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"Outback? Nah..." he though it over. "I have the utmost confidence in your ability to scare the hell out of person who is utterly at your mercy, so what would be the point?"

"Your daughters?" Delilah redirected us to a more (?) pleasant topic. Vincent pulled out his phone, punched a few buttons then handed it to.... me?

"My oldest is Tabitha, she's 21 – she is a senior at Georgetown. Gretchen is 19 and hitch-hiking across the country and Mariyah is 18 and joining the Navy in November."

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "How many guys have you murdered?" They ranged from above average attractive to Yum-yummy!

"None. All my girls know Tae Kwon Do and have qualified with a 9mm at the FBI training course," he proudly informed me. Vincent was in the wrong crowd.

"9's?" Rachel murmured. "I find it to be underpowered in both penetration and armor defeating capabilities. Go with a 10mm, or a . 40 S&W." Poor Vince.

"But they are girls," he explained. Blink. Another pause.

"Oh, you were serious about that?" Rachel snorted.

"Vincent, welcome to 'No Man's Land'," I sighed.

"If she," he looked to the quiet Miyako, "is a ninja... then it wasn't amazons, it really is Amazons with a capital 'A'. Damn it. Are you going to try to relieve me of my firearm?"

"Nope. Javiera has vouched for you," I informed him.

"As you might guess, terms like 'your word' carry a great deal of weight in these surroundings. By walking inside Havenstone, you are agreeing to present yourself honestly. If something comes up and you feel the need to back out, let us know and we'll escort you down to the closest FBI office," I advised. "All we ask is that you don't freak out."

"If you had only one word to describe your Father, what would it be?" Vincent turned the tables on me. I hesitated. Dad... one word?

"I..." I started to apologize.

"There is nothing wrong with that, Mr. Nyilas," he approved.

"The children of single parents either use one word like 'strong', or 'brave' when the parent fulfilled only one role. If they cover both roles, one word never suffices," Vincent explained.

"My Dad was nothing like me. He only dated three women in his life and the last one he married," I said.

"He never understood my sexual predilections, but he never criticized me over them either."**wWw.nOvel@0rm.co@**

"Thankfully, I don't have that problem," Vincent shut down that venue. The discussion petered out after that. This wasn't overly odd since neither Miyako, Delilah nor I had our personal phones. I didn't want to contact Timothy and Odette until I had a better handle on my itinerary.

We parked in the garage, but had to stop by the Security Desk so that our people could get some quick basics on Special Agent Loire. It was my Wilma Draper's shift. She seemed overjoyed to see me too.

"Sister," she addressed me. Oh really now?

"When?" I inquired, already pleased with the revelation**xwWw.n0VtLwwRm.cOm**

"I was inducted two mornings ago," she kept grinning.

"Welcome, sister," we clasped arms. "Keep your eyes open and pass the word around. I'm looking for a hundred 'Runners' for a highly dangerous combat command.

It won't be my unit, the leader is an evil, sadistic monster and the odds of survival aren't great."

"This is another path to induction?" Wilma asked. The last time Wilma and I talked, she was polite yet deferential. Now she was comfortably one of the team – Team Ishara – and her words carried the same weight as any other full-blood.

"I can't promise that," I shook my head. "If the survivors succeed in the missions set before them and the Council lifts the death sentence on their leader, then yes, it does."

"I can think of twenty off the bat who will step forward," Wilma's smile grew feral.

"Have them spend every extra minute training," I cautioned. "She has threatened to kill those who fail the audition."

"Ouch... they'll still try," she nodded. "Take care, Wakko Ishara." I had people waiting on me.

I gave the 4-1-1 on Vincent. He was escorted to the range so they could get the basics of his firearms.

It would take him roughly ten minutes. Felicité of the SD and Selena stepped off one of the elevators as we made our way there. Miyako joined them silently and off they went – off premises for a private chat. There was no official alliance between the 9 Clans and the Amazon, so their business was still theirs.

I found it interesting that Felcite's warding behavior switched to Miyako when they departed. I held off on making the 'she's got my baby on board' for the moment. Rachel dismissed her team. I dismissed Rachel with the explanation that I had Wieslawa if something went wrong. She gave me a terse nod before joining her ladies.

I had shed my crowd down to myself, Saku, Delilah, Wieslawa and Pamela by the time I entered the Executive Services floor. Tuesday was winding down, so the office space was mostly empty. Close to Katrina's office were Arwen and two ladies who had to be Epona House Guard. Things had changed in so many ways. Arwen was cloaking her emotions.

"Fehér mén," one called out, smiling. The other one snorted in amusement. Word about Aya and I had gotten out. I decided to roll with it. 'White Stallion' could be the name House Epona chose to address me by. Arwen didn't share in the relaxing moment.

"Only you," she tried to separate me from my entourage.

"How is Katrina doing?" I asked. Arwen wasn't stupid.

"She is fine and these are her orders," she held her ground(**wWw.@oVtLworm.CoM**

"Please note that I have heard her orders and am ignoring them," I joked as I stepped around her. I'm not sure what made Arwen think she could withstand Saku.

Without breaking her stride, Sakuniyas's palms slammed into the bottoms of Arwen's ribcage, heaving her up and way. Arwen hit the wall next to Katrina's office door – about 20cm off the ground when she impacted. The two House Guard went 'guns-ready'. Saku had already followed me through the door. Delilah slipped past Arwen and that left Pamela.

"If you three want to chase Shammuramat, Queen of Assyria and a fighter oath-bound to House Ishara into Katrina's office, be my guest," Pamela snorted. Wieslawa was behaving by staying outside. They didn't rush past Pamela. "Thought so. Arwen, you get in Câel's way again, he might stop giving a crap that you are House Epona's apprentice and beat you like the little tramp you are."

"You speak for Ishara now?" Arwen grumbled.

"No," Pamela chuckled. "You didn't use Aya's pet name for him. Why? See, when Câel gets around to asking himself that question, he's doing to decide that you think Aya is a weakling and a failure.

Before you spout off with your pie-hole about Aya being Epona's problem, know that she is Câel's daughter in every way that counts. Katrina accepts that, so your opinion does not matter... and if it should someday matter – it still won't matter. Since you know nothing of the bond between a daughter and her father, I'm giving you a cautionary note: tread carefully around Wakko Ishara.

Given the least provocation, he will break you, Katrina be damned," Pamela stated.

"House Epona is far larger than House Ishara. If he wishes a feud, so be it," Arwen snorted.

"Ah yes," Pamela happily mocked her. "That was the level of personal courage I was looking for in you, Arwen. Thank you for living down to my expectations."

Inside, there was a different issue to deal with, Katrina, Elsa, Buffy, Daphne and an Amazon who had a vague familiarity to another, dead Amazon I knew. Elsa rested her ass on the left corner of Katrina's desk. Katrina was in her chair, Daphne and Buffy were on the sofa – standing when I entered, and the stranger was in the closest chair to Elsa.

"Konstantina of House Šauška – Câel, Head of House Ishara," Katrina made the introductions. She stood up and we clasped arms.

"Nice to meet you," I greeted her in a neutral tone. She did the same. I turned my attention to Buffy and Daphne, clasping arms before folding them into hugs**wwW.NoveL(w)0r(n).CoM**

Buffy didn't like Konstantina , which spelled trouble. She was also angry with Katrina, which was really dangerous.

"Okay, what's going on?" I regarded Katrina and Elsa.

"If you recall, Troika Šauška ran our Diplomatic Section," Katrina began.

"Since St. Marie killed her, we have been waiting for a new one to be appointed," she continued. I had the feeling Chief of the Diplomatic Corpse wasn't a huge prestige position in the Host. "St. Marie has appointed you for the post." Fuck.

"You are not the universal choice for the position," Katrina explained. "Others have suggested Konstantina for the position," she clarified.

"House Šauška supports your nomination," Konstantina stressed. I hadn't been 'nominated'.

"And House Epona does NOT," Buffy growled. Two central elements were colliding. First off, St. Marie, the Golden Mare, had given me a job to do. Key word: given. I had no honorable choice in the matter.

"The majority of houses do not support such a young House as Ishara to assume this role during the current crisis," Katrina defended herself. "Câel is too new to Havenstone." New, old – that was irrelevant. There would be no interview process followed by a Senate/Council confirmation hearing. St. Marie was being honest in that she wanted me to do this job. There was no reason I knew of for her to do otherwise.