

The day started the same way it always did.

By waking up.

Zyla spent her first few moments in bed struggling to drag herself out of it. Despite her history of fighting against the most powerful criminals in Horizon, the weight of the blankets seemed to be impossibly heavy. There was a whole day waiting for her on the other side of the plush barrier, one that she dearly wanted to just ignore and stay sleeping forever. Getting out of bed was just the worst feeling in the world, made worse when the light finally struck her face as it filtered through the not quite heavy enough curtains in that exact way that never ceased to upset her. She added a mental note to pick up blackout curtains someday, placing that little bit right next to the pile of identical ideas.

She'd never bother to actually get them.

"Fine..." the bunny girl swept the comforter off with a dramatic flourish, as she did every day, before rotating her body in a deliberately graceless fashion that took just as much time as physically possible. Every inch of her wanted to be a night owl instead of a morning person. Why the universe just decided the day couldn't start at noon was far beyond her slowly activating mind. "I'll get up."

Her heels touched the ground with a subtle jingle that went completely below recognition. The fact that she walked on the raised shoes perfectly naturally was also ignored, though she didn't even register that she was moving on them any more than her natural paws. It didn't matter if there was a forced sway to her hips that made every step somewhat more sultry than she wanted. That was just how things were, the way she always walked. Getting across the room with her perfect bunny butt swishing pendulously was a thing she always did, regardless of where and when it was, so why care?

"God... Why does..." she glanced to the left at her cluttered dresser, catching a glimpse of the clock that had yet to even set off the alarm. The classic piece of metal and glass, the kind with the two bells on top instead of the digital ones everyone else had, stared at her with an evil intent as it read the time. "9 AM even exist?"

The bunny girl leaned over her dresser and looked towards the mirror. Her eyes ran over her face slowly as she made sure that she somehow looked good despite literally just rolling out of bed. The swirling orbs rippled their golden and cyan spirals endlessly as she watched her own expression, casting a small degree of light that reflected from her shining skin. A gloved finger went and ran down the pure white cheek and gave it a small tug, dragging the pliable rubber-skin-stuff into the air before letting it go with a loud *thwap*. That all seemed normal, just like the smile she was eternally forced to hold by the nature of her very being.

"Something seems weird." the clown girl tilted her head to one side, a few strands of gold and green hair fell over one eye. It did nothing to hide the hypnotic spirals, which were still totally normal she thought, but didn't help to avoid the feeling of wrongness. There was something about her expression, maybe? Perhaps her smile wasn't as big as it was meant to be, or the way her hair laid wasn't as perfect as always? She just couldn't place what it was...

"Wait." suddenly it struck the circus bun as she pulled back, a finger moving to point at her own reflection accusingly. The perfectly smooth tip eventually touched the glassy surface, squishing right against it. "Since when do I have a mirror in my room?!"

That moment of clarity jarred the girl from her sense of normalcy, forcing her to look around and see the room for what it was; a clown's dressing area. Not the sort of place her conflicting college girl memories would otherwise have, with the tossed around clothes or the few worldly possessions on a dresser. She'd never have had so many classic, vintage things on her shelves. Who even had a clock like that, at least outside of some old cartoon the likes of which she usually had to punch? The fact that she was standing here before an old school mirror, balancing naturally on heels she barely remembered wearing, was already one part. But why was she sleeping in a bed that was clearly not her own?

"Why am I a..." she reached up and wrapped her fingers around the blue ball resting atop her nose. An attempt to pull it away was met with resistance, stretching, and ultimately a smiling wince as it slammed back to her face.

And a single, loud, honk.

"I'm not a clown!" she shouted, her angry voice completely betrayed by the enforced smile upon her face. It just wouldn't fade, no matter how angry she got. It wasn't fair! "I'm-

"Hey, Cream Soda! You're on stage in five!" came a voice from outside her room, one that seemed older and just a little bit gruff. Familiar, yes, but also completely alien. Like *deja vu* but in reverse. She was sure there was a term for that but she wasn't all French like Emilie. That was her department.

"Fuck you, having an existential crisis here!" she wanted to shout.

"Comin' right up, Sir!" she instead chirped, her hand immediately grabbing the top hat from her dresser. A quick flourish had it pop right atop her head without a second thought, followed by the jingly little clown hopping her perfect bunny butt out to get on stage.

The next couple hours were a mixture of familiar and novel that baffled the performing fool.

From the moment she first picked up the set of pins and started to juggle with the dexterity of a lifelong entertainer, she knew something was wrong. The way that she moved about and caught them carried more grace than she remembered having for those sorts of things; she was much more of a punch bunny herself. She should have been dropping these things all over the place, failing to keep up with the other clowns as she paraded her curvaceous form in every direction. That comedy of errors would have been a show unto itself, a display of ineptitude so great that an audience could do nothing but laugh at it.

But there she was, juggling and dancing like an expert.

It didn't feel like she was under any sort of hypnosis, not the sensation of her body being piloted by someone so distant and commanding that she helplessly obeyed. She'd known what that was like, at least once, but would have known if someone else was pulling the strings. The absence of any pressure in her mind confirmed that it wasn't another psychic villain attacking her, though she was still aware of the hypnotic eye colors. That cartoonish effect made her wonder if she'd been caught by some goofy stage magician criminal at some point. It was stupid enough that it just had to be someone magical or something like that. Maybe transformation?

That would explain the boobs, she thought as she sprayed her apparently eponymous soda water into another clown's face. They were just a bit too big for her memories and jiggled suggestively every time she moved too quickly. That was annoying, dumb, and completely defied physics. How in the hell was her balance so good when she had more boob than ever? She wasn't Purity, that wasn't right. She was butt bunny, not boobs. Maybe if she found Belle, she could get out of this?

Her plans to escape her fate beneath the big top were often distracted when she went to do a gag with another one of her similarly dressed sister-clowns. This familiarity extended to the other girls when she threw one of those old school cream pies or when they got just a little too close for this show to be rated PG. She couldn't stop her reflexes from pulling her up to the other bunny girl and getting a little risqué, though she was still utterly flummoxed by the fact that she could do so much without a single thought. Her actions were just automatic, as if she'd been here a thousand times. How could she resist the memories of being a clown, of wrapping her whip about some other busty girl and pulling her close before doing some other juvenile gag?

It was as infuriating as it was fun.

"Good job out there." she heard as the ringmaster walked past her on the way out, leading to each girl in turn giving a 'thank you, sir!' before he vanished. She could barely remember what he looked like even after a few hours of having seen him.

"So we..." she tried to speak but saw all the other clowns vanish into their dressing rooms. Zyla, or Cream Soda as she was apparently known, could only guess that these girls were going to clean up from the show they'd just put on. Their shiny bodies, seemingly made of or coated with rubber, still needed to be cleaned of all their playful antics.

"Okay, fine, guess I'm on my own!" Cream Soda threw her hands up and walked into her room for a moment. She had to do something to get all this residue off herself before going into town. If she was to free herself of this strange curse she found herself plagued by, she had to at least look halfway decent. Who wanted to talk to a clown covered in cream?

"Don't answer that." she muttered as she sprayed herself with water, answering her own internal question. The day flowed from her body in small rivers, tracing her much more sensual form. It felt great to relax but she hated it, hated the fact that she was some sexualized fool instead of the tomboy she remembered from a lifetime ago.

"So you are telling me you are... Stormwave." Emilie Clovis folded her arms as she looked over this weird clown girl before her.

"Yes! Gosh, you always are just the most annoying person to explain things to." Cream Soda rolled her spiraling eyes as she spoke to the one hero she knew would irritate her almost as much as Harley.

Cristalé watched this unexpected performer as she tried to understand what was going on. Her little frown indicated that she was thinking it through instead of just dismissing it outright, as she probably should, but also that she was frustrated with it overall. There was something weird about the story being told to her, something she couldn't put her thumb on. This outlandish tale of being someone

else, particularly a superhero, was far from what she wanted to hear today. Especially from someone who seemed absolutely capable of playing this up as some overly serious joke. Getting information was going to be a problem.

"I see. Well," Emilie walked around the clown, her eyes trailing over the body. She did have to admit that it was a pretty look, though she questioned if it had to do with those strange eyes. A car zipped by as she spoke. "if you are Stormwave, then you should know your real name, non?"

"Duh, that's a stupid question. My name's ~~Zvā~~" the bunny folded her arms under her chest at that, releasing a small squeak of rubber on rubber. Her smile remained as upbeat as ever but her pulsing eyes had a small edge of smugness to them.

"I am terribly sorry," the hero bunny leaned against a wall, frowning faintly. "I did not understand. It sounded like you said... um... literally nothing?"

Cream Soda put out a huge, exaggerated sigh as she heard those words. Of course the dumb rabbit wasn't paying enough attention to help her out of this. If it wasn't for the fact that Emilie was some sort of magic then she wouldn't have bothered. There weren't many people that she knew who would be able to help her out of some magical entrapment so here she was, stuck watching the foreign bunny try and hear a basic name.

"~~Zvā~~" she said again, narrowing her eyes as the name just vanished as it was said. It was like she was never even speaking, or that name simply didn't exist in reality. "~~Zvā~~" she repeated, shaking her head. The smile remained nice and big, bright and happy, but her eyes widened in shock as she realized she couldn't even remember it now.

A fourth attempt to speak was little more than struggling to remember a thing she'd long since forgotten. A separate life, no longer part of herself.

"... then you should know your real name, non?" Emilie repeated, her cadence exactly the same as before. The same car flew by, cutting into her words at the exact same moment.

Cream Soda looked around in confusion as the world seemed to revert to where it was when she tried to remember that one word. Her mind now couldn't even begin to comprehend who she had been before, the very notion of having a designation that wasn't clown related just seemed alien. Her hand played nervously with the hat, pulling at the brim as she fought to bring herself back to reality.

Or, at least, whatever this was.

"I... I can't." she had to admit, looking towards the bunny. "But it's really me! I promise!"

"That does make it difficult to believe you, but I am aware that magic can do many things." Emilie conceded, having never experienced the name discussion from a moment ago. It never happened. "If you are so certain, I think there is much we can do. Perhaps if we--"

Her eyes met with the clown's own and suddenly were transfixed. She could do nothing to pull away, entrapped as if falling into two black holes. The utter power behind the reality warped rabbit was enough to begin pulling her into them, drawing her mind deeper into the depths of whatever reality was beginning to be. The magical essence within her wasn't able to resist the universe itself blending with

those mind controlling sclera, instead bending to the whim of whoever had done this to the once-hero bunny.

"I..." Emilie struggled to speak as she was taken away from the moment, her thoughts grinding to a halt. A few more words were being interjected, ideas erased, doubts smothered. What she once had been thinking of, the concept of helping this wayward clown, was soon replaced with something far less conducive to discovery. What mystery laid behind those thrumming spirals was beyond her grasp, hidden from the world itself.

"Emilie?" Cream asked, her voice forever happy despite the fear tainting her tone. "You okay?"

"I am sorry, clown girl." Emilie spoke flatly as her eyes mirrored the pattern. "I am not able to play games now, there is a crime I must stop."

The rabbit's eyes turned back to normal as she turned to leave, rushing through the streets and vanishing. Whatever crisis she had to fight was brand new, as if manufactured by space and time itself to prevent the fool from defeating her new role in life. This act of hypnosis had been completely unconscious, a natural response from her body to the other's eyes. Breaking a mind by mere eye contact was terrifying, something she couldn't imagine having done before.

But there it was, the escape of her last hope.

"But..." Cream Soda sighed and looked at the ground, catching sight of the bells on her heels. They were familiar, as always, but weren't at the same time. Did she choose to wear this? Or was it something hoisted upon her, like the costume itself? The memories from before, once so clear, were slowly losing their cohesion. Thoughts of clowns and days in the circus starting to become more lucid than those of her superhero days. Were those mere flights of fantasy, imaginations?

"Uh... Cream Soda?" she heard from over her shoulder. "I need to talk to you."

What the clown saw was the approach of Stormwave.

Well, what looked to be the hero she once remembered. The blonde girl was dressed in the blue and yellow lightning that looked so familiar. Not that pseudo familiar that came with this life she'd been forced to live, but rather the sort that was like coming home. A little different from what she remembered, like certain parts were misplaced or someone came in and moved the furniture, but was still distinctly 'her'. The shoes might be taller boots now, the gloves a little different, but that costume carried all the traits that ~~Zita~~ remembered wearing so long ago.

Why couldn't she think of that name?

"You're... Stormwave?" she tried to say 'me' but the world wouldn't let her. That wasn't her, not anymore. She could feel a kinship but the bunny was definitively not the superhero. That was... whoever this was.

"Yes, I am. Uh. Now. I guess now? And always was? I... well, I did something I probably shouldn't have."

This new Stormwave, one who was as confused about the world as Cream Soda, reached down and pulled out a set of cards from one of her pockets. It wasn't a full deck or anything, but more a collection of about ten. One of them looked somewhat burned, as if it had been used in some ritual to summon Satan or whatever. Their designs were classical, gilted with gold along the edges and heavily weather worn. They were old, ancient, and even the clown could feel the magic coming from them.

“Played a bad game? Made a bet?” Cream Soda tilted her head to one side, trying to parse this. Her heroic instincts, or what was left of them, struggled to think of something more serious in this moment.

“No, no.” the hero rabbit shook her head, looking off to the side. She was far less forward than Cream remembered Stormwave being. That seemed wrong. Incorrect. “I was, in a different life, a clown in that circus. And I stole these cards from the ringleader and I... swapped lives with you? Became you? I have no idea how it works but I’m Stormwave now. And I just... I needed to ask you something.”

There was a pause as the rabbit superhero tried to think of what to say. Her eyes narrowed as she looked to the ground, the clown, then back again. It was a fight to struggle past the fear of anger and also trying to actually solve something so monumental. There were so many questions, so many that could lead to anything. This much choice led to paralysis, breaking her down. Scaring her.

A breath, calming. Speaking.

“How... how the hell did you do it?” she asked quietly, looking at the clown girl as the floodgates broke.

“My brain controls lightning now! I have to work out to stay strong, I have school, which I’m apparently *not very good at*, I have to deal with supervillain snakes with freaking death lasers. There’s all these heroes expecting a lot of me. The streaming’s easy, I was already doing most of that. But then there’s all the rest of it. The whole...”

Cream Soda didn’t say anything yet, just watching as someone explained a life she half-remembered. Where was this going?

“I’m remembering everything. Your life. Mine. What used to be you. The whole... I thought superheroes had fun? Your life is just... how do you live with it?”

“Well, I don’t really remember it all now.” the clown girl leaned in a bit, still smiling despite the somber situation. There was a lot going on, a lot to process. Her newly altered mind was having trouble figuring it out. “But I don’t think I did. Not that well.”

“Look, I can...” the girl reached down to the cards, shuffling them around. She was trying to figure out which one to take. “I can switch us back. Let us go back to our lives. I’ll be a clown over *this*.”

“Okay, I’m starting to think this is a bit of an insult. But sure. I don’t want to be a clown forever. You don’t want to be a superhero. Let’s use the card or whatever and you can start juggling cream pies!”

“Sounds like...” And that’s when it happened.

The new Stormwave had their eyes suddenly locked onto the clown’s own. That momentary connection was made worse with the emotional vulnerability of her breakdown, leading to her natural psychic resistance being thwarted instantly. Cream Soda could only watch in horror as the pattern of her own eyes was reflected upon the other’s own, starting to rewrite thoughts and feelings all at once. What had once been a frantic, frowning face had the edges tugged up to a placid smile, one that showed the utter emptiness of the mind and vacuous nature of the emotional processes. What had been fear was nothing, blank and commanded by a presence beyond her.

Her fingers found a card, pulled it up.

“Twins.” she said simply but still somehow triggered the magic within.

It took only a second for the two bunnies to find themselves back at the circus, standing on stage. Both were in their uniforms, though slightly altered; the green and blue of Stormwave's costume was now reflected upon her form, polka dots and trim that looked like a mockery of what she'd been before. The shiny outfit was still that of a clown but it somehow had blended the life she'd been seeking to recover into itself, like taffy pulled and stretched and twisted. What she was now was just the shiny clown, the one smiling as she pulled the plunger and shot the soda all across the other clown's face.

And Rabbit gasped, laughing aloud as her old life took over in an instant. Memories of her time as Stormwave, a name now long forgotten by reality itself, mattered little. She could prance about, laugh, and be the playful clown she was meant to be. That was her happy place, her joyous little microcosm of reality where nothing mattered.

Right where she wanted to be.

Cream Soda gave a little glance to her side and saw it; the Ringmaster. A man standing tall, taller than anything she'd expected to see. Blue, blue, and more blue. A being that radiated more magic than the cards he now held, his free hand holding a staff topped with a diamond. The same shape was reflected upon his cards, the tools he used for some reason. She knew this man was powerful, though she wondered exactly what he wanted. His eternal grin was locked on the clowns as they played around, watching the former superhero as she played with the magical whip the two shared.

*I'm going to steal those cards and punch him in the face.* The bunny girl thought to herself as she dodged a pie, watching it sail over to strike yet another of their clowny number in the face. She would have to play this role, at least for now.

But she was getting out. Violently, preferably.