

# The Indomitable Huntress & the Hardened Duke - by Stina's Pen

## Chapter 8

"You're going away again?" Enora asked, a film of water glossing over her lilac eyes threatened to spill over.

Greg hesitated. So this was why the queen asked him to tell Enora. Having this conversation was harder than he thought. "Yes, sweetheart. We're going to see each other a little less, but only for the next three months. I'll still pick you up from school on Fridays and we can go to the pond or the park on Saturdays. After three months, everything will be back to normal. And I'll pick you three times a week again, as usual."

Enora's gaze lowered. Then, a snuffle escaped her, sending a crack into her uncle's heart as he hoisted her into his arms. "I'll still be here, Enora. This isn't like the one with your Aunt Pelly where I disappeared completely for two weeks. I'll meet you two days every week and I'll call everyday."

"You pwomise?"

"I promise."

She sniffled again, her arms around his neck tightened. After some time, she asked, "Are you going to see Ugly Deli?"

"No, Enora. She's gone. For good."

He spared her the details of how - after the mavericks had gotten everything from Izabella - he ordered his people to burn the body, with the monarchy's seal of approval, of course. Izabella then stayed in a mason jar of ash in his office desk drawer. And everytime he thought about her ashes, he couldn't help the gnawing feeling in his stomach. He felt like he was lying to Enora about never seeing his former mate again. He was technically still seeing her, though in a different form.

Two months after the cremation, he and his animal decided it was time to let go completely. They brought the jar to the same street Enora asked for a potty break with the teddy bear and he threw it into the same bin, swiftly turning away before he got second thoughts.

Coaxing her now, he said, "This is purely for work, I promise."

"Can I come with you, Uncle Gweg?"

That warranted a big, fat, undebatable NO. He was infiltrating a circle that almost put her in danger. There was no way he'd bring her, even if she begged. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. I can't do that. Maybe... When you're older, you can come with me to these things. But not now, not this time."

After a quiet moment, she asked sadly, "Is it because I'm too short?"

Not wanting to tell her the dangers that she'd be exposed to, he clicked his tongue and fibbed, "Yes, that's exactly it. When you're as tall as..." He had to give her something which seemed reachable in the near future - though it realistically wasn't - and settled with, "...your mother, I'll take you. It'll be easier for you to see and touch everything then."

"Mm-kay," she murmured, resigned.

Setting her on her feet, Enora threw one last crumb into the pond, which fell nowhere near the ducks as it floated a short throw away, a further testament of her sorrow.

"I'll be back before you know it. Don't shoot anyone while I'm gone, okay? We might not get to go anywhere on weekends if any of your teachers called your mother."

"He starteard it," she complained, albeit meekly, kicking a pebble nearby, which fell into the water and created a ripple.

It was about a classmate who pulled her ponytail before she got out her birthday crossbow - which should not have been in her bag to begin with - and shot the rubber bullet at the guy's nape. A perfect shot. It left no mark or injury but the boy cried and whined for fifteen minutes, so the teacher had to call Lucy.

Enora's weapon was confiscated by her mother for three full days, which surprised the pup. She thought she'd lose it for a week or longer. As it turns out, her parents placed part of the blame on the one who pulled her hair.

Greg thought the confiscation was a little excessive. Enora acted in self-defense... sort of. It was good to start defending oneself at a young age. "You could always tell Aunt Hailey, you know? Say your head hurts after the basta— after your classmate pulled your hair."

"Will she give me a ccrossbow?"

"I doubt it. You could try asking." He then made a mental note to tell Hailey to make sure there weren't any crossbows within Enora's reach in kindergarten, and to watch

this pup during her daily archery playtimes in case Enora got the idea to use those instead.