

Chapter 93

At the diplomatic residence, Sush was on a high stool at the kitchen counter, scrolling through the eastern files that had been opened before the archer massacre for the umpteenth time. She and Greg agreed there wasn't a pattern when they discussed it, but what if they missed something?

If there wasn't a pattern, was there something else, something they'd both missed? She lost count of the number of times she tried Ctrl + F and typed in "hyena", "owl", and "rat", and found nothing.

"Eat, please," Greg urged and left a light kiss on her temple after placing a takeaway box of pasta in front of her as he got into the seat next to hers, removing the laptop from beneath her fingers and setting it to the side, placing it next to his own.

Sush heaved an exhausted sigh and rubbed away the stinging sensation from her strained eyes before lifting the ready cutlery and began spearing into the meatball. As she munched, she asked, "Found anything on the ones whose throats were slid?"

"Yes, fortunately. All of them have some form of experience in hacking into the most sophisticated systems." As Greg sliced through the lamb, imagining it was Valor and Ferdinand's flesh ground and mixed to create his meal, he continued, "The first octopus, Porsha Delaware, was a prodigy with computer codes and hacked into a toy company to get her brother a building block set for his birthday that their family couldn't afford."

"Champion of a sister," Sush mused, subconsciously raising her half-filled mug like she was toasting to the feat.

Despite being equally impressed, Greg continued monotonously, "She impressed the state so much that they dropped charges, gave their family another few sets of toys, and Delaware got a fully-funded

education until she graduated and joined the hunters. But she was kept at the innovation side of things, never system codes."

"I wish I met her," Sush commented, then slurped on her pasta.

"Didn't think you had a penchant for toys," Greg taunted in feigned ignorance with the same flat tone but with a slight tilt of his lips, inciting her annoyance and her elbow nudged his side, making him chuckle briefly.

Melting at his laugh, she replied, "Why wouldn't I? I planned to get Lewis something anyway."

Greg was careful enough to not choke this time, and deduced his best way forward was to just move on - to change the subject. But the best way wasn't normally the fun way, so he refused to drop the matter.

"Unlike the Delawares, the Blackfurs are nowhere near the edge of poverty. The little seat-stealer doesn't need more toys."

"Do you know anything about kids his age? There'll never be enough toys. Has Enora ever had enough weapons?"

"That's different," he defended, raising his index finger like she normally did. "She's training to defend herself when she grows up."

"Shooting a bastard with a crossbow is an offense, not defense."

"Using offense is a defense. And one can never wield too many weapons."

"Those are toys too, Greg," Sush noted with narrowed eyes.

"Toys that have better applications in the real world. You're a huntress. You'd know that."

Shaking her head with a smile, conveniently choosing not to mention that the hunters of today used guns and other heavy machinery - never crossbows or arrows, she then prompted, "Who's next after Porsha Delaware?"

"The twins - Regina and Austin Chen. Chameleons. At seventeen, they created a system that hacked into any hackers' account when one

invaded their private files, sending over a computer virus to wipe out the hackers' hardware completely."

"Nice."

"When they joined the hunters, there's nothing to show that they utilized those skills, seeing that they were chameleons."

"That's a waste."

"My thoughts exactly. And the final one: Shahrul Ibrahim from the east - wiretapped his teacher's phone at the age of twelve after being verbally abused in class. He later released a recording of some very explicit content."

"Of?"

"That teacher and his mistress. Word spread throughout their region. The two were forced to resign."

"Wow, a legend of an octopus right there." Closing the empty box, she piped, "They were all precocious hackers and privacy invaders... which means they've invaded the privacy of someone who had the resources to remove them. Could the mavericks find anything? Any particular person they've all pissed off?"

"I haven't told them yet. Thought I'd run it through you first."

Brows shooting to her hair, she said, "The mavericks are under your command."

"And the hunters' archives - which are all that I've been digging through - are under yours. I don't have sole jurisdiction here." He stood, grabbed her empty box and his own and headed for the trash.


Her brows furrowed. "You've never needed my permission before deploying your people before."

The corner of his mouth tilted in a way that made her insides flutter. He came back over with eyes fixed on hers, leaning forward to press a kiss to her shoulder, murmuring, "I wonder what changed."

When their faces leveled, she stole a kiss from his lips, forgetting about her suspension and everything else for a few moments, feeling the warmth of his lips, tasting the saltiness in his mouth, getting lost in the dance between their tongues as her hands trailed all over him while his hands groped every part of her. Their touches were filled with a different kind of need - not the primal, lusty kind, but the kind where two souls yearned for the deep connection they could only find in each other.

Chapter Comments



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