

## dom meets danika

obnoxious carnival music trilled in the distance. dom reread the map again, and glanced at the sign ahead. Corny World. what a terrible name for a theme park.

his driver cursed in his seat, honking loudly at the car that just cut them off in the parking lot.

“oh, fuck off! of course that fucker drives a kia. it’s always a kia,” hanxi complained to no one in particular. dom sighed. it was a nightmare and they haven’t even step foot into the carnival yet.

“this is hell,” hanxi groaned, as another car stole a lot right from them. this time he flipped them off. “i’m totally keying that bald guy’s truck.” the engine of hanxi’s brand new car revved as if in agreement.

dom glanced over at the photograph of his target today. he was the reason dom was here. hanxi was going to the carnival anyway, aiming to sell drugs to the weekend crowd, so dom figured he’d hitch a ride. his target was an eric maxwell - in his 30s, 5’11, white, and the reason for his impending death - an informant to the cartel’s rival gang. dom’s sources stated he would be at the carnival today.

the sun was hanging low in the sky. dom couldn’t wait any longer. he tucked his gun snugly in the his inner jacket pocket. “i’ll go ahead first. see you if i see you.”

“knock ‘em dead, terminator,” hanxi said. dom stepped out and headed towards the entrance.

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dom’s head was spinning. it seemed like everyone and their mothers from Blackwater thought it would be a good idea to come to Corny World this weekend. the intoxicating flashing lights certainly didn’t help dom’s search. he rode the corny cyclone twice now thinking he was tailing the right guy, but it turned out to be a false lead. he crouched against a wall next to the churro stand and shut his eyes hoping to stop his head from spinning.

“are you alright?” a girl’s voice called out. dom waved her off, not caring to look, but she handed him a bottled water to his open hand instead.

dom looked up. the girl had black hair tied in braids, two ribbons of white and black accenting each of them, and a cross choker around her neck.

“thanks,” dom said as he accepted the bottle and drank from it. it tasted kind of sweet to be plain water.

“bad trip?” the girl asked.

dom shook his head, “no. more embarrassing actually - the cyclone.”

“oh,” she laughed. “i’m not a fan of rollercoasters either.”

dom handed her back the bottle. “you from around here?” he asked. maybe she knew eric maxwell. might as well try, since he was getting nowhere.

“i’m new,” she replied as she took a sip from the bottle.

dom scanned her outfit. “you work here or something?”

“no. why?”

“oh, i thought you were from pirate island, because of -“ dom gestured to her outfit, “this.”

she wore a white off-shoulder dress that was cinched by a black corset in the middle, followed by tall laced black boots and gloves.

“no, this is just how i dress,” she explained. dom couldn’t tell if he had offended her or not.

“listen, i’m looking for eric maxwell. have you seen him, by any chance?” dom cut to the chase.

the girl glanced at him. “why?” her red-stoned earrings dangled in the wind.

“he’s a friend of a friend. heard he was here,” dom fed a prepared lie.

the girl peered at him curiously. “you’re lying.”

“what?”

“i can tell,” she smiled. dom felt a shiver run down his spine.

before he could deny it, the girl said, “i know where he is.”

“really? where?”

“mhm. he’s to the east of the theme park, near the ghost ventures ride,” she offered.

dom wondered if he could trust her. “thanks, i appreciate it - uh...?”

“danika.”

“thanks, danika.” he was about to head off.

she stopped him, “wait - i helped you, didn’t i? you have to tell me something in return.”

“what is it?”

“you didn’t give me your name.”

"it's luke," dom lied. she wasn't from here anyway.

she quirked her brow. "you're lying again."

dom froze. "do i know you from somewhere?"

"no. but i told you i can tell when someone's lying."

he didn't know how to respond to that.

danika tapped her lips, as if thinking. "tell me your star sign then, if not your name."

"what?"

"humor me."

dom thought she was playing an odd game of trying to flirt with him. "it's capricorn," he said.

she smiled, pleased. "that's the first true thing you've said."

dom didn't have time to deal with this weird girl. "well whatever. see you."

"bye, dominik," she called out.

dom stopped in his tracks. the hair on the back of his neck stood up. he glanced back.

she stuck out her tongue out at him, and he swore he caught sight of a pentagram symbol etched onto it like it was branded on. he blinked, thinking he was seeing things. but she turned on her heel before he could tell for sure.

when he glanced back, the mystery girl was gone.

dom shook off the skin crawling feeling and rationalized it was a weird girl who knew him from somewhere. as he walked, he tried to ignore the feeling of being watched.