

Out Of The Shadows: Tilda's Brilliant Second Life

Chapter 07

Chapter 7 Welcome Back, Queen

Tilda chose a motel for two reasons.

First, it was cheap.

Second, it kept her off the radar.

Finished

Hotels asked for ID at check-in, and even if she hid behind a cap and sunglasses, it wouldn't help now—her face and name were already plastered everywhere.

"Sure thing," the cab driver said with a nod. He looked like he'd been in the business for years, someone who knew every street in the area. Requests like hers didn't surprise him.

But then...

"Miss, you just came from that fancy neighborhood up on the hill, right? Isn't that where the Jensons live?"

He glanced at her again. "You look familiar. Have we met?"

As he spoke, something seemed to click for him. Right on cue, the radio buzzed with another breaking story about the real Jensons heiress.

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"I'm not her," Tilda said coolly. "I've got nothing to do with them."

"Oh. My mistake. It's just... The Jensons have been all over the news today."

"It's fine."

Minutes later, the cab pulled up to a small, run-down motel tucked on a quiet street. Tilda paid the fare, checked in, and let herself into the room.

She dropped her suitcase onto the floor, pulled out her phone, and made a call.

A cheesy ringtone blared. Don't tell me it's not worth trying for; you can't tell me it's not worthy of dying for...

The phone was soon connected..

“Queen! Oh my god, it’s really you!” The voice on the other end practically exploded with excitement. “I thought you were gone for good! You vanished off the dark web and swore you’d never come back!”

Tilda had expected the reaction. She pulled the phone slightly away from her ear.

“Andy, I need cash. I’m taking jobs again. Got anything quick?”

“You’re coming back?!” Andy Saville practically shouted. Damn! The dark web’s about to erupt in chaos again!

“Queen,” he added with a mix of awe and excitement, “with your record, landing work will be a piece of cake. Give me a little time—I’ll find something for you.”

He hung up before she could respond.

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Chapter 7 Welcome Back, Queen

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Tilda pulled a sleek laptop from her backpack and set it on the desk. The moment it powered up, her fingers danced over the keys, entering a long string of passwords.

A familiar screen appeared—a massive bronze door with a blood–red skull set deep in the center.

Then came a voice. Low. Old. Creepy enough to crawl under the skin.

“Welcome back, Queen.”

"I'm back," she whispered.

She never thought she'd log in again.

The Dark Web—true to its name—was a hidden network linking the world's underground.

The place offered every kind of job imaginable, things most people wouldn't even believe existed.

Black-market auctions. Contract killings. Hacking... If something was illegal, it could be found here.

Of course, you needed more than curiosity to get into the Dark Web. You had to have the right connections. -and enough money and influence—to become a client. Miss one, and you were out.

As for the contractors who could log in and take jobs, every single one of them had skills most people couldn't even dream of. To get an account, you had to survive the administrator's ability test—pass it, and you'd earn your own login and password.

Tilda was one of them; she had passed years ago.

Codename: Queen.

She had ruled this space once—a legend among hackers.

And now, word of her return ripped through the Dark Web like a shockwave.

Her inbox blew up. Message after message poured in.

"Queen's back?!"

She opened her profile, deleted the old status—"Retired. Gone for good."

Replaced it with just two words: "I'm back."

That alone sent the entire network into chaos.

Queen had returned.

Hackers everywhere were celebrating.

In their world, Queen was a legend. She was the one who cracked Motrar's firewall—something experts had called unbreakable. The code was flawless, or so they thought. Queen found the weak spot, exploited it, and tore it down. The breach was so severe, the country had to rebuild its entire system from scratch.

That single job put her at the very top.

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Chapter 7 Welcome Back, Queen

People called her the best hacker alive.

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If Queen couldn't find it, it simply didn't exist.

A month ago, she'd shocked everyone by announcing she was retiring, then deactivated her account. The rumor mill went wild—had something happened to her?

Now, the mystery was over.

Queen was back.

Tilda's phone buzzed again.

"Queen, I've got something for you. Need a terrorist group's firewall taken down. Five million. Payment's instant."

"Done."

She had her own code when it came to work:

Rule One – Never take a job that threatened national security.

Rule Two Never cross the line of basic human decency.

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Rule Three – Never turn against the innocent.

Because of those rules, even with her reputation on the dark web, there were plenty of jobs she refused. Clients who could post there were almost always knee-deep in something shady. But this one? This was precisely the kind of mission she liked.

Her fingers flew across the keyboard, lines of code spilling down the screen like a waterfall. To anyone else, it would've looked like nonsense—random symbols, numbers, and commands. To her, it was music.

The terrorist network's firewall folded under her attack like it was nothing but cardboard.

"All done," she told Andy.

"Perfect. I'll wire the money—same account?"

"Yeah. Andy, your cut's a million—"

"Forget it," he cut in. "Call it a welcome-back gift. You donated everything when you left. I'm guessing you're dealing with a lot right now. And trust me, money's good to have."

"Thank you."

A small smile touched her lips.

This—this rush—was what she'd missed.

Being given a second chance was a gift, and she wasn't about to waste it pretending to be someone she wasn't. No more silencing her instincts for the sake of a fake family.

Andy hesitated, then asked carefully, "Queen ... didn't you find your real family? Wasn't that why you quit?"

To keep them safe? You even gave away everything you'd earned."

"I don't have a family," Tilda said, her tone firm. "From now on, I belong to no one. I live for myself."

Her voice was clear, sharp, and steady—leaving no room for doubt.

In the entire dark web, there was only one person she trusted: Andy.

And Andy knew her story.

His chest tightened for her. He knew life at home hadn't been easy.

Who would've guessed that the legendary Queen was a nineteen-year-old student—an orphan? She'd finally tracked down her birth family, only for it to end like this.

Andy knew how badly Tilda had yearned for love. But the stronger the craving, the deeper the cut when it turned on you.

Her heart must have been in pieces.

"Don't worry, Queen. I got you. If anything happens, I'll be there for you. Even if the whole world turns on you, I'll stand with you. Always. I believe in you."

"Thank you, Andy. You're my best friend. Always."

There was a pause, then Andy said, "One more thing. Someone with your same blood type contacted me."