

Catalyst

A young Scudi Ferria, around 15 years of age, was making her way through the crowded hallways of the publicly funded high school she attended. It was here that those whose parents couldn't afford private tutors or a private school education for their children sent their offspring to receive an education. Scudi was wearing the school uniform, a shirt and tie underneath a blazer with the school logo emblazoned on the right-hand side, roughly where student's pectoral muscles would be. To complete the uniform she wore black trousers and black shoes, the girls were allowed to wear skirts, but Scudi didn't particularly like them. Her black hair was worn in a shoulder-skimming bob. It was almost the end of the day, just one lesson left to go.

Fortunately for Scudi, it was one of her favourites, Computer class. It was split into a theory segment followed by a practical segment before recapping at the end, just before the students went to their homes. Scudi found herself squeezing through the horde of bodies, it was a particularly well-attended school due to its location in a deprived area not too far from Csilla's capital city. Scudi's classmates poured into the classroom after her, Scudi wasn't particularly athletic but through careful planning, she always found her way to the classroom first. She stood outside the door and waited for the teacher to open the door. Scudi constantly sat near the front of the class, the closer to the teacher she was the better she could take in the information he was presenting to the class and apply it when it came to the practical portion of the lesson. The teacher was a tall man, he must have been close to two meters tall, he wore a pair of glasses he needed to see long distances.

"Alright, class, who do we have today?" The teacher, Mr Greymane, attempted to quell the rowdiness of the students. The last lesson of the day was always the worst, the children mostly eager to go home so that they could play with their friends. He ran through the register, seeing which students were present and who had elected not to show up. It was mostly a full class on this occasion. "So, today, we're going to be learning about going over spreadsheets and you'll set up one of your own about a topic that interests you. This is in preparation for the test happening in a couple of weeks. Mr Greymane stood in front of his desk, ever so slightly leaning against it and he gesticulated with his hands while he spoke.

Scudi's remembered the work done on spreadsheets and she was such a good student that sometimes Mr Greymane had to give other students a chance to avoid having Scudi answer everything. She was top of the class, but sometimes she had to be managed. It was a fairly typical lesson, with Scudi finishing ahead of the other students and almost doing the assigned task all over again before the end of the school day. Something different would happen on this particular day though.

"Scudi, would you mind staying? I have something I want to talk to you about." Mr Greymane asked of his most promising student. Usually when students were asked to remain behind it was for disciplinary reasons but Scudi was a perfectly behaved student. Instead, Scudi was perhaps one of the school's most promising students for some time. While it shouldn't have been noteworthy at all, the fact she was female would go over great in the press. Scudi remained seated as the classroom emptied, leaving only the teacher and a lone student. "You... you're not like most of the other students in my class. You seem to have a natural affinity for computers I've never seen on the level I see in you. It's considered questionable by some, but I would like to introduce you to slicing... if you're interested."

Scudi was flattered, the blushing gave it away. She was glad to be praised, but she didn't know what this slicing thing her teacher was talking about meant. "So, what exactly is this slicing thing you're suggesting Mr Greymane? I appreciate the compliment, but I'd like to know what I'd be agreeing to if I said I'm interested."

"Well, Scudi, slicing is the unauthorized intrusion into a computer or a network. I think, with your aptitude at working computers you could become a good slicer. Apparently, there's a lot of money in slicing. At worst, you could take the knowledge you gain through the lessons I give you to ensure that important systems aren't sliced into. Like a cybersecurity expert. You could also become a teacher, but well, it's not quite as exciting if I'm honest." Mr Greymane made his pitch to his most exceptional student. He knew that if Scudi wanted it, there could be quite the life if he taught her everything he knew, in fact, she'd probably end up knowing more than him considering how quick a study she'd proved to be with technology.

"It sounds risky like I could get into serious trouble. I don't want to cause more stress for my mother. But if conducted in a safe environment and we started out with theory

before moving onto practical applications of it, I couldn't see there being harm in learning a little more. I'll give it a go. Though are you allowed to be giving private lessons to students? It seems like it'd be difficult to get approval for."

"You let me worry about that. And of course, we'd use the same structure as regular lessons. You're good, but throwing you in at the deep end and expecting you to know how to do things is a bit of a stretch, even for you. Anyway, once I've cleared it with the school board I'll let you know at the end of our next class together. Now go on, get home to your mother, I've kept you long enough." Mr Greymane directed his head towards the classroom door and Scudi stood up and prepared herself for the journey home, eager to embark on a quest for knowledge with Mr Greymane.