Boredom came easily to those with all the money in the world.

That revelation hit me like a steam train not too long into retirement. No more worrying about the electric bill, the Wi-Fi bill, the gas bill, the water bill, medical insurance or having enough cash in a wallet to tip the hardworking waiters at a restaurant. Nowadays, my weeks were spent trying to either better myself or alleviate the creeping, crawling desire to tear some shit up after ten long years since my last job practically set me for life.

My usual morning started by waking up an hour before dawn, followed by a casual stroll around the condominium’s nearby park and a nice cold shower afterward. Then, I experimented between new breakfast recipes or accepting one of my neighbors’ invitations to eat out for brunch, usually resulting in a conversation dominated by the grocery prices or the rumor mill.

“UCLE is being unfair to Jonathan.” Mrs. Beverly, the overweight middle-aged otter living right below me, scoffed as she sipped on her Bloody Mary. “He didn’t do anything wrong. So, what? He has a tiny bit of pot inside of his dorm. It’s not a handgun.”

“And I thought smoking the stuff was legal in California.” I mentioned, to which Mrs. Beverly and Leo, our fellow condominium neighbors, snickered before returning to his dish. “I am sorry to hear how they’re treating your grandson, Mara.”

“Don’t worry about it, Carmen.” Mrs. Beverly waved it off. “My husband knows a good lawyer who will help convince the Dean to give him another chance.”

“A good lawyer in L.E. What’s the punchline?” Leo shook his mane in laughter as Mrs. Beverly join in. Then, the thirty-something lion sighed as he dug his fork into the omelet he’d ordered. “So, Carmen, what do you have planned this week?”

“Not much.” I shrugged, casually swishing my tail at my chair. “I’m thinking of going on a vacation sometime this summer. Tied between Oasis or maybe Golden Gate.”

“I recommend Oasis, sweetie.” Mrs. Beverly chuckled, “If you want to ever hook up with men, your best bet is over there. Golden Gate’s full of homosexuals. Ah, no offense, Leo.”

“None taken, Mrs. Beverly.” Leo cackled between bites of his food. “Speaking of which, Tim just asked me to come visit his family this Thanksgiving. He insisted after our last date.”

Once upon a time in Las Estrellas, I didn’t live in a luxury condo. An orphaned vixen like me grew up a modest lower-class foster home in northern California. It certainly didn’t have three bedrooms, two bathrooms (one with a new jacuzzi), one corner office, or a large granite kitchen next to an equally massive dining room, let alone an overlook balcony perfectly positioned towards the Pacific Ocean. As far as my neighbors knew, I was just a single forty-three-year-old red vixen who got lucky winning the lottery.

Following brunch, I decided to spend another day hopping between the local museums, then once again drive to Griffin Observatory for another tour. A new exhibit or three caught my attention, while nothing else changed. I swear, even the guides from the previous week were at their same post, wearing the same clothes. By the time the summer sunset fell over my apartment, I started bemusing which food to have ordered for dinner.

Dinner went to the back of my mind though when I noticed the front door unlocked.

“Shit.” I went in without thinking, half-expecting to see a burglar on the other side, ready for a firm beating he’d least expect. “Hello?”

My tail bristled at seeing nothing out of place. Everything, from the flatscreen TVs, the laptop, the desktop computer, the bookshelves, its paperback contents, several photographs, small knick-knack sculptures, and paintings I’d legitimately bought, the one *Le pigeon aux petits pois* I told visitors was a replica I bought online, as well as my clothes and furniture…they remained untouched. I started questioning my own memory when my amber eyes fell on a manila envelope taped to the refrigerator.

*Sorry to scare you, Ms. Carmen Eden. Please read.*

Laughter bubbled like molasses. The clinical and experienced side of my brain told me not to open it. It told me to toss the manila envelope in the recycling bin, then call the condominium’s security guard. Plus, whoever broke in could still be around.

Something compelled me to snatch the envelope, then tear it open. Maybe my instincts were fading due to retirement? Maybe boredom got the best of me? Whatever the reason, I ripped the envelope open and read the contents, where my would-be-intruder next instructed me to call a provided number that no doubt couldn’t be properly traced. When you used to be well-known thief like me, an extra instinct in your gut made you realize it could always be a trap.

Which was why I tried tracing the call anyway. Connecting my smartphone to my desktop computer, I ran the tracing software program my past self never bothered removing. I did make sure to update it though, then entered the number and hit ‘call’.

“…hello, Ms. Eden.” Answered a distorted male voice. “How are you today?”

“Fine, just fine.” I kept my voice composed as I started running the program. “A burglar broke into my home though. Doesn’t appear they took anything except my good night’s sleep.”

“Apologies, but it was the best way to gain your attention.” Replied the electronic voice.

“A simple phone call would have sufficed,” I argued.

“I don’t think you would appreciate having our discussions about your past on your personal emails, or in the flesh and fur.” His next words made me freeze. “Would you, Ace of Hearts?”

My fingernails dug into the fine leather of the office chair. I bought it using the same money as my last score. It cost roughly eight-hundred dollars, a drop in the ocean to what the heist provided me in the grand scheme of things. The computer cost twice as much, and the tracing program…well, I couldn’t remember exactly. Still, it did its job and kept tracing the call between Las Estrellas, Liberty Hill, then down to South America and all the way to an island in the Philippines.

“…what is this about?” I finally asked, giving an exhaustive breath. “If you’ve read the papers and online forums about me, then you’ll know the scoundrel went underground. She went dark after that big heist, and likely retired.”

“Yet you continue to go to museums and auction houses, correct?” The voice continued surprising me further. “Seems more like you’re imagining what the next score would be like?”

I bit my lower lip. Nothing but my face indicated he wasn’t half-true.

“Ms. Eden. We’ve been watching your retirement for a few weeks now. Took a while to find you, honestly, but don’t worry. We’re not going to tip off the authorities to where the missing money is.”

“Oh, aren’t you the charmer?” I asked, sounding almost bemused despite my eyes glaring daggers at the software to go faster and find the caller’s true origin. “If it’s because you’re interested in a date, I’m sorry to burst your bubble. I don’t swing in any direction.”

Laughter filled the other line. It belonged to more than one person.

“Neither do I.” The voice answered, and by coincidence, he revealed a name by saying, “You might know me as ‘Themis’, the founder and leader of a hacker-activist group you may or may not have heard on the news lately.”

“Of course, I’ve heard of re: Sonance.” I scoffed on the other end, still eyeing for the signal to be found onscreen. “One of my neighbors’ teen boys went through an ‘techno anarchist’ phase and loved mentioning your little club...”

Not to say I didn’t hold some respect for the hacktivist group. Much like myself during my heist days, re: Sonance targeted the most disliked and opulent of groups. What separated them from the A$$holes or any other would-be Internet vigilantes were how centralized and successful their operations were. Just the previous year, they harassed a rather violent carnivore supremacy organization from building a remote compound near Lakertown.

“Seeing how we’re being casual then,” Themis spoke up, “I’ll get straight to the point: I firmly believe your involvement in our ranks will be beneficial for us both. You’re restless in retirement. Me and my colleagues require a woman of your experience and talents. Not every operation of ours can be accomplished from a laptop. Together, we could make real, factual change to the world.”

The tracer continued doing its work, yet my attention found itself drifting towards the phantom hacktivist leader’s words. After a careful moment of thought, I reached over to turn the program off, then held the phone close. I could have just hung up. My night and ensuing week ahead could have remained uneventful and without serious obstacles in the way. The rest of my days could simply be spent bubbled away from all the troubles in the world, just like the same people I used to steal from.

Sighing, I decided, *What the Hell? Why not? Leon Muskrät and all the other billionaires can suck my nonexistent dick.*

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*“If you’re interested in becoming a member of re: Sonance, then we would like to know you’re still capable. I assume you’ve heard of Gordon Marshall, Vice President, and Supervising Editor of Marshall & Liman Publications? Ever since his dad gave him a big position in the company, they’ve been publishing more…controversial novels, to say the least. When the themes and characters aren’t anti-gay, anti-women, or simply not as well-written as previous successful works, Gordon has been rumored to hold similar views whenever the cameras or microphones are turned off. He's also frequented on hookup apps like Howlr as of late since a divorce last year. Our current mission is to perform a classic honey trap on the old wolf when he’s visiting a book convention in downtown Las Estrellas. Can you prepare in a few weeks?”*

Prepare, I did. In the years since my supposed last mission, nothing felt more exciting than pulling out my old equipment collecting dust in the closet. A fur makeup kit, some pickpocketing tools, and a deck filled with Ace of Hearts cards among them. Looking at them led to a sense of nostalgia wafting over me.

Was I bored in retirement? Yes. Did returning to my old ways elevate the risks of getting caught and sent to prison? Absolutely. How much did I feel giddy at the thought of finally stealing something once more? Plenty. The thought of returning to mischief made my tail wag faster than I tried bothering to remember. So, I prepared for the job (or op, as Themis called it).

Finding the convention was far from difficult. One glance at Mr. Marshall’s social media accounts showed him advertising it the location and what authors of his would be joining. I simply needed to do some research into the building’s exits, followed by a look at the convention's scheduling and where the wolf would likely be in-between events. Lastly, I went straight to work on my makeup. If I wanted to continue having an apartment to return to between jobs, I needed to make myself look like anything but a vixen with bright red fur.

One pair of blue contacts to cover my natural amber orbs, then black markings on my muzzle and greyed fur all over my upper body, and a dash or two of purple streaks to my ponytailed headfur made me appear like an arctic fox during summertime. Some round glasses further led to the illusion I was an adorably shy thirty-something bookworm.

A week before the downtown convention, Themis sent me the name of his secretive Howlr profile, and I set up my own account on the popular hookup app. Safe to say, the moment I sent him some faceless breast pics, the dick pics from him came aplenty.

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: [sent a photo]***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: what do you think babe?***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: think u can handle this?***

Of all the few dick pics I’d seen in my lifetime, his could be categorized as impressive by sexual standards. His wolfish cock stood erect in the middle of a closed bathroom stall, the shaft pulsing and apparently dripping with pre. A corner of the hastily taken photo showed his pants and underwear lying on the linoleum floor, with some dollar bills poking out of his wallet in the pocket. I didn’t know if it was intentional and didn’t care, instead sending him another picture.

***Needy\_Vixen: [sent a photo]***

***Needy\_Vixen: Can you handle me?***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: oh fuck***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: wanna pound that cunt til u moan***

I rolled my eyes. It's astounding the number of amateur pictures involving an arctic vixen’s leaking vagina as she’s in heat is so vast, I didn’t even need to look far on the Internet.

Between his recurrent duties as a leading editor at a mainstream publishing company and my preparations for the eventual night, Themis instructed me what to do. The plan involved me attending the big book convention, then messaging Marshall and letting him see my location. We would be only less than a thousand feet apart. Then, he’d take the bait and invite me to the hotel room he’d be using for his trip upstairs. When I gave the signal, a re: Sonance field operative would perform the next important role of the plan.

Days went by as I practiced changing my voice. I made sure to emphasize the Californian dialect that’d grown on me while peppering in some Midwestern nasaling. The first day of the convention, I’d already booked a last-minute ticket to get inside the Ascendancy Inn, then messaged Themis through a coded messaging app. I felt ready. Themis told me he was ready too.

We were ready to see if I could be re: Sonance material.

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The Ascendancy Hotel wasn’t one of the more expensive hotels in Las Estrellas, but it certainly had the distinction of catering to ‘new money’. Marshall definitely counted among those kinds of celebrities. Wealthy, charismatic, loved to spend outwardly limitless disposable income, semi-autonomous from their parents’ shadows, and almost as talkative as any politician.

“Now without further ado,” my target for the evening held the microphone in his big paws, “I’d like to introduce you to the beautiful and charming author to the sequel of Legion’s Champion, Miss Sierra Paulson!”

Everybody in the hotel’s art deco-themed meeting room clapped as a bubbly mink in a summer dress stood up behind the table and waved. She seemed no older than a college graduate.

The panel went okay. Miss Paulson talked about her book, answered questions, revealed a medium-budget book trailer for the third novel in her series. What captured my attention was when I felt a familiar wolf’s eyes on me across the room. Did he recognize me?

He disappeared midway through the panel and returned eight minutes later. I felt a hot buzzing in my purse, and I knew precisely why. The ivory fangs shining between his grinning lips in my general direction said enough.

*Lecherous, smug horndog can’t even support his authors without sending a dick pic.*

The foul-mouthed thought came and went as quick as the frown on my bright muzzle. A quick second later, and I joined everyone else in standing up once questions were over. While most left to go to the next panel or grab a drink, some stayed behind to visit Miss Paulson. The quiet side of me wished the mink luck in her authorial endeavors for the future. If I didn’t require keeping low and interacting with as few furs as possible during the mission, I’d probably would’ve gone to the table to buy some of her books and get them signed.

Oh well. I could always purchase an eBook.

The rest of the convention appeared to be massively popular. Whichever panel I went to, whether it be one connected to Marshall & Liman Publications or a joint venture advertising their own works together, everyone attending had a good time. Some cosplayed as characters I’d never heard of or vaguely remembered seeing online in fanart, while most congregated in the hallways. Another message buzzed in my purse, and I pulled it out.

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: [sent you a photo]***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: u in the hotel?***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: Im free at 8. Just gotta deal w/ a dyke @ work***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: I got a room upstairs if u want this dick***

***DTF\_WolfDaddy: u interested?***

***Needy\_Vixen: what’s the room # sexy?***

Between my last message and him sending me the room number, I made sure to remove my phone from the Ascendancy Inn’s Wi-Fi before messaging Themis. I told him the plan was in motion and I’d meet Marshall for our hookup at 8:00 precisely. The re: Sonance operative would commence part two of the plan three minutes later. Until then, I would need to stall things during the encounter before things got out of hand.

“I’m well-aware you’re being put in a risky position.” He messaged me one final time. “The moment he goes too far for you, or you feel too uncomfortable to continue with the charade, nobody will judge you. We are aware though you can handle yourself quite fine, but I still thought I’d remind you you’ll be on a team who can help. Good Luck, Ace.”

Part of me wondered if Themis or the rest of re: Sonance suspected how I didn’t care for romantic or sexual relationships towards any gender. Or, if he were just being a gentleman by stating I didn’t need to lower the bar on myself to degrading levels in order to prove myself to the hacktivist organization. Even if Themis did have suspicions of my sexuality, he wouldn’t need to worry about ‘poor little old me’.

The previous time I entered a hotel with the intent of committing a crime had been a few years prior to my final job. Younger and bolder, my eyes were set on stealing an African tribal mask placed behind protective glass inside one of Great Britain’s museums, then selling the artifact to a dictator who wanted it ‘returned’ to its proper homeland—for a modest sum, of course. Getting to it had been easy after luring the lesbian security guard to a hotel room after her shift, then swiping her security clearance card and stealing the artifact the same night. I didn’t even feel bad for the lioness afterward. She’d been a lousy lover who couldn’t do her job, let alone figure out a fake moan from a real moan.

Same could be said for Gordon Marshall, apparently. Not a minute before eight, I knocked on the door to the wolf’s hotel room, and he answered it wearing a lavish black bathrobe meant to camouflage with his fur. Marshall welcomed me with the inviting smile of a real estate agent confident in a great sale.

“You look lovely today, Miss…?” He trailed off, expecting me to give a name.

“Vixen will do.” I giggled, to which the brute chuckled.

“Works very well for me.” He shrugged, then advanced forward after closing the door behind his taller figure. “It’s been a bitching hard day for me, and I need to relax.”

I could fake passionate kisses. To me, they meant nothing more than pressing your lips to another person’s and letting their tongue snake between your teeth. As he held me close and I pretended to swoon against his muzzle, Marshall reached down to lift the hem of my dress and feel blindly for something he and all straight men desired.

His manicured, wandering fingers did nothing when one of them brushed against my mound. Gordon Marshall thought my whines and yipping moans were real. He thought my gyrating into his fingers were genuine. He thought it was all real, from the way I rolled my eyes back and bit my lower lip in ecstasy to the simple act of gasping. In truth, I felt no interest in him teasing me down there than he would feel sexual pleasure in attending a six-hour video conference with meddlesome shareholders.

Before the wolf could even begin questioning why my pussy was as dry as a bone, I distracted him by patting the boxer tenting between his legs. The minutes ticked by as we kissed and groped the other, and at the back of my mind, I started to wonder if the re: Sonance operative didn’t get the room number I sent?

A cold chill went down my spine and up my tail when Marshall dropped his bathrobe. He wore nothing but the tented boxers I continued fondling, but he also revealed a set of muscles beneath the greying fur. The toll of an unhappy marriage and corporate climbing could be seen on his beer belly, yet at the same time, those biceps weren’t for show.

Didn’t they say the operative would arrive in three minutes?

“Fuck, you’re gorgeous…” He murmured, then grabbed one of my boobs through my bra. The other paw manhandled my tail to pull us closer to his furry chest. “I sure hope the carpet matches the drapes down there, heh.”

“Y-You’ll just have to see and find out, big boy.” I held my façade together, smiling despite urging the re: Sonance operative to commence part two. “We have a-all night to ourselves, don’t we?”

“Good point.” He pulled me into another possessive kiss, then grinned lecherously before backing up to the edge of the king-sized hotel bed. His fingers roughly caressed an ear tip, twitching in hidden panic, and he subtly tapped between my ears. “I hear foxes are good at oral. Mind showing me if it’s true?”

My instincts told me to run out the door. My rational side argued to drag things out longer. My pessimistic side reminded me forestalling would make him suspicious. As I silently weighed my options and Marshall put a little more pressure in his fingers, signaling me to kneel down and service the perverted, powerful wolf, divine intervention stepped right in on time.

**KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!**

Gordon Marshall glared at the door. A flicker of genuine relief in my vulpine expression made way for acted confusion.

“What the fuck?” He yanked his bathrobe from the ground and furiously tied it closed, then stormed to the door and foolishly opened it. “I didn’t order any room—”

The door swung open and a large, pissed off, black grizzly bear in dirty jeans and a plaid trucker shirt pummeled inside. Our eyes connected, and the anger sputtered a little. He winked.

Part two in the plan finally commenced. It made me feel giddy.

“Vicky, what the fuck is this?!” He growled. “Are you seriously cheating on me?!”

“It’s not what it looks like, he’s a friend!” I added in the quavering to my voice, then let the overwhelmed waterworks begin. “I swear you got the wrong idea, we haven’t even done it!”

“Who the fuck’re you?” Marshall stepped over and tried turning the bear around to face him, only for the wolf to falter when he saw just how big the intruder was. Then, it appeared the exchange finally sank into his thick canine skull. “Wait, so you’re—you told me you were single, you stupid bitch!”

I gasped in fury. It helped the act when you really were offended by a fur’s words.

“What did you just call her?” My ‘husband’ snarled at the wolf. “That’s it, I’m gonna kick your ass.”

“Hey, hey, hey!” Marshall held his paws up in fright, backing away from the grizzly approaching him in the executive hotel room. “Look, I didn’t know and I figure you’re pissed I tried sleeping with your wife—”

“That’s an understatement, pal!”

“Right, well…” Marshall cautiously reached for his briefcase lying on a corner desk. The bear growled again at the movement, and our target nodded uneasily. “Relax, relax. I’m not gonna do anything, I just…I just want to make you an offer.”

My ‘husband’ cocked an ear. “Offer?”

“Yeah, I uh…can make this up to you.” When the bear didn’t answer back, the once-dominant timber wolf from before turned into a skittish pup. He hurriedly pilfered through his briefcase to find a checkbook. He scribbled something and peeled it off. “How does $50,000 sound to you, and we all just forget this ever, ever happened?

Both me and my ‘husband’ stared incredulously at the offered check. We appeared conflicted of the bribe. Deep down, however, we were celebrating in mutual, mischievous glee.

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Our tails were practically wagging Twenty minutes of tense silence between us, the black bear mutually smiling back at me as he held the check like a winning lottery ticket, led me to a parked RV owned by him and his husband/partner-in-crime, a lanky yet excitable husky named Lawrence. The bear’s name was Dwight, it turned out, and they both played the part of Themis.

As Dwight drove the motorhome onto the infamous Las Estrellas freeway, Lawrence went about cashing the check through an underground bank account on a spare smartphone.

“Aaaaaaaand, Mr. Marshall’s generous donation is secured!” He laughed giddily in the RV’s kitchen table. “We fuckin’ did it, sweetie!”

“Good job there, babe.” The bear behind the wheel proclaimed, halfway beaming with pride, and halfway focused on the road. “Congratulations are in order, Miss Eden. You’re officially a member of re: Sonance.”

“Yippee ki-yay.” I chuckled in the passenger seat, glancing back at Lawrence typing away at a nearby laptop. “Tell me: what do you plan to do with the fifty thousand?”

“Donate it to a couple of non-profit charities in Manhattan City.” Lawrence spoke up without looking away from his screen. “One of them’s an important group home for LGBTQ youth, and the other is a shelter for victims of domestic abuse. Me and Dwight are torn though on whether or not to have it be revealed that Mr. Marshall ‘gave’ the donations…”

“We ought to sleep on it for the night, at least.” Dwight proposed, to which the husky shrugged and went back to work doing…whatever hacktivists did. “So, what do you think of this line of work, Ms. Eden?”

For one, it felt overwhelming to do a job and not leave an ace of hearts card at the scene of a crime, like in the olden days. However, the whole experience left me feeling…powerful. I had almost been pressured into performing oral sex on a sleazy old wolf, sure, but at the same time, me and Dwight’s award-winning performance led us to extorting fifty-thousand dollars out of the same canine’s own pocket. For charities he didn’t care for, no less!

“It’s…different.” I replied in an honest fashion, “Never stole stuff for a good cause before. Never had the opportunity to play Robin Hood or the like, but…I think I’m going to like it enough. Just don’t think I’m only useful for honey pots though.”

“We wouldn’t assume otherwise.” Dwight reassured me. “That’s why we scouted you.”

They dropped me off two blocks from my apartment, but not before we firmly shook paws and promised to keep in touch soon. Walking back home gave me this gut feeling, similar to the quiet of an amazing musical’s end, or when the VHS tape finishes playing an epic movie from your childhood. A high of excitement with no more track to go. I could already picture the endless jobs and ops to perform, especially alongside my new team. It made my tail swish with utter anticipation and enthusiasm not felt in a long time.

The Ace of Hearts was back, baby. Retirement never did suit her.