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Hypothetically, the Council could defer any agreement formed today, on the spot, until a High Priestess was elevated. What I proposed wasn't a pipedream. Black Cloud was the last of a First House. She also had an upcoming war in which to prove herself a valuable member of the Host - repaying her sisters for her sins by slaying our enemies AND by agreeing to live and die by the High Priestess's judgment when the war was concluded

In essence, I was giving Shammuramat nothing while getting her to promise her skills, flesh, life and possibly death in battle in the cause of the Host. The fierce warrior-Queen chose Delilah, of all people, to hold her weapons while we sat down and talked. I laid out my offer. She demanded two amendments.

One: Alal would not die at the hands of the Host until Shammuramat's case was delivered before the Council and High Priestess.

Two: I would, in a timely fashion, tell her the history of "White Hair" since her passing.

Number two I agreed to as that was my right. I temporarily agreed to number one with the clear mutual understanding that I would have to confer with Krasimira and St. Marie for their approval, or rejection. Her safety and that of Alal were not in my power to guarantee. Immediately Caprica, Priya and Pamela offered up their willingness to testify concerning 'Black Cloud's' critical part in the battle to save the Amazon young, her bravery and the number of enemies slain at her hand.

St. Marie had ultimate authority. Once the Regency Council was selected, they would hold that burden. The High Priestess would inherit it eventually. Ultimate authority was real and perversely that made it more of a consensus matter. With all the blame falling on one individual, others were free to give advice without guilt.

That was Hayden's act of cowardice. Her decision on the New Directive was the only one that mattered, yet she deferred to the Council's sensibilities when brutality wielding autocracy was required. Hayden did not create the list of traitors out of any misplaced assignment of blame. She took the hit for her wrong decisions and paid for that with her life.

That part done, she did what needed to be done to push the Host forward to the place they needed to be. The traitors died because they were traitors to the goals of the Amazons - an example of pride over survival. She judged who could accept that and who couldn't. Dying while those leaders lived was selfishness on her part and a waste of her death. She had remedied that detail.

My reasons for throwing Krasimira into the mix with St. Marie was twofold. St. Marie had a war to orchestrate and it was evident our opponents had planned ahead more effectively. The Keeper of Records could fabricate the legal three-legged stool that would allow St. Marie to add Shammuramat to her arsenal while not removing an ancient High Priestess's death sentence.

The final point of contention was viewed as both a must by Black Cloud and an issue she was prepared for a long and acerbic argument over.

"I may not be accepted as Head of House Anat, but I will have a command of Amazons to lead into battle," Shammy girded her loins.

"How many do you want?" I inquired coolly.

"One hundred," she suggested as our starting point. She would have been happy with fifty.

"Done," I stunned her by doing our forearm clasp. "You may want to aim for one hundred and twenty-five."

"I want Amazons," she insisted.

"I pledge to you that every candidate will have at the very least two years' experience in Amazon ways and battle training. They will be house-less, so their primary loyalty will be to you."

"I said I wanted Amazons," Black Cloud was getting feisty.

"I would never suggest any woman I would not personally accept into House Ishara," I honestly replied. "You will find that they are Amazon where it counts - in their bravery and willingness to kill." That last bit brought a curl to her lips.

"If I do not approve of the woman, I will take her life," BC upped the ante.

"I'll make sure to put that on the Job Posting Notice," I joked. "It will probably cut down the number of volunteers from a thousand to five hundred, but that's on you." We clasped arms again, sealing our agreement. Me delivering... well, I'd figure out what to say to make St. Marie agree... hopefully.

"Enough time has passed for talk. I believe we have to an evacuation to execute," Shammy stood up and motioned for Delilah to return her weapons. "Caprica Mielikki, where can I do the most good?" Caprica was aghast. She wasn't appalled; she was awestruck. The entirety of my House's purpose rolled over her like a tsunami.

She'd been calculating how many more camp counselors she was going to lose killing Shammy. Now Shammy was offering her services and obedience and it had all occurred in a matter of minutes. She thought 'Turning weakness into strength' and 'Love more than Hate' had been amusing bywords I had put forth in my naiveté.

I had turned them into Isharan axioms right before her eyes. Caprica knew - knew - that if I wasn't there, there would have been more bloodshed. No Amazon... I could see the wheels turning inside that veteran's brain... no OTHER Amazon would have talked Shammuramat into a truce, much less a shaky alliance.

The Chief's command had grown stronger with clever application of words alone.

"Stay with me," Caprica ordered. "I'm placing you in command of two combat teams. If another attack comes, you will be my reaction force." With that, those two left as an organic 'one'. The pow-wow was over. The rest of the Amazons, save Priya, separated to complete our evacuation preparations.