

# The Indomitable Huntress & the Hardened Duke Novel

## Chapter 30

"Uncle Gweg! Why didn't you call?"

He was just two minutes late. Even so, heaviness settled in his stomach. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. I lost track of time. Had a good day today?"

A moment of silence passed before Enora's whisper rang through his ears, "I shot Lionel MacDonald today and ran. He doesn't know who did it."

Although Greg could hear the smile in her voice and his animal howled in pride, his human's eyes snapped shut.

Shit.

As an afterthought, she added, "Don't tell Mommy."

"Sweetheart," Greg exhaled, pinching the bridge of his nose. "This call is recorded."

"What's recorded?"

"It means everything we're saying now will be on your Mommy's phone and she can replay what we're saying like how you watch cartoons over and over again."

A stretch of silence followed before Enora innocently asked, "So I should throw away Mommy's phone, Uncle Gweg?"

"What? No! Just..." How was he going to resolve this? "Alright, Enora. Lesson one: never tell secrets through a phone, a computer or anything that's not a mind-link or the actual person, got it?"

Giving her time to digest as he got into his car, put in the key, and started the engine, his niece carefully combed through the memories of

the day and spoke again when he started driving, "Mm... Ken peed in class today."

Greg chuckled. "What was that like?"

Enora described in detail - with repetitive words due to her limited vocabulary - how a puddle formed below her brother's seat because he couldn't hold it in while waiting for the previous student to return from using the restroom, how it stank and how Ken almost cried when some of the others started making fun of him, the loudest being Lionel MacDonald. "Is that why you shot him, sweetheart?"

"Mm-hm. And he stole Lisa's wed crayon once. And... and he took Jack's doll. He pulled out the doll's head and threw it at 'em. Jack cwied and his mommy came to get 'em. And... and he bwoke an a-whow Aunty Hailey gave me for my bwirthday."

"Yeah, I remember the birthday arrow. Aunty Hailey did get you new ones, didn't she?"

"Yeah, but he bwoke the old one!"

"Lionel MacDonald is definitely a pain in the a- is definitely an immature classmate you have. How's your brother?"

"He said he doesn't want to go to school anymore but Mommy and Daddy said he'll still go tomowwow."

"He'll be fine. Here's a tip: ask him to pee into Lionel MacDonald's bag next time." Greg regretted his words as soon as he said them. To a phone. On a call. That was recorded. Clearing his throat, he uttered, "Enora, just so we're clear, that was a joke. I wasn't serious, okay? Don't tell your brother to do that and don't think of doing that yourself either, got it?"

"How do I pee in a bag, Uncle Gweg?" Enora's voice came in contemplative curiosity.

"You can't. It's not possible." Why wasn't it possible? Damn him. "You'll hurt yourself. Don't do it. Hey, how's that archery practice coming along? Signed up for the competition yet?" He prayed Enora's precociousness with bows, arrows and crossbows didn't include an advanced ability to detect a deflection in subject.

It was as if his prayers were answered when Enora's excited voice blared through the speaker, "Yeah! And I almost hit the wed dot today!"

"Atta girl! When I come home this weekend, we'll go to the pond to celebrate, okay?"

"Yay!"

Greg heard some muffles in the background before Enora sadly said, "Mommy says it's my bedtime now. Bye bye, Uncle Gweg. I love you."

"I love you too, sweetheart. Sweet dreams."

The call dropped and Greg knew for a fact the next connection that was going to come was via mind-link. He checked the time on the dashboard and counted down the minutes as he arrived at the diplomatic residence.

In twenty minutes or so, her link came through, 'Is there something I should know, Greg?'

'I doubt it's something you don't already know, my queen. And good evening to you too. The sky's pretty clear on this side today, in case you were wondering.'

'Lesson one? Should I be given a copy of the syllabus?'

'You've already graduated. Giving you a copy would be a waste of paper. Weaver would never forgive you. My cousins, on the other hand, may need it. Since we're on that issue, I have a question: what weapon was it and where did she get it?' He remembered Lucy checking her pups' bags right before they left the house every morning since Enora shot a

classmate with her crossbow, so whatever she used today couldn't be her own toy.

A frustrated sigh came from Lucy's end. 'A crossbow, coincidentally. And it was her classmate's - Colin's. There was a search and it was found in his bag. But one of the teachers saw Colin when Lionel was hurt, so they dropped him from the suspect list.'

'Is Enora on it?'

'Surprisingly, no. It seems she was on a potty break.'

Greg's smile of pride couldn't be wider. This was one of the many reasons why she was his favorite. Which other pup would know how to lie, shoot the target and make sure she had an alibi at the same time? And at the tender age of five?

'This isn't something to be proud of, Greg.'

Trying to sound monotonously indifferent but failing miserably, he merely responded, 'I didn't say anything, my queen.'

His smile was evident even from his link, making Lucy respond, 'Your silence pretty much said it all. And your cousin seems more impressed than angered, too. Do you know he just got Enora out of bed and is now feeding her ice-cream in the kitchen? Telling her it's because she's working hard in archery practice? We know that's a lie. He enjoyed her undercover adventure a little too much. What's in the Claw gene that has hardwired you two to find any of this okay?'

'The fact that she shot the one who laughed at her brother, broke her toy, and bullied countless other classmates is something to be celebrated, my queen. It's practically self-defense.'

There was another sigh - an exasperated one. 'Exactly what Xandar said. You two should really look up the definition of self-defense because the law would disagree.'

'You're not going to ground or restrict her from anything, are you? Swap the classroom setting for a battlefield and she'd be a heroine.'

'Honestly, I don't know what I'm going to do. And my mate, his second-in-command and now the leader of the Secret Service ARE OF NO HELP!'

Greg nodded to himself, impressed. 'Got to hand it to Blackfur. Didn't think he'd have it in him to approve such barbarism.'

'It seems Ianne had a hand in it too. She helps water the plants in kindergarten. But today, she distracted Colin with a watering can when Enora "borrowed" the crossbow.'

Greg was so stunned that he froze while taking out leftovers from the fridge, half bent over with the chilly air blasting at his face and refrigerator light shining on his forehead. It took him a moment to defrost and let the door shut as he strode to the microwave. 'Blackfur must be proud.'

'But Annie is annoyed. So am I.'

'Well then, I'm sure you and the duchess can sort things out. Get the Lionel pup expelled and restore peace in the kindergarten. The other pups would appreciate it, I'm sure.'

'I'm not saying what Lionel did was okay. Frankly, it's wrong. I'd restrict him from all leisure if I was his mother. But I'm not. And these are pups. They don't know any better yet.'

'A rubber bullet to the eye would speed up the learning process fairly quickly.'

'You know what? Forget it. I'll just continue ranting to your cousin about this until I've calmed down enough to speak to the teachers about talking to the MacDonalds. As for Enora's curriculum with you - legal lessons only, Greg. And no teachings or tutorials of peeing in someone

else's bag!

Pressing back a guilty smile as the microwave buzzed in the background, he replied, 'Duly noted, my queen. And since we're already speaking, let me update you on the hunters' debacle thus far.'

Greg informed her about the eastern intrusion and the western issue about an archer being pulled out of station without reason. Lucy asked whether he'd gone through the eastern files. He had. 'There isn't a pattern. Whoever breached the system got what he wanted and opened the other files to throw us off. Jade traced the duration each file had been open and the longest is the one with the explosion.'

Lucy's voice came out concerned and ominous when she linked, 'There are so many other ways to kill a creature. Why use bombs?'

'Erase traceability would be my best guess, but I'll have to look further into it, my queen. Something tells me there's more than what's written in those pages. I'll keep you posted.'

'Thank you, Greg. And send my regards to Sush.'

The link ended and the first question Greg asked himself was: what the fuck did that mean?



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