



Duty Bound Guardian (Capitol K-9 Unit)

By Terri Reed

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FRAMED

When a priceless artifact is stolen, museum curator Lana Gomez becomes the prime suspect. How can she hope to adopt her orphaned nephew if she's a person of interest in a crime? Cooperating with Capitol K-9 Unit officer Adam Donovan doesn't get her very far—the handsome cop thinks she's hiding something. But when the real thief returns set on silencing Lana, it is Adam and his Doberman pinscher, Ace, who become her only defense against a madman who wants nothing more than to see Lana eliminated.

Capitol K-9 Unit: These lawmen solve the toughest cases with the help of their brave canine partners.

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Editorial Review

Review

The multilayered plot will have readers looking forward to the next series installment, and give them an appreciation of K-9 units. The characters remind us that while we have free will to make choices, God is always in control.

Reviewed by:

Leslie McKee

- See more at: rtbookreviews.com/book-review/duty-bound-guardian#sthash.wa1a584K.dpuf

About the Author

Award winning, multipublished author Terri Reed discovered the wonderful world of fiction at an early age and declared she would one day write a book. Now she's fulfilling that dream by writing for Love Inspired. She is a member of both Romance Writers of America and American Christian Fiction Writers. You can visit her online at www.terrireed.com or email her at terrireed@sterling.net or leave comments on <http://craftieladiesofromance.blogspot.com/> or www.loveinspiredauthors.com

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A soft thud, out of place and unexpected in the after-hours silent museum, broke Lana Gomez's concentration. Her heart revved into overdrive and a shudder of fear scraped along her limbs. Her hand convulsed. Ink from the quill pen she was using to craft display labels created a blotched blob of black against the parchment-colored paper, completely ruining the effect of the old-fashioned script.

She wanted everything to be perfect for the upcoming gala. A thank-you celebration and to show off the recently acquired artifacts for the American Museum, a newer, privately held institute in the metro Washington, DC, area.

"Ugh!" Mad at herself for overreacting to the sound, she crumpled up the square sheet of card stock and grabbed a clean, blank one from the stack sitting on her mahogany desktop. "It's Brad doing his rounds."

Any second now the older gentleman would pop his graying head inside her office to check in with her. There was no reason to freak out.

Yet, the fine hairs on her arm slowly stood on end. A voice inside her mind mocked, *Girl, as long as Mark draws breath, there will always be a reason to freak out.*

On a shudder, she whispered, "Lord, I need Your peace right now."

Blowing out a cleansing, calming breath, she refo-cused. She had so much work to do to make the gallery party a success. Her boss had gone on a weeklong vacation that morning, leaving her to do the majority of the planning. As the junior curator, part of her job was to seek out donors as well as valuable collectibles such as the ones currently on display.

The crown jewel of the newest collection was the beautiful Golden Arrow. The gold-plated, two-foot-long relic had once belonged to General George Washington, the first president of the United States of America.

A priceless piece of history.

Glass shattering jerked her attention to the closed office door.

Had Brad fallen? She needed to go help him.

Stepping out of her office into the gloomy innards of the museum, she faltered. Which part of the vast building did she check first?

The low lighting helped preserve the numerous relics and artifacts that lured many tourists and visitors away from the more famous galleries, but did little to dispel the shadows in the hall. She wished she had a flashlight.

All was quiet. Still. A chill hung in the air. The surreal sensation of being frozen in time and space, surrounded by bits of history dating back to the first settlers in Jamestown, assaulted her.

Normally, she loved to roam through the gallery, loved knowing the story behind each piece of art, loved presenting the story to the world so others could enjoy the heritage that came before them. But a strange eeriness invaded the space, leaving her breathless. Fear crept up her spine.

Overhead, the skylights revealed a black sky. The soft pinging of rain against the windowpanes made her think of the childhood nursery rhyme her mother would sing about April showers bringing May flowers.

Suddenly, a flash of lightning illuminated the main chamber, bouncing off shards of glass littering the floor beneath the case where the Golden Arrow rested on a swath of deep red velvet.

A big, bulky man, dressed from head to toe in white, hunched over the display case.

Lana's pulse stalled. Thunder rumbled in her ears, and then rattled the windowpanes. The noise was real, outside of her head. Another flash of lightning revealed the man reaching for the arrow. Her eyes widened in horror. Adrenaline pumped in her veins and anger fueled the fire within. "No!"

Six months of martial arts training making her reckless, she charged the man, her sole focus on preventing him from taking the arrow. "Leave that alone!"

The man spun around. Large, round reflective sunglasses concealed his eyes, while a white ski mask covered the rest of his face. As quick as a snake, his hand grasped the arrow and yanked it from its bed. He hefted the arrow in large gloved hands like a baseball bat.

The slick soles of her pumps skidded on the marble floor in a futile effort to stop while velocity propelled her forward. Her only option was to get in close and strike the pressure points in simple attack mode to hopefully disarm him or at least make him back off and run away—without the Golden Arrow.

He swung. She ducked. A forceful current of air swept over her. He'd barely missed.

He released one hand from around the arrow's shaft and latched on to her arm before she could jump away.

With purposeful aim, she targeted the arrow-wielding hand and delivered a hard blow to the pressure point of his forearm muscle between the elbow and wrist with the sharp outside edge of the radius bone in her

forearm. His grip loosened but he didn't release the arrow.

Using the same hand, she immediately curled her fingers and used her fist in a hammer shot to his left rib cluster points. He doubled over, but recovered quickly and clutched a handful of her hair, yanking her close. She screamed and stomped down hard on his instep with the heel of her pump. The man grunted.

From the corner of her eye she saw the Golden Arrow swing toward her face. By reflex she raised her arm to ward off the blow. Too late. The hard metal connected with the side of her head in a sharp explosion of pain. Then all went black.

K-9 Officer Adam Donovan's cell buzzed inside the breast pocket of his uniform shirt. He halted, staying out of the rain beneath the overhang covering the entrance to the E. Barrett Prettyman Federal Courthouse.

"Sit," he murmured to his partner, Ace, a four-year-old, dark-coated, sleek Doberman Pinscher. The dog obediently sat on his right. Keeping Ace's lead in his left hand, he answered the call. "Adam Donovan."

By habit Adam scanned the crowds of tourists flooding the National Mall, on alert for any criminal activity. Not even nighttime or an April drizzle could keep sightseers in their hotels. To his right the central dome of the US Capitol building gleamed with floodlights, postcard perfect.

"Gavin here," came his boss, Captain Gavin McCord's deep voice. "You still at the courthouse?"

Adam had had a late meeting with the DA regarding a case against a drug dealer who'd been selling in and around the metro DC area. The elite Capitol K-9 Unit had been called in to assist the local police during a two-hour manhunt nine months ago. The K-9 unit was often enlisted in various crimes throughout the Washington, DC, area.

Ace had been the one to find the suspect hiding in a construction Dumpster outside of the National Art Gallery. The suspect took the DA's deal and gave up the names of his associates rather than stand trial, which had been scheduled to begin later this week.

A victory on this rainy spring evening.

"Yes, sir." Adam spotted a group of teenage boys huddled together giving a group of teen girls furtive glances. Ah, to be that young and impetuous again. He remembered his own junior high school field trip from Colorado to the nation's capital. He'd fallen in love with DC that week. Never in his wildest imagining had he thought he'd end up working in the iconic city.

"There's been a break-in at the American Museum and two of the museum employees have been assaulted," Gavin stated.

"Injured or dead?" Adam asked, already moving down the steps toward his vehicle with Ace at his heels.

"Injured. The intruder rendered both employees unconscious, but the security guard came to and pulled the fire alarm, scaring off the intruder. Both have been rushed to the hospital on Varnum Street." Gavin's tone intensified. "But the other victim is who I'm interested in. Lana Gomez."

The name rang a familiar chord in Adam. Dark eyes in a pretty face rose to the forefront of his mind. He and Ace had been in on the interview with Lana regarding her older sister, Rosa Gomez's death last month.

Lana's reaction, or rather lack of reaction, to the news of her sister's untimely demise had been strange. She'd seemed anxious, not grief-stricken like he would have expected for a woman whose sister had just died and left a child behind. She'd asked the right questions, took notes on little Juan's care but there had been something off about her. It bothered him enough that he'd checked on Lana's alibi for the time of her sister's death. It was solid.

He'd been surprised to learn Lana had not known of her nephew's existence. However, she had said she'd contact a lawyer about petitioning for custody though she hadn't appeared enthused by the idea. Last he knew two-year-old Juan still lived in the group foster home that was funded by Congressmen Jeffries and run by Adam's captain's fiancée, Cassie Danvers.

"You want me at the hospital?" He and Ace reached the white-and-blue Blazer with Capitol K-9 emblazoned across the sides.

Using the remote access in his pocket, Adam unlocked the kennel door that had been installed specially for the canine. The door popped open and Adam pointed; the dog jumped in and lay down, his ears up, his eyes watchful. Ace knew they were on a case.

They'd been partnered for three years now, ever since Adam signed on to the Capitol K-9 Unit after leaving the FBI.

The transition from agent to K-9 officer had a definite learning curve, but after completing the patrol dog training, he and Ace had developed a symbiosis that had Joe, Adam's brother, convinced the dog could read Adam's mind and vice versa. Maybe it was true. After living alone for most of his adult life, he certainly enjoyed having the canine as a roommate.

"Yes. I want you to interview Miss Gomez." The timbre of Gavin's voice dropped to a dark note. "If she awakens."

Lana hated hospitals. The antiseptic smells, the sounds of beeping coming from the monitors showing her vitals, and the claustrophobic way the white, sterile walls closed in on her. The only bright spot was the window allowing morning sunlight to stream in despite the spring rain tapping at the glass.

A nurse—her name tag read Cindy—adjusted the IV fluids flowing through a tube attached to Lana's arm. Lana pressed the buttons to automatically raise the back of the bed to a more upright position. "How much longer do I have to stay here?"

When she'd awakened after being admitted to the ER, she'd been told they were keeping her for observation because she'd lost consciousness. The doctor had her moved to a private room and told her to rest. She had and now she just wanted to go home.

The blonde gave her a kind smile. "The doctor will be in shortly. You took a nasty hit on the head."

She didn't need to be told. Her head throbbed where that awful man had used the beautiful arrow to knock her unconscious. She fingered the bandages covering her skull near her left temple. Her heart ached knowing she hadn't been able to protect the arrow. The loss was too much to bear.

"Can I get you anything?" Cindy asked.

Lana heaved a sigh. Even to her own ears she sounded pitiful. "No, thank you, though."

"All right. There's the button if you need anything."

Cindy walked out, leaving Lana to stare at the boring walls and stuccoed ceiling. A black television set mounted high on the wall showed a blank screen. She didn't feel like watching the TV when her world was spinning out of her control. A white board with her name, the doctor's name and a list of the medications she'd been given was fixed to the back of the bathroom door. Her life had been reduced to markings on a to-do list.

She gripped handfuls of the blanket. A deep-seated sense of loneliness settled over her like a shroud. She was alone in the world. There was no one to care that she was here. No one to visit her. All she had was her career. And now that she'd allowed the arrow to be stolen, no doubt her livelihood would be taken away, as well.

When her boss found out, he'd fire her. She hoped he didn't cut his vacation short, but knowing Mr. Floyd he would. He'd had reservations about leaving her in charge to begin with, and now...well, she wouldn't blame him for letting her go.

Dejection spread through her chest, making her heart heavy.

There was no way the courts would give her custody of her nephew, Juan, if she didn't have a job.

Her head drooped to the side. A tear slid from the corner of her eye and trailed down her cheek. She hated feeling so pathetic. It had to be the painkillers. She normally wasn't one to indulge in self-pity.

A sharp rap on the door brought her chin up. She hoped it was the doctor with discharge papers. "Come in."

The door swung open. A large, black, intimidating-looking dog appeared, his claws tapping against the linoleum floor as he made a beeline for her bed.

And beside the animal came Officer Adam Donovan, dressed in his dark uniform and looking handsome despite the dampness clinging to his short-cropped, strawberry-blond hair.

Lana's mouth went dry. The doctor had told her the police wanted to talk to her but he'd insisted they had to wait until morning. Why did it have to be this officer, with his icy blue eyes and thousand-mile stare?

Adam had been one of the elite K-9 unit officers present when Lana had talked to the director of the foster care where her nephew, Juan, had been taken after her sister, Rosa's, death.

Hearing the devastating news of Rosa's death and learning Rosa had a son—a child Lana had known nothing about—had frozen another portion of Lana's heart. A familiar feeling, one she'd been living with since the day she'd heard of her parents' horrific deaths five years earlier.

Adam had studied her as if he was trying to put the pieces of a puzzle together and didn't like the picture emerging.

She mentally shrugged. Everyone dealt with sorrow differently. Her way was to contain everything inside. Not the healthiest way, but the only way she knew how to cope with the loss and tragedies and traumas that

plagued her life.

"Officer Donovan." The reedy wariness in her voice echoed inside her head, making her self-conscious of the fact she was in a vulnerable position with no ready means of escape. She smoothed her hands on the blanket as if somehow the motion would smooth her frayed nerves.

"Miss Gomez, I was glad to hear you're recovering well."

She doubted he'd felt much of anything regarding her health. He wanted information on the arrow. That was the only thing of importance. "I survived."

"Yes, you did." He stepped closer. The light coming through the window reflected in his blue eyes and made them appear almost translucent. "I have some questions regarding the break-in at the museum last night."

"I hope I have answers." Though she couldn't think of anything she could say that might help him find the man who stole the artifact.

"Can you tell me what happened?"

"It was late and I was working at my desk when I heard glass breaking. I went to see what was going on. I saw a man dressed all in white taking the Golden Arrow. I tried to stop him." She fisted her hands at her sides. Frustration and anger and despair ran a race through her, making her head pound. "And lost."

Something warm and rough touched the back of her clenched hand. The dog licked her hand again before resting his head on the bed to stare at her, his dark eyes watching her intently. She extended her fingers to rub them against the dog's snout.

"Ace. Sit."

The dog obediently sat. Her fingers curled.

"You didn't see the intruder's face?"

She lifted her gaze to meet his. "He wore sunglasses. Not the dark type but the reflective kind that were popular in the 1980s."

"Aviators."

"That's it. His face was covered, too, with a ski mask."

"Could you tell skin color?"

"Caucasian, maybe. Definitely not African-American."

"Height?"

She struggled to remember. "It happened so fast. I'm pretty sure he was taller than me."

"What did the intruder use to hit you over the head?"

"The Golden Arrow." She rubbed her dry lips. "I hope he didn't ruin it."

"Do you have any idea why you were attacked?"

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rosemarie Cleveland:

This Duty Bound Guardian (Capitol K-9 Unit) is great guide for you because the content which is full of information for you who else always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it data accurately using great coordinate word or we can say no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read this hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but hard core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having Duty Bound Guardian (Capitol K-9 Unit) in your hand like obtaining the world in your arm, data in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no guide that offer you world in ten or fifteen small right but this publication already do that. So , it is good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt that will?

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