

Under the Heiress' Facade

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James was stunned. 'Unbelievable. Who is this Raven you keep talking about?' He was unfamiliar with the world of hackers and their hierarchy, but he reckoned Raven must be quite a formidable force if his presence could set the city abuzz.

"He's supposedly an elite hacker wanted by the International Police after he breached Miridian's satellite system," Gideon explained. He worked in intelligence and had gathered some basic information on Raven.

He continued, "Raven was also S's protégé. S was the hacker who rose to fame after he single-handedly stopped Miridian from breaching our national defense system and left theirs crippled for a week.

"After their embarrassing defeat, Miridian tried to capture S and convince him to work with them. Needless to say, they failed to persuade him.'

Gino piped up somberly, "Even though Miridian accused Raven of breaching their satellite system, rumor has it that he actually patched up the weak link in their system. I bet they're pulling the same old trick.

"They'll arrest Raven as a criminal on paper and acquire him for their own operations. I doubt the Department of Defense would let them get away with it, though.'

His excitement was palpable. He was only invested in the matter because of Raven. He wanted to meet the legendary hacker and persuade the latter to take him under his wing if the opportunity presented itself.

With his adorable face, he might just succeed in winning Raven over! If playing up his endearing childish charms was what it took to become Raven's protégé, he would do it. After that, he would brag about it to Hera and Bernard!

"Huh. You seem to know a lot,' Gideon praised as he gave Gino a surprised look.

Gino said righteously, "Of course! I'm going to be the world's best hacker one day."

The sky had darkened by the time the car slowly pulled up outside XS Corporation. Several military squads had been mobilized for crowd control outside the building. A few influencers and media personnel had gathered among the crowd to get the latest scoop.

The internet and major streaming platforms were abuzz with news of XS Corporation awaiting Raven's arrival at their third-anniversary party. A couple of platforms even experienced a server crash due to overwhelming traffic

Because of this, the general public grew curious about Raven too, only to be startled when they clicked into the live streaming.

Several influencers were broadcasting live from XS Corporation, updating their viewers on what was happening among the guests.

"Hello, everyone, apparently Miridian's bounty for Raven has increased from 100 thousand dollars to a million dollars on the Cyber Web! Oh my gosh, that's right, folks! A million whopping dollars!

"Can you believe it? All you have to do to become a millionaire is to find Raven! Miridian must be desperate!"

"Just moments ago, the National Space Administration of Elpswich put out a ten-million-dollar bounty on Raven to encourage the world to help them track down Raven. From the looks of it, Elpswich is intent on stealing Raven from Miridian!"

"Folks, it looks like the deputy commissioner of the National Space Administration is here as well! That explains why the traffic has been so terrible in Norburgh today."

"I'm seeing a familiar license plate pulling up here... Goodness, isn't that Astral Nova's car? Has the organization sent someone here to hijack Raven, too? Even Rhett Killian, the CEO of Killian Corporation, is here! And so are the CEOs of several domestic microchip companies!"

Those watching the live streams commented, "Stop yapping and show us what's happening at the entrance! Am I entitled to the reward if I find Raven while watching the livestream?"

"I'm dying to know who Raven is!"

"So am I! I can't wait to be a millionaire!"

"What a time to be alive. Who would've thought we'd be united through our search for Raven?"

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Over at the CEO's office at XS Corporation, Bernard stood straight and tall before the floor-to-ceiling windows, his long fingers wrapped around a glass of wine as he swirled the ruby-colored liquid around.

He imperiously surveyed the crowd below the building as if they were no better than pests.

"Bernard, Samson just called and said he's handled the matter with the International Police," Aaron said, knocking on the door as he entered.

Bernard hummed in response and fished out his phone. He sent a text and elegantly took a sip of wine, a smile curling his lips.

Aaron joined him by the floor-to-ceiling windows and stared at the crowd below. He sighed. "I wonder what Chad will make of this spectacle you've put on."

"Don't bring him up on a day like this. You'll just spoil my celebratory mood," Bernard drawled.

Aaron pursed his lips. There was a celebratory mood indeed. Today marked the third anniversary since Bernard had gone against his family. He changed the topic and asked, "So who's this Raven guy?"

"Curious, huh?" Bernard cut him a sidelong glance.

Aaron nodded. He hadn't been interested before but grew curious about Raven's identity after seeing the commotion and hearing about Elpswich's ten-million-dollar reward for anyone who found the famous hacker. Bernard said curtly, "Go look for her yourself."

Aaron shot Bernard a withering look. He jested, "Do you not know who Raven is, too?"

"I'm waiting for confirmation," Bernard answered. He looked at his phone and found no reply to the message he had sent earlier.

Shock colored Aaron's face. "What? If you aren't sure, why would you have Samson go-"
"He was cut off when the door opened and Theo walked in. Pursing his lips, he dropped the matter entirely.

"Rhett and his son are here, Bernard. Word has it that they want Raven to develop microchips for Killian Corporation," Theo reported.

Bernard snorted but made no reply

Theo continued, "Also, Douglas said Ms. Youngworth is arriving soon."

Bernard's smirk instantly disappeared and was replaced by a wry smile when he heard this. He had been right when he guessed Hera would show up.

"I'm going down to the fray. I leave the rest to you," he said, handing Theo his wine glass.

"Yes, Mr. Killian," Theo replied.

Meanwhile, Hera was scrolling the news in Damian's minivan. Leon, who was also following the latest news update, exclaimed in surprise, "Damn, Boss! You're famous! Everyone's looking for you.

"With the frenzy you've caused, you don't suppose they'll shred you into pieces if they discover your identity, do you?"

Hera had finished scrolling through the trending topics and the latest updates on the Cyber Web. She never thought she would be capable of stirring up such discourse. She wondered if S would give her an earful at the anniversary party.

She texted Samantha and asked about the investigation. The latter called her a second later. "Hera! I have the results. The case has been verified, and you are on the wanted list! Also, the bounty has been increased from 100 thousand dollars to a million dollars!

"They all received word that you'd be attending XS Corporation's third-anniversary party, so they'll be moving out tonight. As far as I know, Noburgh is in utter chaos. You can't go to XS Corporation tonight, or you'll be

arrested!"

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"I'm on my way to XS Corporation." Hera glanced out the window. When she spotted XS Corporation's office building, she added, "Actually, I'm already here."

Samantha wailed sharply, "No, Hera! Don't do it! If you're captured, I'll have to visit you in prison if I miss you! How will I cope?"

"Shut up before you jinx me. I came to see someone and meet my mentor. I'll leave after that," Hera promised. Samantha sobbed. "Do you think my royal guards would arrive in time to protect you if I mobilize them now?"

"Don't bother," Hera declined the offer. She was better off navigating through this predicament alone. She would risk exposing her identity if she had an entourage tailing her.

When the minivan rolled to a stop outside the office building, she said to Samantha, 'I'm outside the building. I'll talk to you later.'

Hera had only just hung up when she spotted the message notification for Dr. Shadow. She clicked into her account and saw a message from the Grandmaster of Astral Nova. "I have a present for you."

A picture followed the message. Her eyes widened when she clicked on it, and the first thought that crossed her mind was how he knew she was Raven.

She and the Grandmaster of Astral Nova had gone head-to-head a few times on the internet, but she didn't recall leaving any traces behind. The only thing that might have given her away was the record of the transaction she made with Astral Nova, but the record had already been deleted.

She grew uneasy and suspicious. However, she knew she had to keep a level head during these confrontations. She shouldn't expect anything less from someone who had managed to become Grandmaster of Astral Nova.

A small smile tugged on Hera's lips as she replied, "Thanks. Let's meet up later, Vulcan."

Now that her cover was blown, she had nothing to hide anymore. Vulcan was the entire reason she even wanted to attend the anniversary party in the first place.

"Boss, maybe you should go through the back entrance with us. Your identity will be exposed the moment you present your invite, and you might get dragged away before you can even enter the hall," Leon suggested worriedly as he assessed the cops outside.

When the Grandmaster of Astral Nova did not respond, Hera pocketed her phone and unbuckled her seatbelt. "I'll be fine. Besides, Damian will shove me into a cellar if I don't stop third-wheeling you guys."

She shot Damian, who was scowling in the backseat, a wry look as she said this.

Leon cleared his throat. "And what will you do later?"

"Don't worry, they won't catch me." Hera opened the door and got out of the car after that.

Leon wanted to go with her and fulfill his obligations as an assistant, but Damian stopped him. "Leave her be, babe. She has her own way of solving things."

When Rhett and Frederick arrived outside XS Corporation, Frederick was stunned to see the nationwide hunt for Raven. They thought XS Corporation was their only rival and had planned to beat Theo into recruiting Raven, but they never expected to go against the entire country.

Their initial confidence waned as they decided to play by ear instead.

The father-and-son duo were getting their invites verified at the entrance when Frederick inadvertently noticed Hera stepping out of the minivan. His eyes lit up at once.

Even though the car door had closed behind her a second later, he spotted Leon in the vehicle with someone else.

If Leon was Raven's assistant, then the mysterious figure in the car had to be the infamous hacker himself! "Dad, I found Raven. He's in that car!" Frederick said in hushed tones. "Leon is in the car with him."

Rhett followed his son's gaze and spotted Hera first. Spite flashed in his eyes before he diverted his attention to the minivan heading toward the basement parking lot. "Go after them!" he ordered.

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Hera made her way to the entrance and brushed past Rhett and Frederick, who were heading in the opposite direction. A smirk played on her lips when she turned and caught them running after Damian's minivan.

She faced forward again and went through the main entrance, her stilettos clacking against the floor as the reporters did a double take. They couldn't believe even Dr. Shadow herself had shown up for Raven.

The reporters surged forward, vying for Hera's comments. However, the security was tight, and the crowd control held them back

"Invitation, please," said the security guard who stopped Hera at the entrance.

Hera was about to fish her invitation from her purse when a kid in a suit ran out of the hall. Gino announced, "She's my sister!"

He had been waiting at the receptionist's desk and watching every guest that arrived, hoping to find Raven among them. He didn't expect to see Hera, and he bet she was here to ask Raven to take her under his wing, too!

Gino praised his own quick thinking. If he hadn't come, Hera would have one-upped him again.

Not many children were in attendance, and Gino had been loitering around the front desk while the guests filed into the building. The security guard recognized him and let Hera through before she could produce her invitation.

Neither of them knew dozens of people in different corners of the building were watching the quests through the security camera over the entrance.

They were hackers who ranked within the top 100 in the world, and hacking into a security system was child's play to them.

Besides, they hadn't done anything abhorrent. They had simply adjusted the security camera angle so that they could read each invite that the arriving guests presented to the guards. They could only assume XS Corporation was tolerating their behavior in the absence of outright reprimand.

The nationwide search for Raven came down to one's skill set. Naturally, plenty of hackers were hoping to uncover the identities of S and Vulcan. Uncovering Raven's was just a bonus.

Inside the hall, Hera asked Gino, "What are you doing here?"

Gino gave her a look as if to tell her to drop her act because he had seen through her intentions. He answered, "Same reason as you."

Hera cast him a sidelong glance. "And you know what I'm doing here?"

"You're here to seek mentorship so you can level up!" Gino declared.

She fell speechless at this. One of these days, she ought to look into the child's head and examine the cause of his wild imagination.

"You can join Dad and Gideon upstairs. I'll hang around here for a bit," Gino said when he saw more guests stopping at the entrance and dismissed Hera with a wave of his hand.

"Who are you waiting for?" Hera asked almost instinctively.

Flashing her a cryptic look, Gino said, "My mentor."

"Since when do you have a mentor? Did you even finish the books I gave you?" Hera asked, unable to hide her surprise.

Cino did not take his eyes off the entrance. "I'm still reading them, but becoming a protégé won't get in the way of my reading. Once I find the person I'm looking for, I'll ask him to take me under his wing."

Hera rolled her eyes. "Have fun waiting, then." She had business to attend to.

As she walked toward the elevator, Gino stopped her. "Wait, what day is today?"

She looked at his dark, round eyes as he stared at her expectantly. She took two chocolates from her purse which were leftover from this morning and handed them to him. "It's Children's Day, meant to celebrate petulant little punks like you."

Gino cringed but took the chocolates. He unwrapped one and popped it into his mouth, savoring the milky sweetness.

When the receptionist saw this, she nearly gasped at the kid's double standards. When she gave him candy earlier, he refused her and said Children's Day was for babies, not eight-year-olds.

The third-anniversary party was held at the rooftop banquet hall, which teemed with people as the titans and elites from various industries rubbed shoulders.

Hera had only just stepped out of the elevator when she spied a familiar figure standing by the banquet hall entrance.

He wore a white suit, and his short curls had grown out since she last saw him. He had styled his hair in a half- up-do, and his ivory skin was now sunkissed. He did not look as effeminate as before, his delicately chiseled features appearing more rough-hewn and masculine.

Chapter 485

Tyler had spotted Hera, too. He set his wine glass on a tray carried by a passing waiter and walked over to her. "Hey, baby. Long time no see." The last time Hera had seen him was after they exchanged numbers. Summer had yet to come, yet Tyler sported sunkissed skin that seemed at odds with the current weather. "Did you go to Astenia?"

Tyler blinked. "How did you know?"

Hera made no reply. So, she was right.

"Can we talk somewhere a little more private?" Tyler asked, pointing at the corridor.

All Hera wanted to do was to find Vulcan as soon as possible. She did not want to waste time on an idle conversation with Tyler. "What do you want to talk about? Out with it."

He clicked his tongue impatiently. "Have you always been this cold?"

"Look, if it isn't something important, can we talk about it some other day? I'm kind of busy here," she pointed out, glowering at him.

Tyler grumbled something that sounded a lot like "so cold-hearted" and asked more coherently, "What are you doing here anyway?"

"That's none of your concern," Hera said curtly, making to push him aside and continue on her merry way.

However, Tyler stopped her.

"I thought you wanted to meet me."

She stopped and turned to eye him with surprise. "You mean, you're..." She trailed off. Was he Vulcan? But he couldn't be. The Grandmaster of Astral Nova was Vulcan, and she had already eliminated the possibility of Tyler being the grandmaster after testing him the last time.

Tyler flashed her a cryptic smile and headed toward the end of the corridor. Hera, still suspicious, followed him silently.

Using his phone, he unlocked one of the office doors and gave her a meaningful look, indicating for her to enter.

Hera had seen him use a decoding program to gain entry into the office. She did not hesitate and entered.

The office was not large, but it was empty. She glanced at her phone and saw no reply from the Grandmaster of Astral Nova. She quickly sent him a question mark before meeting Tyler's gaze.

He showed no emotion or reaction as he entered after her and closed the door. "You've been very bad, Raven." Gone was the playful facade as he looked at her, his tone terse and his expression somber

Hera's brows furrowed as she leveled an inquisitive stare at him. "How so?"

Tyler raised a brow. "You really think it's a good idea to stir up such a buzz before your account gets unblocked?"

Hera blinked. She could not hide her shock as she demanded, "Mr. S?"

He nodded once, his face

inscrutable as he said tersely, "I had your account blocked for half a year so you could lay low for a while, but you just had to push the boundaries. Why did you come if you knew everyone was looking for Raven?"

He really was S!

She tolerated the admonishment but did not acknowledge her mistake. She stared at Tyler's youthful face so handsome and delicately chiseled that he bordered on

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effeminate, and his thick curls. She

was confused.

All this while, she had thought S was a balding old man with wrinkles and a myriad of ailments.

Tyler had deliberately put on a stern and unsmiling facade customary of a mentor, but to his surprise, Hera did not look sorry at all. She even gave him an odd look.

He couldn't keep up the no-nonsense act any longer. Resuming his playful and laid-back demeanor, he drawled teasingly, "So, what do you think? I'm hotter than you expected, right?"

Hera nodded. "Yes. You're healthy. Your limbs look strong, you still have a full head of hair, and your skin is as flawless as a newborn's."

The corner of Tyler's lips twitched in disbelief as he processed her words. "So, you're telling me that before this, you thought I was some balding old man with worn-out limbs?"