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(A few hours later on the plane ride back)

"Luv, don't you have any male friends?" Delilah teased mew~~W~~W.No(v)e/worm.c.m

"Hey now," I protested tiredly, "You don't go to a Jaguar dealership and expect to drive out in a Hyundai."

"Is Virginia going to be okay?" Delilah inquired out of the blue. "You know this Javiera better than the rest of us."

In what was yet another bizarre twist, Rachel, Mona and Delilah had hugged Virginia good-bye with some emotion. Virginia and Delilah had attached themselves to Tiger Lily when the fighting broke out and stuck with her throughout the battle, firing at and being fired on by the Seven Pillars infiltrators. To the Amazons, the fight was not their guests', but they had volunteered to help anyway.

Pamela had a quick conversation with Priya. She'd agreed to keep an eye out on behalf of our FBI agent so that no jumpy Amazon mistook her for an enemy when the Americans arrived. I had a terse good-bye with Caprica – this was her disaster to deal with, victory or not.

While my horniness had alerted her command when her pickets had failed, and while my mad dash for the bridge had been pivotal in turning the Seven Pillars surprise attack into their catastrophe, I was claiming credit for none of that. I blamed the spare phone at the guard post for Caprica's success. Miyako and I had been rescued by Shammy. Without Shammy, I would have died in a futile effort.

My humility vexed Caprica... it was so non-male in her eyes. She also 'gave back' Shammuramat to me. The Assyrian Queen was far more comfortable fighting the war than fighting for the peace.

As I hugged Virginia goodbye one last time, I asked her to hurry back to New York. I had no desire to explain this insanity to someone new. She came back with a nod, her emotions stifled by her official responsibility.

"Yes, she'll be fine," I reassured Delilah. "The very presence of Priya will calm the other Amazons. Caprica is far more 'open' than we could have hoped for. She is going to make an effort to work with Virginia. At least, as long as the Federal government doesn't criminalize the situation and lets the members of the Host go."

"What happens if they keep the Amazons and the children?" Delilah felt compelled to ask.

"It would make Murrah Building in Oklahoma City look like water damage in your beachfront shack," Pamela shook her head. "There are roughly 8, 000 Amazons in North America and they won't differentiate between armed and unarmed government employees and their families."

"At what cost? You are already at war against two other forces," Delilah pointed out.

"At best, Amazons view themselves to be in a wary cease-fire with the rest of the World. The raw numbers of our enemy is rarely an issue. During the days of my active service, there were contingency plans for such an occurrence. We will move around in small groups. Amazons will rearm by overrunning rural law enforcement centers and recuperate in Canada and Mexico."

"With stockpiles of heavy weapons, we attack refineries, power stations, petrochemical storage facilities, railroad bridges and mine major waterways," Pamela continued. "We avoid major urban centers and military installations where you can react quickly and with great force. Instead, we eliminate Sheriff's departments and Highway Patrols out in the countryside.

Either the government lets us strangle their supply and energy infrastructure, or they come out after us. Out in rough terrain, in small patrols, we start picking you off. Once you are committed to the countryside, we double back and attack your air bases, destroying your warplanes and helicopters on the ground where they are vulnerable.

After six to eight months of this, the Host withdraws from the United States. We wait four or five years then attack again. We never ask for our children back, or the return of our imprisoned Amazons. No, we kill you, cut you and strike terror in your hearts until you cast them away like the toxins you have turned them into. That doesn't stop us.

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We'll keep attacking until the Council is satisfied – preferably when your government collapses. A military coup will do, as will a civil war," Pamela grinned.

"Do you think the US government appreciates that?" Delilah worried.

"I'm sure that Katrina gave Javiera all three options," I spokeWw@.n(o)vèLWσ(r)mm.COM

"They can help us and we will repay that debt with interest. They can help us and then betray us, at which point the scenario Pamela layed out goes into effect. Or they can sit back and do nothing. I'm not terribly worried. We know Javiera does not have the authority to control the commanders now involved. We also have faith she wouldn't unleash forces that would fuck us over either.

She'd rather refuse our request than risk pissing us off."

"As a male, do you really think they see you as one of them?" Miyako whispered from overhead. She'd taken the seat behind me on our private jet. I thought about the ledge of the Havenstone Commercial Investments building.

"I don't care," I reached up and stroked her hair and left ear.

"It is not my place to demand respect, or understanding," I related. "They WILL respect Ishara. Me having testicles is not an acceptable excuse, in my book, for failing to do so."

"If they don't?" her delicate fingers played with the top of my head.

"I will deal with the situation when it arises..." I huffed.

"... arises again," Pamela corrected me.

"I have no master plan, or set contingency. Knowing that most opponents will be tougher than me allows me to benefit from their underestimation. That outweighs what I suffer from me exaggerating their capabilities. See, I know I will fight no matter what, so it falls to me to fail or succeed."

"That barely made any sense whatsoever," Delilah snorted.

"It did to me," Aya piped up. "No sane person picks a fight with someone they can't beat. So, if they pick a fight with Cael, they've already made one serious miscalculation."

"What would that be?" Shammy looked our way.

"That Cael will ever give up – that he will ever admit defeat," Aya's intrepid gaze went her way.

"Dying is its own fatal confession," Shammuramat sneered.

"That is where you are wrong, Salmu Eretu..." Aya started to reply.

"Not even your youth forgives you for using that name. Call me..." Shammy said, dripping scorn.

No name came forth.

"Sérkuén?" I suggested. Shammy's furor lanced through me. "You gave that name up when you turned away from House Anat and justice." In the Amazon tongue it meant 'She who kills'. How prophetic.

"You will address me as Shammuramat," she grew positively thunderous.

"Shammuramat is dead. If we keep this up, I'm going to start calling you Shammy to your face and we both know I'll do that one too many times. Then you'll kill me and all of this was for naught," I put my own spin on fortune-telling.

"You've got that right," she sizzled.

"Fine, we shall call you... Sakuniyas," I suggested. Once more we were on the cusp of violence and once more, I had cut Shammy off at the knees and trundled her rage off to its poorly-locked cage. I swear, I could despoil a nunnery.

"Spring?" Rachel looked my way. Sakuniyas was the feminine version of the spring season. It signaled rebirth, a fresh start and shedding of the dour cloak of winter, aka Death. Know your chicks, figure out their desires and pander to them. There was the minor complication that she wanted to consummate her relationship with my Grandfather, not me, but I liked a challenge.

"Is that an acceptable compromise?" I asked, while already knowing the answer.

"Finding you useful brings me no pleasure," Shammy/Sakuniyas grumbled.

"Does it suffice?" I prodded.

"Yes... yes, damn you," the angry tone failed to reach her eyes.

"I will let people call me Sakuniyas and answer to it when it suits me. Saku in case of battle, or other necessity," was her minimalist concession.

"I'm glad that's settled," I stood up. "Speaking of necessity – Miyako," I grabbed her left upper arm in a rough, manly fashion. "I'm going to ride you like the Pony Express."

"I have no idea what that means, but I think I like it," she beamed sexual kitten joy up at me. I am so truly, deeply and pathetically in need of professional psychiatric help.

"You know," Miyako snickered as I 'dragged' her to the restroom, "if we ever get buried in a coffin together, we'll already know how to make love." The space wasn't... actually, it was exceedingly cramped for dual occupancy. I can definitely recommend that every would-be Lothario have their own personal closet ninja. They are exquisite.

Sex with Miyako was snuggly warm (emotionally), tight (still) and close quarters. Miyako had trained thoroughly in the study of body movements and posture. She could determine what a person was thinking by observing body language to the point that eye contact had become superfluous.

She had joked about the cramped confines of our sexually secluded spot yet it was this level of contact she found herself craving. In our post-coitus afterglow, she had her arms draped over my shoulders and her calves linked behind the small of my back. Her right cheek rested on my right shoulder while she made endearing, playful puffs on my bicep.

"I will resent giving you over to Jovanović," she purred.

"Who?" I retaliated by lifting her up so I could plant kisses on her jugular.

"Selena," Miyako inhaled deeply then exhaled with sensuous joy.

"I'm not happy with you leaving, much less with someone thinking you can be replaced," I grumbled.

"Is this why all those women get angry with you when they find out you are not theirs alone?" she giggled.

"I think my dishonesty was a key factor," I confessed.

"No, I mean that you make us feel so good before, during and after sex that the idea that you could have been giving us even more of your time... it makes us jealous," Miyako

murmured.~~w~~W@.NóVèLwO=rmm.(c)om

I wasn't going to argue the point that I knew way more about women and romance than she did.

Knock, knock, knock...

"Hey, Mr. Dishonest," Tiger Lily teased me through the door. "Some of us really have to go."

"We are getting dressed," I groused.