

All The Riches

I could have all the riches in the world, and yet the only thing I'd really want is you.

Raven sat on the side of his bed, fidgeting with something small in his hand. It weaved around his fingers before he caught it between his index and his thumb. The item itself: a silver ring with a shining ruby at its peak. He slipped it on, smiling softly when he did so, but his expression quickly soured to a stoic one. *The gemstone reminds me of her. It reminds me of what we once were, of what things were like when we were together, but everything else...* Raven removed the ring and stashed it away in a pocket. He then brushed a hand through his pitch-black hair, tracing along a bony crown that rose and fell toward the back of his head like ocean waves. *Unusual silver eyes, skin as dark as a midnight blue, and the horns of a devil to top things off. I suppose life was just inclined to be that way for people like us, wasn't it?*

Raven breathed out a sigh, but a few knocks on his room's door plucked him out of his thoughts. Just when he was about to stand up to open it, the door was bashed open, the frame slamming against the opposing wall. He jolted in surprise and instinctively prepared himself for some sort of sneak attack, only for three familiar individuals to waltz in like nothing had happened: a dark gray-toned half-orc with his bulky arms crossed; a dark brown-furred tabaxi staring at him with their piercing, emerald gaze; and a sunset-hued tiefling, her golden eyes glinting with both worry and strictness.

The half-orc was the one to shatter the ice of the sudden tension, his gruff voice making the scene all the more menacing. "Alright, Raven, cough it up. We know you're hidin' somethin'."

Shit. They don't know about that, do they? Fuck. Just... keep your cool. He's always been the intimidating one anyway. If nobody says what it actually is, then they don't really know.

“What do you mean, Vulture?”

“Don't play dumbass with me,” Vulture growled. “A little birdie” - Raven noticed his eyes point to the tabaxi for a split second - “told me you've been stashin' somethin' away from the Scavengers. You've been keepin' secrets from us, buddy?”

Maybe if he didn't call me 'buddy,' I'd tell him the truth. That is, after I smack his face in.

“I'd never hide anything from my own teammates.”

“He's lying.” The tabaxi flicked their tail toward Raven's direction. “Check under the bed.”

Raven did nothing but clench a fist and watch as Vulture went down to peer underneath. A long, sharp whistle then sounded in the room. “Ya' know what, Raven? I always knew sneaky little *bastards* like you had a knack for collectin' shiny things.” When Vulture got back on his feet, a small sachet was in his grasp. He shook it, the sound of coins clinking together from within, then tossed it to the orange tiefling. “You've got one hell of a cache down there, too. That's why we Scavengers are 'generous' enough to cut a deal with ya'.”

'Generous?' The only thing they're 'generous' enough to give away is their blackmail.

Raven asked a question through slightly clenched teeth. “And *what* would that deal be?”

“Donate everything you have to Nightowl and nobody gets hurt.” The tiefling jingled the bag of coins as a gesture. “That means *everything*.”

Damn. 'Donation,' my ass. “And if I don't?”

“You already *know* what we'll do,” the tabaxi said, suddenly unsheathing their claws with a *shink!*

“Now, now, Perry, the three of us won’t be the ones punishin’ him. I’m sure Nightowl will torture ‘im, or maybe she’ll kill ‘im... Or maybe she *just* might take pity on ya’ and set this little birdie free.” Vulture moved closer to Raven, his smug underbite mere inches away from the other’s emotionless expression. “Then again, it’d be a damned shame if a *wanted criminal* like you were to be on the run, wouldn’t it?”

Damn it all the way to hell.

“The choice is yours, Raven,” the tiefling chimed in. “Give your loot to the Scavengers or suffer Nightowl’s wrath.”

Raven clenched his fist tighter, his fingernails beginning to dig into his palm. *As if I have any choice. Vulture would beat me up, Perry would dash straight to Nightowl, and Robin...* He stifled out his answer. “Fine.”

“What was that?” Vulture teased. “You might wanna say that again just a *little* louder, birdie.”

Fuck you. “Fine,” he suddenly snapped. “Go ahead, take it all. Just don’t tell Nightowl.”

“Oh, don’t worry, Raven. The Scavengers *always* keep up their end of the bargain.” Before stooping down to the bottom of the bed, Vulture turned to his tabaxi teammate. “Scout the hall for us, won’t ‘cha, Perry? We wouldn’t want Nightowl herself comin’ in and kickin’ *our* asses instead.”

Perry followed the order immediately, passing through the doorway with light, swift steps. Meanwhile, Vulture got down to business. He scooped in as many of the coin bags as he could - all while Raven casted a single glance at the only other person there - and rose back up, his hefty arms full of them.

“I got most of the stash, Robin. Be a dear and get the rest for me.” He then looked at Raven and said in an exaggerated, sarcastic tone. “‘The Scavengers appreciate your donation to our cause.’ Hah! Come on, Perry,” he called, making his way to the exit, “we can go. The lass has got the rest.”

Vulture left the room with a chortle, leaving the two tieflings to themselves. Robin kneeled down to the bottom of the bed, taking her time to gather the rest of the cache. On the other hand, Raven stayed put. It was only after a fair number of seconds later when he spoke in a strange, demonic tongue.

“Alright, they’re gone.”

“Oh, thank Asmodeus,” Robin sighed, replying in the same language. She breathed out a deep huff as if she had been holding her breath the entire time. “I swear, the next time Vulture calls me a ‘lass,’ I’ll be kicking *his ass* straight to the Ninth.”

It’s times like these when I’m glad the two of us are the only ones who know Infernal. Having a fiendish heritage has its perks, I suppose. “And I’ll be there to help you.”

Robin chuckled lightheartedly at Raven’s comment. The remaining coin bags jingled in her arms when she got back up on her feet. She then met gazes with Raven, and her tone changed to one of sympathetic sorrow. “Hey... I’m real sorry for having to do this to you. I wish I could help, but knowing Nightowl-”

“We don’t have to talk about it.” Raven looked away and swatted his hand. “She needs everything she can to help the crew anyway. I’ll just... find a way to regain it all or something. It’s fine.”

“Are you sure? I can probably leave you a coin pouch or two if it helps-”

“Robin, I’m *sure*. I don’t need your help or anybody else’s. It’s *fine*.”

I'm not fine.

Despite the growing tensions, all Robin did was let out a sigh. "Sometimes I think your unfriendliness is so cold, your cause of death will be frostbite. You know I'll always be here if you need someone to talk to." She began to step out, but took a pause to say one last thing. "By the way, I left one of your 'shiny things' down there. It was this run-of-the-mill box that seemed out of place, but-"

Her. Raven darted his head toward Robin. A flame of hope flared up in his eyes, but it instantly died out. He swiftly reverted back to his stoic expression and turned away, pretending that the scene never occurred.

"...Alright then, I'll be taking all of this to Nightowl now." Robin's voice was solemn. "Good luck, Invidrav."

With her arms full, Robin awkwardly closed the door to his room on her way out, leaving Raven to be alone. He listened to the sound of her footsteps fading away. When he was sure she was gone, he pushed himself off of his bed and frantically searched under it. *Where is it, where is it, where is it... There it is!* In an instant, he reached toward the item - a small, mundane box - and slid it toward himself. Once it was out in the open, Raven removed its lid and gently lifted up the precious item that was inside: a pristine, golden necklace with a beautiful sapphire gleaming at its core.

Then, Invidrav smiled.

They could take all the riches in the world away from me, but the only thing I'd really need is you. I hope you're doing okay out there, Luxaria, wherever you are. Invie's still trying his best to find you, and he'll do whatever it takes to be with his best friend again, no matter what.

We'll meet again, Arrie. I promise.