

Chapter One

Loss of Balance

“This son of a bitch just *scammed* me!” I said to Lanson, and he stared at me in astonishment, overwhelmed by the way I greeted him into my room.

“Well maybe if you got a *real* job, you wouldn’t have to worry about things like that.” he said, and he began staring at my computer screen as if he understood what I was doing.

“Why do you do this anyway?” he asked.

“Because hacking is what I’m good at, and it pays well if I can just find the right jobs.” I responded

“I guess being scammed is a good paying job.” He retorted sarcastically while rubbing his fingers through his strawberry blonde hair. He plopped down onto my bed, his heavy weight causing a loud crashing noise to ricochet through the house.

“What the hell’ya doing in there?” slurred my father from the living room.

“Just... dropped my books!” I shouted back, and Lanson let out a light chuckle.

“Well shut the fuck up for *christ’s* sake Nico!” he shouted, and his voice alone was enough to remind me of the tingling aroma of alcohol that crept off of his breath every day.

“When are you finally gonna give up the hacking gigs, I mean, I’m pretty sure you’re getting tired of it, right? Being scammed, getting hacked yourself, constantly hiding your identity? It’s not tiring yet?” asked Lanson as if he hasn’t asked me this question hundreds of times already.

“I don’t know, maybe when you give me ah’million dollars so I don’t have to do it anymore I’ll stop, but for now, I’m not planning on it anytime soon.” I responded, but to be completely honest, I never really enjoyed hacking. It wasn’t a dream job of mine or anything, but it is

something I'm good at and it is an easy way to make money without having to give out a resume full of lies that probably wouldn't get me a job anyway.

Now, did I want a job that was more secure? Of course, you could say that, but the last time I managed to get an actual interview was at a store called Sleezer's that sold shitty clothing no one in the town even wore. To make matters worse, the awkward gothic chick who was supposed to interview me ended up randomly peeing herself right in front of me and freaking out because she was so high on meth. She promised a reschedule but I didn't bother going back which has ended in me, once again, sitting at home all day hacking worthless places like auto insurance companies.

As I was scrolling through the dark web, it was quickly interrupted by the loud snap and jolt of my bed crashing down onto the wooden floor. I shot a glance at Lanson who laid there in shock as it rocked unevenly. His mind finally returned to the present and he hurried off of it making the bed creak and wobble even more than before.

"Did you just break my fu—"

"Nico, ya just don't get it do you?" shouted my father from down the hall, and Lanson quickly scrambled out of the bed with a frightened look on his face.

"Maybe I should get outta here..." He quickly insisted as he heard my father begin his stumbling journey into my room, and he rushed to the backyard window, climbing through it, and he waved goodbye as I struggled to get the rusted window shut.

My father finally made it to my doorway, and swayed back and forth as he stared at my broken bed.

“What the hell happened up here?” he asked, and I could smell the harsh alcohol from across the room.

“I’m not sure, the bed just... collapsed.” I said with a slight shrug and his glare instantly turned to me. I could see the anger boiling within his eyes, and he began stumbling over to me.

“You must *really* think I’m some fucking idiot, huh?” he shouted, and he began swinging at me relentlessly with all the strength he could garner behind his drunkenness until suddenly, one of his blows resulted in him losing his balance. His head collided with the wall next to him, and the mixture of blood and sweat on his face allowed it to easily slide down the wall and crash onto the hard floor.

“Dad?” I said hesitantly, but there was no answer.

