


The Indomitable Huntress And The Hardened Duke

18:07 

Chapter 17

Greg was reading Sush's profile. The first part, he already knew: only child; orphaned at age ten; stayed with maternal relatives until a few days shy of her eighteen birthday before the last of them - her uncle, passed on. After high school, she took up mechanical engineering with a full scholarship in her first year, partial scholarship in subsequent years while taking up jobs at restaurants, malls and two-day events that pay a lot. She graduated with a Second Class (Upper) Division and secured a job at a moderately reputable company but quit two years later and joined the hunters.

Here was what he didn't know: she took multiple courses in hacking; her parents were what they called Liabilities - non-hunters. Both died in road accidents, albeit separate ones. It was rare for a hunter to be born out of two Liabilities, but history did prove this was possible.

In the midst of working, he heard a shriek, followed by a crash and an overdramatic, "Ouch! Ooooh! Help!" coming from somewhere near him as the Human Resources folks dashed to the source.

Greg reclined his chair, witnessed Hazel with palms

pressed against the floor, papers scattered around her yet she made no effort to push herself up as colleagues offered her hands and asked her how she was.

His animal's eyes rolled. Enora could get up quicker than that and never made such a fuss from a simple fall. If anything, the adults around her made a bigger fuss, himself included. Greg didn't care Hazel wasn't a lycan and didn't possess the healing abilities of one.

Sighing at the loss of two precious seconds being nosy, he drew his attention back to the computer, narrowly missing eye contact with Hazel.

The deputy's shoulders fell when he didn't come to help her like her colleagues did. Finally pushing herself off the ground, she shambled toward his cubicle yet still got no response. Coming up with an immediate plan B, Hazel then leaned against the cubicle next to his, chatting with Aaron about their last time out at a bar and how so many of them had to decode Izabella's messages, intentionally leading Aaron to mention that Hazel had been instrumental in the effort.

When Greg reached the end of Sushmita's profile, he moved on to the next, which - coincidentally - was Hazel's. There was a "Strengths" section, and the duke thought she left out a few attributes: inconsiderate,

loud, vexing. Or did those fit under a “Weaknesses” section that - for some reason - wasn’t included here?

In his peripheral vision, he caught sight of Sushmita. “Chief?” The word escaped his lips before going through his brain, which didn’t often happen.

Sushmita had just extracted one ring folder and was reaching for another when their eyes locked and she questioned, “Already? It hasn’t even been an hour.”

A corner of his lips tipped up just the slightest. “I like to work in peace. If you could keep your traffic cone of a deputy a little busier and away from this area, I’d really appreciate it.”

Sushmita’s eyes flickered to Hazel’s embarrassed ones, uttering, “Haze, go check the correspondence.”

Under his breath, Greg muttered, “And maybe don’t trip on purpose this time.”

Sushmita didn’t hear it, given the distance and her focus back to the files in hand, but Aaron and Hazel did. A brighter flush of crimson rose to the deputy’s cheeks as she subconsciously ran her fingers down her orange hair and scurried away.

Even with the welcomed silence, Greg just couldn’t keep his eyes on Hazel’s picture perfect profile for more than a few seconds as the creature to his right continued intriguing him.

It bothered him that Sushmita seemed to be able to pull off any look. The pondering one now was a little different from the hard look on his only visit to this place: her brow was not as arched, her lips flat rather than frowned.

Slamming the files shut and shoving them back into place, she heaved a sigh and turned, which was when their eyes locked again. Her brows raised. "Another complaint?"

His lips twitched almost imperceptibly. "Not yet."

She nodded in acknowledgment and strode back to her station, where her fingers tapped furiously on her tablet. Only then did Greg get back to Hazel's profile. Perfect upbringing. Gold-mine parents: a former Chief Octopus and former Deputy Chief Octopus, now retired and living their days in a quiet countryside. Hazel had good grades. Joined the hunters fresh out of high school while finishing college in civil engineering and graduated as valedictorian. Goddess, this was mind-numbing. Might as well add that she was hunter royalty after her name.

"Boss?" Ella Tristan, one of his mavericks, stood by his cubicle. "Is this a good time?"

Swiveling his chair to face her, eager for an escape, he said, "There has never been a better time, Tristan.

18:08 

Show me.”

Ella handed him the blueprints and sketches, explaining, “Amara - the huntress I’ve been working with - said these were retrieved from Delilah’s and Larson’s private abode. We don’t have a copy. Should I ask to borrow the originals or would scanning them do?”

Skimming through each page, he instructed, “Scan. Front and back, even if it’s empty. Use Jade’s version for the scanner. I want them to be near original.”

Ella retrieved the papers from him, nodded, and left.

Turning back to his screen, Greg’s animal groaned. Telling himself that the sooner he finished this silver spoon garbage, the quicker he could move on, he went through it in one painful minute before heaving a sigh of relieved accomplishment and proceeded to the next person.