was said to be happy doing it. Every week or so, she would meet on IRC with q and pass over the collected info via encrypted e-mail, then await further instructions. If she asked what Julian Assange thought of what she was doing, q would say he approved of what was going on.

It turned out that q was good at lying.

Almost a year after Kayla started volunteering for WikiLeaks, other hackers who had been working with q found out he was a rogue operator who had recruited them without Assange's knowledge. In late 2011, Assange asked q to leave the organization. Kayla was not the only volunteer looking for information for what she thought was WikiLeaks. The rogue operator had also gotten other hackers to work with him on false pretenses. And in addition, one source claims, q stole $60,000 from the WikiLeaks t-shirt shop and transferred the money into his personal account. WikiLeaks never found out what q was doing with the vulnerabilities that Kayla and other hackers found, though it is possible he sold them to others in the criminal underworld. It seemed, either way, like q did not really care about unearthing government corruption, and Kayla, a master at hiding her true identity from even her closest online friends, had been duped.

None of this mattered come February of 2011 when Kayla began talking with Tflow, Topiary, and Sabu in the exclusive new chat room that would bring them together for a landmark heist on Super Bowl Sunday: the attack on HBGary Federal. The bigger secret, which Kayla didn't know then, was that Sabu would not only get her deeper into a world of hacking that would become front-page news, but watch as her details got passed on directly to the FBI.

Regarding the WikiLeaks IRC network, where Kayla first met q, anyone could access it via a browser at chat.wikileaks.org. Several sources close to Wiki-Leaks confirm q (real name known but not disclosed here) had habitually lied to supporters, and that he and Assange were close, like a "stepson to Assange," according to one.