2 cm metal ball she'd pinged off of my driver's forehead... the reason the driver had fallen down the second time.

"Heinamachefrau?" Pamela suggested, indicating Miyako as we yanked our duffel bags free of the jeep. Whoa... my little closet ninja in a French maid's outfit... yum, yum, yum, yum.

"Let's not press our luck anymore today, Sundance," I faux-whispered.

"Got it Butch... oh, very clever," my mentor beamed.

"You are a butch Butch in lesbian country," Pamela gasped delightedly. "I love you. You are the best grandson I've ever had." Hey, I had to get her back for 'Unforgiven'.

"I accept that with all the sincerity that was intended," I bumped her.

"Pamela?" Rachel called out.

Her eyes went from Pamela, to the whimpering woman with the two dislocated shoulder.»ww.œvê(i)Ww.r@.cœ(m)

"Damn it, Jim! I'm an unflappable pedagogue of dubious distinction, not a saw-bones," Pamela protested. I could hear DeForest Kelley rolling in his grave, or maybe that was a rockslide. We were close to the base of a mesa.

"Câel," Rachel appealed.

"Fine... fine," I groaned. To Pamela, "I'll hold the Horta down, Bones. You apply the healing goop." Despite no goop being needed, my command made limited sense.

(Grumble) "Sixty-three years at the Academy down the drain. I've been reduced from a once-promising Cadet to a Freemason," Pamela hammed it up. I finally knew Pamela's age... maybe.

I had to wonder what poor Virginia and Delilah were going through. They were ratcheting down their reflexes from near-brawlfest to hearing us cracking jokes. They were nervously snickering at the word play... that no one else seemed to get and the spookiness was getting to them.

Despite the jocularity, Pamela took to her medical task with a purpose. She gave the poor woman the hilt of her own knife to bite on while cautioning her before fixing each limb. It was a rather calm, proficient and relatively gentle procedure. Pamela and I helped the Amazon stand, Pamela relayed some useful advice to ease the pain and off we went - beat-down at the shed still unresolved.

Domiciles were either caves carved carefully (so as not to project any telltale shadows - yep, paranoia) out of the mesa walls, or horizontal mine-like tunnels in the debris slopes at the base of the mesa - for things like the vehicle shelters. The caves dwellings housed four to twelve people depending on size and had indoor access to at least one 'chimney' - vertical escape ways.

Large mine shafts housed our rides (ATV's, motorbikes and horses along with our jeeps), an armory, sewage tanks (they collected their waste products then trucked them to different dumping points), supply depots and fuel storage (the farthest away from the main encampment). We changed from long-sleeves to short- sleeves and shorts. Copious amounts of suntan lotion and bug repellent were applied as well.

Each of us was shown a 'chimney' with handholds that led to the top of the mesa if necessary, plus a secondary route, should the primary be blocked/under fire. The same went for trails to the natural springs and underwater caverns and four different paths down to the flatlands. You only walked from the water sources to the flatlands in case of an emergency.

Everything had a designation - either a native plant, or animal. My primary chimney route was 'greasewood' - rumor had it being a curative for headaches and arthritis. My main water route was 'javelina' - that was a small, local, bristly, pugnacious pig-like creature. They offered to let me bow hunt one. My exit route to the flatlands was Arizona Alligator Lizard (AAL for short - I was still grappling with there being ALLIGATORS of any stripe in the Southwest DESERT).

We were also shown the places not to go - where the pitfalls, dead-drops, tripwires and 'blast zones' were. Blast zones were pre-prepared areas with an underground sprinkler system that would douse the field with some sort of flammable substance, then ignited in such a way as to surround and choke/incinerate those boxed up in the trap. They were cunningly placed to minimize fuel expenditure while maximizing carnage.

I was liking this place better and better. I loudly suggested to Pamela that dusting off our Klan robes and taking a midnight jog through Harlem would help us recapture this quaint 'Great Outdoors' experience when we returned home. Pamela amended my proposal. We should keep the hoods while streaking, to add some extra incentive to keep up a good pace. Virginia was beginning to crack.

"So, where do you live when you are not here?" Virginia asked one of our escorts. The woman gave her best deadeye stare.

"Do you speak English?" I prodded the woman.

"Yes," she grudgingly admitted. She was definitely from South of the Border.

My money was on a Spanish/German/Italian/Amerindian mix. Chile, or Argentina... maybe.

"Come on," I teased her. "Unless you live in the Vatican City, telling Virginia your nation of origin isn't giving anything away."

"My birth-hold is in Chile," the Amazon admitted.

"Hi, I'm Virginia Maddox. I was born in Knoxville, Tennessee," Virginia persisted in her attempts at conversation. "I had a high school boyfriend. He joined the Air Force - that is the United States Air Force. Do you have a boyfriend?" The Amazon gave me a nasty look. I was forcing the hospitality due any guest. She should have given it willingly and she resented it.

If a stranger walked up to an Amazon hold, they would be interrogated. The women's concerns were the mission of the person and the likelihood of others following. If your trespass was innocuous and you were traveling with no set purpose, they let you go. Despite my language, Amazons were not psychotic, or homicidal. They killed for a reason.

They didn't want outsiders to threaten them, to take their possessions, or endanger their children. Within those guidelines, they were passable hosts and decent neighbors - reference the early Swiss. In the same way they failed to empathize with other women, they knew not every man was on today's Hit List. If you were Greek, you were fucked - man, or woman.

If they offered you the safety of their home - welcome to the Old World. They felt obliged to feed, shelter and protect you. Why? Recall, through most of their history, small groups of Amazons traveled from their homesteads to Council meetings, or to bear the summons for said meeting. By extending courtesy, they hoped to receive it.