

## Chapter 29

That was only half the truth. Although she and Kenji parted on good terms, long distance wasn't the only reason, or the main reason. Sush had seen things as a huntress, learned things - things she only wished she never knew, never dwelled on. She wished she had it in her to forgive, accept, and move on. But she couldn't.

She didn't want Kenji to catch her doing what she'd set out to do, nor did she want him to get involved. So she ended things. She wanted to see through her plan more than she wanted a future with him. The decision was thoroughly thought through, and to this day, she had no regrets.

"Hm," Greg mused, replaying the previous day's events - how Kenji held her like she was his - and a splinter of anger returned. "So Mr. Sophisticated came today to rekindle an old flame?"

The words in itself kindle a different flame within him - a less romantic kind, a raging kind. His jaw clenched taut as he waited for her answer.

"The only flames Kenji is concerned about are Valor's. The shit in the east yesterday was enough for him to be summoned. I hope the sprinklers in Valor's office work. I'm pretty sure my boss is up there with a flamethrower right now."

Greg's jaw loosened, the onyx in his eyes lessened. He didn't mind the sprinklers not working, actually. It'd kill two hunters in one arson. The situation was so naturally perfect that no intervention was necessary for it to unfold. Shaking himself out of Sush's metaphor of her boss's anger, he watched her push the last chunk of the first cupcake into her mouth when he decided he should say something, just so it didn't look like he was watching her over-attentively.

"I still fail to comprehend how you're able to inject humor into any

situation, Chief," he said, picturing Valor with a flamethrower that he probably couldn't even hold, let alone use efficiently.

Sush's index finger up and his animal sat, recognizing as the cue that she was about to make a point. "I don't inject, Your Grace. I extract. Humor is always there. The ones who can't find it are either lacking in creativity, mindful about not offending someone, or they're mourning a loss. Otherwise, like happiness and sadness, amusement can be found in everything. It's just a matter of perspective."

After reading her file, she was the last person he'd expected to be able to find humor in any - let alone every - situation.

"Mm," Sush added, "I should mention I couldn't find humor in the four months cleaning the sewer that my predecessor, Delilah and the other three left behind. There was no humor in that situation. It was exhausting."

Greg's lips twitched. "You were probably mourning a huge loss."

Her eyes narrowed. She doubted he didn't know the animosity she had for the conspirators. Green frosting dotted her upper lip when she said, "Hah. Funny. Lost of what?"

His eyes dropped to the green dot on her lip as he listed flatly, "Sleep. Routine. Peace of mind." He truly believed Sush was suffering in that duration since he'd even heard it from Nancy.

Her chewing halted. She blinked, digested the words, then her jaw moved again as she nodded. "That's actually true. See, the point stands: there's humor in everything."

"In that case, I look forward to hearing what comes out of your mouth after Mr. Sophisticated and the noble boss set each other on fire."

Licking up the last bit of icing off her thumb and closing the empty box, she mocked suspicion when she said, "You didn't tamper with the

sprinklers in Valor's office, did you?"

Greg lips curled into a smirk. Pushing himself to stand straight, he replied, "Wouldn't that make humor-extraction easy."

She scoffed. The sound brought a twinkle into her eyes, ones that he'd never noticed before. Because they were never there. Sush could find humor in many situations, but most of it was insensitive humor - ones she kept to herself, some were self-deprecating humor, thinking back to how naive she was when she thought engineering was the only thing she was going to do until retirement or when she thought her mother died of a simple road accident. Such humor simply kept her sane and entertained. It never brought the shine that Greg was witnessing.

Sush would be the first to admit that she was prepared for a chaotic three months with the duke and mavericks infiltrating their circle, but it was pleasantly surprising that they seemed to be getting along. She might even say he was better company than most of the people she'd met in her life. Whenever she said something, he never seemed to find it insensitive, disrespectful or inappropriate. She'd gotten a shit ton of people telling her - through their eyes - that her comments could come off offensive.

Oversensitive paper towels, she thought. Only Hazel seemed amused with her comebacks unless the comment was for her.

There was something different about Greg. She couldn't put her finger on it but beneath the stony exterior who delivered the most brutal execution in hunter history, he was someone she... clicked with.

The hum of Greg's phone stole their gazes from each other. The duke's eyes widened like he was caught doing something he shouldn't. He checked his watch, brows rose at the time, and hastily swiped to answer. "Hey, sweetheart. How was your day?"

And just like that, Sush's moment of lightheartedness came to an end.

Heat radiated from the middle of her chest, sourness developed in her stomach as her intestines coiled. And it only got worse when Greg covered the mouthpiece and curtly said to her, "See you tomorrow."

Forcing a meek smile as he strode away, she tossed the empty box into the wastepaper basket under her desk with more force than necessary. As she furiously scrolled through the flagged documents, her mind questioned why she was angry in the first place.

Greg Claw was a duke, now in the good books of the kingdom. He was a bachelor with wealth, status, connections, and a vicious charm.

How was it a surprise that he'd already moved on from Izabella and now had someone else? If it wasn't a surprise, why did Sush feel something akin to betrayal?



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