

The Mouse's Plans
Chapter 2: The Second Offense
By Draconicon

Another day passed, and despite the school administration's best efforts to keep a lid on what had happened the day before, Salla's name got out. The mouse heard towards the end of the school day that there would be police visiting the next day and that they would want to talk to him, and the school papers wanted to do the same. The fact that he only heard this begrudgingly from the student reporter that was tracking the story told him that the idea of a mouse being the one injured didn't excite much interest, but they were at least doing some due diligence. Like a good student, he told them that he would make himself available, and went home.

His family, as usual, was busy or distracted. His dad was somewhere abroad doing labor work – the construction company that he worked for sent him all over the country, these days. His mother was busy watching her show for the night, but had already put dinner in the fridge. No siblings, so nothing to worry about there. His aunt, his mother's sister, was upstairs, judging by the thumping sounds. He carefully ignored that, knowing that she was working, and knowing better than to go upstairs too soon. The Johns weren't always kind.

So, he sat on the couch. His mother's shows, game shows, were always her addiction. She stared at the screen, silently writing down the answers to the puzzles and the quiz shows as they went by, comparing them to what the contestants said before tearing the page off and starting again with the next round. She always watched the brainy ones, and on days when Aunt Yilla was busy, it kept him involved, too.

Nibbling the noodles left behind, he pulled out a scratch pad of his own. His mother noticed, gave him the slightest of smiles, but no more. Instead, she flicked to a fresh episode, one that had probably been recorded last night that neither of them had seen, and gestured at the screen. Salla nodded, and started writing things down.

The show passed in silence for the both of them. Neither bothered to write down the answers when they were done; both of them knew the other would be honest about what they remembered. All they kept were the answers that they wrote down, just so they'd have a fair record of who was right and who was wrong.

The episode finally ended, and Salla held out his answers and his mother held out hers. They sat together, checking the other's answers.

“I win,” Salla said, the first words that he’d spoken since walking through the door.

“Mm.”

“Close, mom. Just two wrong.”

“All right, dear. All right.”

She smiled at him, and he knew it was a good night. She wasn’t angry, wasn’t competitive. Just proud. All the better, really. It was never a good night when someone wasn’t happy.

The sound of Yilla’s John thumping down the stairs stilled the both of them. Salla kept his eyes forward, ignoring whoever it might have been behind them. After the ambush from Lars and the others, he had a fresh reminder of what it meant when a mouse poked their heads up. It was something to be stomped out.

The front door opened and closed a few seconds later, just long enough that the stranger might have stolen something from them. Making a mental note to check, the white-furred mouse closed his notebook. He nodded at the stairs, and his mother nodded back, going back to her shows.

Sometimes seems like she likes those more than the rest of us...

Salla stopped that thought. It wasn’t really fair. She stayed there for a reason. Simple numbers and questions, right and wrong answers: they were much easier to deal with than what Yilla was doing, and what his mom used to do.

After all, the rats hadn’t been wrong. His mother *had* been a sex worker at one point. It was something of a common experience among mouse females, and among some males, too, depending on how bad the situation got. The entire family knew it. You grew up knowing it, most of the time.

He didn’t know how he managed to make himself forget, sometimes. It was easier to plan things, to focus on other things. If you were planning, if you were plotting, you felt like you had some control.

He was good at that. He was very good at that.

Salla made his way around the corner at the top of the stairs. Yilla’s door was open, but his aunt wasn’t in sight. The brown-furred female would be getting dressed or toweling down from her last man, depending on whether she had another one booked. Or another woman. There were some that liked that.

Again, he put it out of his mind. He had other things to think about tonight.

Salla went to his bedroom, shutting the door behind him before tossing his bag on the bed. He sat beside it, tapping his fingers on his knees as he imagined his next move.

The story's going to lose steam tomorrow, but the headline's out there. Just because it was a mouse doesn't mean it loses power. Mattis will still be investigated, and that means that he'll still probably be replaced. Particularly once the news media gets started.

The sphere of public attention was easy to gain and hard to lose. The blame game was even easier. All he had to do was keep it from losing too much momentum, and someone else that might actually use their power would take Mattis's place. But that was just the start, and he needed to think about that next step.

The police were going to get involved. Lars knew someone on the force, had a family member there. That would inform how he talked about it tomorrow. The rat would probably know that he had spoken up in some way, which, while not against what he had been 'asked' to do, was still going to piss Lars off. It was a better than even bet that he'd see the rats on the way to school tomorrow, possibly getting a worse cut depending on just how angry they were.

And if they cut, then either they're stupid, or Lars's uncle's going to be the one asking questions...

But that meant that he would be able to prepare. He needed two scripts, one for an honest cop, one for a crooked one. If he was going to talk to an honest cop, then he needed to state what had happened, why, and what he was looking for. It would hopefully start the ball rolling in the right direction. Maybe the rats wouldn't get arrested, but they'd be talked to, and things would be safe at school again.

If it was for a crooked cop, however, he needed something different. There would be blame shifted towards him, that he was making a target of himself, that a mouse was starting to poke his head too high and that he needed to learn his place. If that ended up being the case, he needed a script to follow that would divert that attention, something that even a crooked cop would have to follow and deal with.

But how do you manipulate someone that's already made their decision?

Simple. Make it so that the decision doesn't matter and they have to make a new one. Lars's uncle would have made the decision that his nephew's crime either hadn't happened or wasn't actually a crime since it was someone else's fault. So, how did you make that decision into something that didn't matter?

It was a good question. He hoped that he could come up with a good one by morning.

The sound of someone walking up the steps announced that another John was there. After checking that the bedroom door was locked – both his aunt and his mother knew the trick of a

quick unlock with the right handle-jimmy – he rolled over and closed his eyes. Of all the distractions out there right now, he didn't need to hear that.

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Morning came and brought with it a sunrise that burned his eyes as he stepped outside. He groaned, covering his face as the cloudless sky streaked with pink and orange, the latter fading faster than the former. Getting up early was his best hope of avoiding Lars and his friends, but that was still a torment in and of itself.

Salla shook his head, adjusting his backpack. Four more months, and he could graduate high school. Once that was done, the world would change. He would make it change. For now, he'd just have to be satisfied with this revenge on the school.

He made his way down the same route as before, testing his luck but also a hypothesis. If he was right –

He was. Someone grabbed him just as he went under the railway tracks, but this time, he was ready. He ducked out of his backpack, rolling forward and avoiding the knife that would have been pressed to his throat again.

Of course, not being that practiced at actual physical work meant that he didn't get back to his feet properly. He stumbled, almost fell over, and by the time that he managed to stand up, one of Lars's friends had him by the elbows. He got yanked back, pinned, and the knife was right up against his neck again.

So... Crooked cop interview it is...

Groaning under his breath, he didn't struggle. Lars shook his head, throwing the bag to the ground before joining his buddies.

“So, mousie. You talked, didn't you?”

“You would have, too,” he muttered.

“Heh, well, ain't gonna change nothing. My uncle's coming today.”

“...”

“Yeah, didn't think of that, did ya?”

More that he had been hoping that it would be something less problematic. An honest cop would have made this whole mess that much easier to deal with, but there were still ways forward with a dishonest one. He hoped, at least. His script was a bit rough around the edges for that one.

Just don't make a slip-up, and you might be able to force something.

Salla had already made his decisions. He just had to follow through on them. He hissed as the rats pushed him more firmly against the wall, though, and this time, Lars leaned in even closer.

“Heh, you look like your bitch of an aunt like this...”

“...What do you mean?” he whispered.

“Turn him around.”

The other rats flipped Salla around, and he grunted as he hit the wall face-first. Lars grabbed him by the tail, yanking it up and making him stand on tiptoes.

“Yeah, there it is. The family resemblance. Heh. Your aunt looked just like this when I paid for her last night.”

His eyes went wide. Lars was the second John? He had to be lying. Had to be. If that was true –

“Nngh!”

Lars pulled his tail higher, almost yanking it out of place. Salla had to grip the brick wall with his claws, holding tight as the rat slapped him across the backside. He huffed into the wall as the sting left behind burned almost as hot as the humiliation.

“Yeah, that's the jiggle. She was moaning for me, mousie. Then again, all of you are natural whores, aren't you?”

“...”

“What's the matter, huh? You gonna stay quiet like your mom did? What's wrong with her, huh? Why'd she stop? Someone scar her up?”

“You made your point,” the mouse whispered.

“What was that, mousie?”

“You made your point. Now let me go.”

“Nah, I don't think I did. See, mousie, you tried to get uppity, didn't ya?”

The knife left his throat, but it didn't lose contact with him. Instead, it trailed down, moving along his back, drawing a line all the way over his spine to his tail, and then down to his

backside. He gasped as it pushed point-first just under his tail, right towards the space between the cheeks.

“Could just cut ya a new one. But I’m not about to have mouse blood on my hands. But this should teach ya a lesson.”

RIIIP!

And just like that, the rat cut a slit up the back of the mouse’s pants. The only good pair he had, ripped right down the middle, and the draft that pushed through proved that there was a hole cut in his underwear, too. He gritted his teeth, his jaw aching as he swallowed rage and fear in equal measure.

“Hehehehe, look at that, mousie. I’m giving ya free advertising. Looking forward to seeing you around school like that. Come on, boys.”

They let him go, and he tumbled to his knees. He rolled, turning his back to the brick wall, keeping it pressed there as the rats walked away. He watched them leave, his hands huddled in fists against his stomach. His face burned red beneath his fur, but this time, it wasn’t humiliation. This was rage.

You won’t talk about them like that again...Oh, you won’t. I fucking promise you. You will never, ever talk about them like that again...

And now, he had an idea for his little script.

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Humiliations abounded as he reached the school. Without anything to change into, not even gym clothes, he had to walk around with his ass half-hanging out of his pants. He could only do so much with the safety pins that he managed to snare from Shop class, and even they were often taken by those that were more keen on taking the humiliation further than helping him.

The hours passed slowly. At noon, he was approached by a rat that had the same too-short ears that Lars had.

“Salla?”

“Yes?”

“My name is Officer Ledon. We need to talk about your...incident.”

Tone of voice, angle of eyes, and the twitch of a suppressed smirk all told Salla that any hope of a good, honest cop was all but out the window. He looked at the rat’s chest, then at the shoulder, then to the belt. Each glance was too fast to be anything other than nervous looking

around, but he didn't see the tell-tale lens of a body cam. That meant that the cop had probably been getting away with all kinds of abuses without anyone having proof to show that it was that bad, or his fault.

Salla stood up slowly. He made sure that he took his time, scraping his tray. All eyes turned to the sound, showing a five-foot-nothing mouse standing beside a six-foot rat, minus the ears. Small and scrawny versus large and brawny. A mouse who still wore the bandage around his neck from the previous attack, one with pants ripped open already.

And then he walked. Witnesses would be had; willing or not, they'd be had.

They walked out of the cafeteria and into one of the empty classrooms. Officer Ledon pointed to one of the desks, and Salla sat down at it. The teacher started walking around him, taking his time.

Salla, imitating the most put-upon, fearful mouse that he could, glanced in the corners of the room. The little black domes that were ostensibly for security in the classrooms that filled the center of the room had never actually worked. They were just security theater, something that was there to make students think that they were being watched. However, in some of the new classrooms that had been slapped onto the old building, where the construction workers cut corners –

Yes, there was an outdoor security camera right there, and it had the familiar little red light just under it. Just there for video, he was sure, and probably something that only worked every few frames from the age of the thing, but that would be *perfect* for his purposes.

After all, how did you render someone's decision to blame someone else for your family's crimes irrelevant? Make it so someone else had to make the decision.

"Do you know why you're here, Salla?" the rat asked him.

"Because your nephew can't handle having to earn something," he said.

Stick to the script, he told himself. *Stick to the script. Be smarmy. Be a smart-ass. Be everything that a mouse shouldn't.*

It worked, too. Officer Ledon stopped in his pacing square, turning to look at him again. Salla kept his head down, knowing exactly where the camera was, knowing it was pointed right at him.

"What was that?" the rat said. "I'm gonna give you a chance to answer that again, mousie. You know why you're here."

"Yes. Because your nephew is an idiot, an ass, and can't stand anyone showing him up for anything."

SLAP! The first blow hit him in the back of the head, knocking him down hard enough and fast enough that his muzzle bounced off the desk. He gasped for breath, biting off the scream that wanted to come out.

Not enough. Too fast. Might not have caught it, he thought, even as his head ached with the reverberations of raw pain.

“Watch what you’re fucking saying, mousie. That’s my nephew. And if you think that you’re going to get him in trouble, you better get it through your fucking skull that you’re not.”

“Now I see where he gets it from...heh...stupid apple doesn’t fall far from the stupid tree.”

This time it wasn’t a slap. It was a full-on body slam, the rat leaning over him and grinding his face against the desk. Salla hissed through clenched teeth, feeling like the rat was trying to crush him, trying to break his skull open just by leaning on him. Breathing was hard. Breathing was painful. He had to remind himself to keep doing it as his neck felt like it was pressed almost to its breaking point.

“You’re not going to get anything out of this. You want to get hurt, huh? You need to learn a lesson, mousie? Smart-ass remarks aren’t going to get you anywhere. I’m the one running this investigation. And I already know what happened. You threatened my nephew. Self-defense. And besides, everyone knows that you were just sucking up to the principal for that chance at a scholarship. Soon as you close your legs, they’ll stop paying attention to you.”

“Mmmph...you mean the way...your nephew came to fuck my aunt?”

“Fucking –”

“Lars is so stupid that he can’t even find a rat to fuck. He’s so cheap that he can’t buy a ‘proper’ woman for the night. And he’s too fucking stupid to find his own cock, so he’s gotta pay someone to –”

That was it. He felt the desk rising, and he knew that he’d gone just far enough. He went limp, and just in time. As Officer Ledon threw the desk across the room, he fell out of it instead of riding it, hitting the floor while the desk itself hit the wall.

He rolled, making sure that he was still in camera shot, and that was the last free movement he had. The police officer straddled him, pinned him, pulled back one arm and gripped his throat with the other.

“You’re going to pay for that.”

...And then...you.

The punch came down, and Salla’s head went back, bouncing off the floor.

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He woke up in a hospital bed, and he *hurt*. He had a black eye, his throat was bruised, he had light bruises up and down his muzzle, and he was missing a tooth at the back of his mouth. Two at the front were chipped, too.

But he smiled, mostly because there was a paper at the side of his hospital bed that read ‘Settlement Paperwork’.

Gotcha.

Of course, that smile hurt, too, but he would be willing to bet that the cop-funded painkiller coming down the IV was working double-time to make sure that he didn’t feel much of it. He slowly reached for the file, dragging it to his lap and opening the folder. Inside were pictures, still images from the camera. Despite the best efforts of the police department to find the least damning ones, the progress from a mouse being completely still to being thrown across the room and pummeled hard – a mouse that the entire cafeteria had seen could not have posed a threat to the officer in any way – showed a brutal picture.

Even though he had lived through it, he winced at some of the images. They would get anyone fired, even someone that had been on the force for most of their life. Ledon was *done*.

The settlement had been filed...two days ago? He must have been beaten unconscious and then some. He flicked back, found the amount that was on offer was...

\$10k.

For someone that had been beaten to the ground and then put into a coma for two days, that would have been a paltry amount. However, the fact that he was a mouse and lucky to get that, combined with the fact that Lars was going to lose his guardian angel on the force, was sufficient. His medical bills were covered outside of the settlement – he made sure of that – and that meant that he had gotten everything that he needed.

A busted tooth, two chipped ones, bruises...I’d call that worth it.

He smiled as he settled back on his pillow, letting the drugs take him down to sleep once more. He deserved it after that successful entrapment.

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He was released from the hospital three days later, once the dental surgery had been done on his jaw and teeth, and once he had been cleared for no serious risk of further coma. He had been dealing with something of a concussion – something that had nearly gotten the nurses in trouble, for allowing a patient, even a mouse, to keep sliding in and out of consciousness with that problem – but he was past the worst of it. He wasn’t going to be allowed to go to school for

a few days, just so he could recover the rest of the way, but that was fine. He could do his work from home.

Returning home, he was welcomed in silent fashion by his mother. His father was still finishing up work abroad, but would be home by the time that he was going back to school. She was happy to have him back, but still didn't say a word.

It didn't matter. He was glad to be home.

Paying for takeout that they hadn't been able to afford in some time, Salla made sure that they'd have leftovers for the next three days with his settlement. He wouldn't spend it all there – he'd need that money for other things – but it was a good start. The whole family ate well.

And then, there was a knock at the door.

Yilla was the one to stand up, his mother's younger sister giving her an apologetic nod before making her way to the front door. Salla watched her go, wincing too as he realized what this would be. And sure enough, it was Lars.

“Hey, bitch.”

“H-hello, sir.”

“Upstairs, now. I'm gonna have you all night...”

The rat pushed the mouse along, and Salla and his mother could say nothing as Yilla was nudged towards the steps. Lars stopped on the way, looked Salla right in the eye, and gave the most sadistic, angry grin that the mouse had ever seen.

Lars knew, he realized. Lars knew that this had been staged, and this was his way of taking revenge. He would do this for as long as he needed to, just to give back a bit of pain. Salla watched him go up the stairs, his hands clenching tighter and tighter around the edge of the table as he watched them disappear.

“This is wrong,” he whispered.

His mother didn't answer. She did, however, cry. Her tears were silent, her eyes closed and her shoulders shaking.

There was little choice but to take her and hold her for a moment. When the thumping started upstairs, this time it was accompanied by the occasional whimper, or the sharp yelp that came with pain.

Salla restrained himself. Doing something now would not help. Doing something tomorrow...or when he got back to school...

Give the real police a chance...but just one. If they fuck up again...no more. I'll do this myself.

The End