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BOOK
presents*

Rym

Dimensional Detective



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Kuwait, 2011*

Ryu

Dimensional Detective

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It was around two in the morning, but in some places life was just beginning. At the end of the street of a certain town was a nightclub, one which attracted many people of different races and occupations. Some came for business, others for pleasure. In that joint two men met – had scheduled to meet days prior to this evening. One was a woaak, the other – the one holding a briefcase – was a human. A woaak resembles a human from head to foot, but the obvious difference in appearance lies in skin. While humans have soft skin, woaaks' skins are hard as rocks. The human was the one who had come in late. Having scanned the noisy and heavily-packed nightclub, he saw the woaak occupying a table with a couple of human girls. He approached his table subtly.

“Who’s your friend?” One of the girls asked the woaak as she sized the human up while having her arms wrapped tightly onto the woaak’s arm; the other girl was hanging onto the other arm.

“You’re late,” the woaak grunted.

“I apologize. I had business with another client,” he explained, then looked at the two girls as if his cold look told them to beat it. They returned a mean stare.

“Girls,” the woaak said, “leave us.”

They growled in complain, but complied. The human sat down, placing his briefcase on the table. He turned it towards the woaak and opened it. An expression of terror made its mark on the woaak’s face.

“Is that grass?”

“Yes. What’s wrong?”

“That’s not what we agreed on. I told you if we’re gonna do this we’re gonna do this right. I don’t want nothing to do with no illegal material.”

“If that’s the way you want it.” The human replied coldly. “But you’re not a goody two-shoes, are you? You wouldn’t do something stupid as, say, report what you know to the cops, would you?”

“No, I’m nothing like that. But I also don’t want to spend ten to fifteen behind bars so I’ll be leaving now. I might not be from your dimension, but I do know when to deal and when to deal out. Later.”

“Suit yourself, scaredy cat,” the human said just as the woaak was about to leave the table, but then he stayed to share a piece of advice.

“If I were you I’d be scared too. I heard he’s in town.”

“Who?” The human said cautiously as he studied the woaak’s face, then made an educated guess: “Cowboy crazy?”

“You won’t be laughing if he walked into this joint right now. They say he’s got a sixth sense for detecting guys like us. Piece of advice: call it a night.” The look of fear on the woaak’s face made it clear that he, like most smalltime criminals, knew when to be scared.

“Ain’t no cowboy gonna scare me, cat. Besides, I never leave home without protection. If he does come looking for trouble, I’ll make sure he won’t be walking out.”

Realizing that the human was crazy enough to challenge the detective, the woaak left. He felt that the detective would come; that a showdown will take place. As the woaak ran out, a luizi walked in. It was a fine-looking luizi girl in a magenta evening dress. Had it not been for their pointy ears and cyan skin, luizis would’ve been easy to mistake for humans. The luizi had attracted the human. She walked over to the bar and sat there. He joined her subtly. He placed his briefcase next to his leg. The luizi girl noticed that.

“Evening, miss.”

“Evening.”

“May I buy you a drink.”

“You may.”

Both of them talked in a similar, eloquent manner. The look in his eyes told her that he desired her. She knew that; she depended on it.

“Hope you don’t mind me saying,” the luizi spoke, “but you look like you’ve just got out of work.” The luizi commented on what the human was wearing. It was a black business suit.

“Actually, I’m still working.”

“Oh?”

“Well, not anymore, anyways. My shift ended the moment my client walked out of this place a moment ago.”

“Oh. And what exactly is it that you, mister?” She asked, looking at his briefcase. He drew the briefcase in between his legs.

“That’s classified.”

“How mysterious!”

“Like yourself. Got a name, gorgeous?”

“Excella.”

“Excella. Perfection.”

“And you? Care to share?”

“No. But you can call me Finn.”

“Fake names: don’t you trust me?”

“An alias for entertainment, my lady.”

“Is that all I am to you? Entertainment?”

“Am I not to you?”

“Not really. I was just killing time. You see, I came here because I heard this was a place Ryu would pop up in.”

“You know Ryu? On a personal level, I mean?”

“I came here to meet him. I’ve been a fan ever since I first read about him in the papers. I so desperately want to meet him, don’t you?”

“As much as the next guy, but not to kiss him.”

“Oh! You’re a bad man! I had no idea!”

“Does that scare you?”

“Not at all,” she smiled. “In fact, I like it. Being around an outlaw increases the chance of attracting Ryu.”

“Heh. You’re one odd gal.” Finn remarked, then he looked around to see if Ryu was among the crowd. “I heard he made detective. Guess that makes him a complete cowboy then, huh? Once a cop, then a bounty hunter, and now a detective.”

“You know what they say: he’s a living legend.”

“He’ll be a dead one if he decides to show up tonight.”

“Sounds like you’ve got something personal against him.”

“I guess you could say that. He threw my best friend behind bars.”

“And he was?”

“A drug-lord.”

“Can’t say he didn’t have it coming. You know Ryu hates drug-sellers the most.”

“Well some of us don’t have a choice in the matter. We gotta do whatever it takes to survive.”

“That’s true.”

Excella drank her glass with one go, then looked at Finn with a smile. Finn interpreted it as an invitation.

“Don’t think that’s not what I want too, Excella. In fact, that’s all I’ve been thinking about since I saw you.”

“But?”

“But I can’t. Not until I meet this detective.”

“Well then, let me make it easier for you.”

Then Excella got up. She placed her arms around Finn as if to embrace him. She grabbed his arms and took them behind him as well. Being so close with her body against his, Finn could not but give in to whatever she wished to do.

“I had no idea that luizis are so exotic.”

“Not all of us. Just me.”

“The better.”

Finn had no idea what ran inside her head, but, like most males in his position, he sat back to enjoy the ride. Then, he heard metal clinking. Excella removed her arms and stood back. Finn tried to move his arms but his wrists were cuffed together to the back of his chair. Reaching into her dress, Excella took out a badge.

“What the –”

“You are under arrest, Malcolm Riley, for the possession of and dealing with you know what.” Excella said, referring to what’s inside the briefcase.

“..?! Is that you?”

“The one and only.”

“Have you no dignity, man?”

“Gotta do whatever it takes, right?”

“Freak!”

Malcolm Riley resisted the arrest, but Ryu knocked him out cold with one strike on the head.

“Call the cops,” Ryu instructed the bartender. “Here. Keep the change.”

The bartender glanced at the coin he gave him. It was a 1000 dim. He gave him a 90 percent tip. Dims were interdimensional currency. Each state in each dimension had their own coinage, but Dims were most preferred as they were acceptable everywhere. As the bartender glanced up again, Ryu was gone.

It was the same dimension, but a different part of the town. Instead of a large, noisy club, this was a small, quiet dinner, one which was packed with people. Some ate in, some ordered out. At one table were three men; two of them were playing cards while the other was reading the paper. The quietness between the three ceased when the one reading the paper came across a certain article.

“Listen to this, fellas,” he said. “Law attorney Malcolm Riley was arrested last night by D. D. Ryu for the possession of illegal herbs.”

“Don’t read us any of that garbage, Sam. It’s depressing as it is.”

“Yeah, but look at the picture taken here. It shows Ryu to be a chick luizi. All this time I thought he was this macho guy and now he turns out to be a chick!”

“Nah, he’s a guy.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“’Cause there ain’t no chick that could make D.D. that fast. Look at his hair: he’s still young. He has to be, what? Twenty four or something?”

“But look at the photo, Johnny, she looks really hot!”

“Meh. Bud, you playing or what?”

“I would, Johnny, but it’s your turn.” Bud replied, then turned towards the rest of the people, eyeballing a specific specie. “Look at all those luizis. Any one of’em could be him. In disguise. Waiting to catch us. I want him dead.”

A waitress who waited their table and put drinks and food on it overheard them talk. She was a human like them, so they did not care whether she heard them or not.

“Who doesn’t,” Sam replied, “’cause of him, business is running slow.”

“Damn that cowboy. What business does he have interfering here, in our dimension of all places! What: all of a sudden his dimension doesn’t have enough problems to keep him busy – he has to come up here steering trouble?”

“Rumor has it Ryu has no home anymore. Now he wonders from one dimension to another. His whole stinking life has become a search to put people like us behind bars.”

“Damn cowboy.”

“They say he’s girlfriend or boyfriend or whatever that freak’s lover was died by someone who hated him enough to track down his home dimension and whacked her. That cowboy must’ve done something really bad to piss him off. Once he left his dimension for a day’s work, the tracker came and killed his wife. That’s why he refuses to settle down. Because wherever he lives, the people around him would always be in danger.”

“If that’d be the case then he’s a smart one. I know I’d like to see him suffer.”

“Oh believe me, he suffered.” Sam added. “He took his wife’s death hard. Quit the force and everything. He sank into a depression.”

“Guess he’s over it now, with that grin on his face wherever he goes.”

“Nah, death doesn’t get a man like that down.”

“If he’s a man.”

“Not unless it was him dead! Ha ha ha!”

“Here’s to him dead!”

“To his death!”

As they drank and laughed, the waitress slipped away and walked outside the dinner. Her job was killing her from the inside. She hated hearing people trash-talk others. But where she worked that was all she heard: people backbiting and trashing the dimensional detective. However, she needed the cash so she went back inside. Just before she did, two hands fell on her and drew her out and in the alleyway.

“Let me go! Who are you? What do you want with me?”

“Why the rush, honey, show me some service.”

“What do you want with me?” She repeated in a fright.

“What every guy wants with a girl!” He replied with a malicious grin.

As the man forced himself on her, a third party was present.

“You’re gonna regret ever doing that,” he said.

Shocked by the voice, the assaulter turned around to see who it was only to receive a kick in the face. He fell down hard. When he came to he saw two police officers taking him to the car.

“Wait! What’s going on?”

“Had a nice nap, buddy? In case you haven’t heard the detective read you your rights, I’ll gladly do it again.”

“The detective? What detective?”

“The one who knocked you out then called us. Detective Ryu.”

“Wait!”

He ignored her and walked on. However, she ran. She caught up with him in no time and walked along side him, staring rudely and curiously at his appearance. He wore a black suit and a magenta shirt underneath.

“You’re him, aren’t you?” She asked as she tagged along. “You’re Detective Ryu.” He said nothing. He had no interest in pleasing or entertaining fans. “Wow! You really are him.”

“I suppose someone would have to be.”

“The way you kicked butt back there –”

“Look I was only doing my job. Thanking me would be meaningless.”

“I wasn’t. I mean I am grateful, but that wasn’t what I was getting at. Mr. Ryu, I want to work for you.”

“Huh?! .. Go home, kid.”

“I have no home. Please, I want to go with you.”

“No.”

“What? Why not?”

“You want me to train you to fight like me, right?”

“Yes. How did you know?”

“Not important. So go home. I don’t do apprentices.”

“Is it because I’m a girl?”

At that moment Ryu gave a strong laugh. The waitress had no idea what made him laugh, but then, paying close attention to his genderless tone and body structure, another question struck her line of thought. She hesitated to ask at first, but then went ahead and asked.

“Are you a girl, Mr. Ryu?”

“It doesn’t matter, kid. ’Cause you ain’t coming with me.”

“How come?”

“I work solo.”

“It’s because I’m human, isn’t it?”

Right then Ryu stopped altogether. His expression went from merry to fury in an instant. The pose he took and the look he had in his eyes alarmed the waitress, but she stood her grounds.

“I don’t know what you’ve heard about me,” Ryu said with honesty and brute frankness dominating his tone, “but I’m no racist.”

“I didn’t mean it like that ..”

Ryu didn’t wait to hear her apology or excuse or whatever she had to say. He walked on. She followed him.

“Don’t follow me.”

“It’s a free country, isn’t it?”

He said nothing.

She studied him. She was curious about him in a number of ways, but the thought that ran on her mind at that moment was whether he was a boy or a girl. She knew that the name Ryu, which meant dragon, was given to boys in this dimension – her dimension; the human dimension – but in other dimensions the name could have a different meaning and might even

be a feminine name. Thinking about his gender was going nowhere and only confused her so she tried to guess his age. It was easy as luizis are known to be born with white hair. The darker it gets, the older they are. Since Ryu had light silver hair, she knew that he was young.

“Could you slow down please,” she asked. “I’ve been working all day and my feet really hurt.”

“So don’t follow me.”

“Please.”

He walked on. She slowed down. Eventually she came to a stop and sat on the pavement. She took off her shoes and tended to her feet as she saw Ryu walk away. He refused to look back, but by the time he had almost disappeared out of her sight, he took one peek behind him and saw her being attacked by a gang of three teenagers. He rushed back and attacked the three. Since they were kids, he let them go with fractured ribs as a reminder not to pick on the defenseless.

“Are you always this magnetic for trouble?”

“Usually its less. Guess it’s my birthday today.”

“You okay?” He asked.

“Yeah. Thanks.”

Seeing her incapable of walking, he whistled for a cab. Once it arrived, he picked her up and sat her in the back.

“Take her to wherever she wants to go,” Ryu said, giving the taxi driver a 1000 Dim coin then walked by.

“Where to, miss?”

“I suppose here’s fine.”

“What?” Exclaimed Ryu as he overheard her giving him the address of her desired destination. “Don’t be an idiot. Let him take you back to your place.”

“I don’t have one, remember?”

Ryu stood there, staring at her, thinking about what she might be thinking. She stared back in the same stubborn manner. He finally let out a puff of air and picked her up and out again. The taxi left, keeping the coin. Ryu carried her back to his place. Being carried by him, she felt that he was not only a man, but a gentleman. She wondered if there was such a thing as a gentlewoman.

“Is this where you live?”

The waitress asked as she scanned the flat. It consisted of a small living room slash kitchen with only one door besides the one they came through. She guessed it to be the bedroom's.

"No. I'm spending a few nights here, then I 'm gone."

"Where?"

"Wherever there's another cheap inn, I suppose."

He walked into the bedroom and placed her on the bed. He walked into the bathroom.

"You can spend the night in the bed if you want. I can take the couch outside." Ryu shouted from the bathroom.

"Don't be ridiculous," she shouted back. "We're adults. We could share."

"I'm afraid it's the other way around," Ryu said as he walked out. "If we were children we could share. But adults have to be more responsible."

The waitress hardly recognized Ryu in what appeared to be his casual attire. Now his hair was messy. For pants he had worn black tights that cut off just before his ankles. He wore no socks nor slippers. For a top he had on a magenta baggy sweatshirt that exposed his stomach and had a large opened space for his neck as well. In the middle of it there was a drawing of a huge eye. She wondered why he had selected such an outfit, but it did appear comfortable. Seeing him in ordinary outfit, he looked as if he could be a boy or a girl. His figure, voice, and attitude didn't help in determining which.

"Where are you going?"

"To the living room. I'm going to sleep."

"But its only eight."

"I'm calling it a night."

"Well .. aren't you even interested in knowing my name."

"No. 'Cause you're leaving tomorrow."

"Fine. Be that way!" She shouted. He left.

She wasn't really angry, but trying to get him to care. She hated him for being inconsiderate. Little did she know, it was quite the opposite; he was being very considerate. The faster he's out of her life, the safer she would be.

The waitress did not sleep immediately. Instead, she flipped and tossed and turned until she got bored and started messing around with whatever's within her reach. Her feet were still sore so she did not try to get up. Next to the lamp she saw a purse. She opened it and saw a dimensional passport with the name Ryu on it. The photo next to it held his face with the same

messy hairdo. However, there weren't any other information. No birth date; no gender identity; no clarification whatsoever. She figured dimensional detectives had that privilege – to conceal such information. Then, messing in his purse, she found other passports. One with a letter F written in front of SEX, as well as a feminine photo of the detective, held the name Excella; another which had the letter M and presented Ryu as the masculine man she first met him as held the name Giovanni. With all these personalities her fantasies ran wild. She took him for a secret agent who was on a noble mission. Like a knight. She wished she could be his princess, but her wish was reconsidered a number of times as she was still confused about his gender. With such thoughts crossing her mind, she faded into the darkness that is called sleep.

The next morning she got up and stood on her feet. They no longer gave her pain when she stood on them. She made her way into the living room and saw Ryu standing against the stove.

“Making breakfast?”

“Tea.”

“Oh. But thanks anyways.”

“It's for me. But I suppose I can make an extra cup.”

She made her way towards the couch and took a seat. It was still warm from Ryu. He appeared to have just awoken himself.

“Why do you have different IDs?”

“Comes with the job.”

“Yeah but why aren't they only male or female? I mean why shift interchangeably between the two?”

Ryu, after pouring the tea into two cups, brought the cups over to the waitress.

“Why are you so fixated on gender? Is it really important to know a person's gender? Shouldn't his actions speak for a persona instead of his biology?”

“I'm sorry. You're right.”

“It's not your fault. I suppose my lifestyle would confuse most people. After all, it was the exact same way with my –”

But then, he broke off. He just stood there as if he witnessed death. Talking about such a swore subject did bring the scent of death into the room, at least for Ryu. Looking into his eyes, she knew he was speaking of his significant other. The person Ryu loved clearly had a tragic ending.

“Anyways,” he changed the subject. “I should be working now. I won’t be home until around dawn. By then I expect you out of here and out of my life. For your own good.”

“Why are you in this line of work? So dangerous and extreme?”

“.. The sooner you’re gone, the better.”

He deliberately chose to ignore her question, partially because she wouldn’t understand, and partially because if she did understand then she would be a potential candidate as someone he could connect with. For someone like him, he knew it wouldn’t be wise. He walked towards the door. However, she kept on talking.

“It’s Mimi, by the way,” she stated her name. He stopped walking, but didn’t turn around. “And I look older than I am. I’m really seventeen. I know, I should be in high-school not cleaning dishes, but my parents threw me out once they found out that I invited a guy over while they were out of town. You see, they only found out because they came sooner than I had expected and they found me with him in their bed.”

“Why are you .. telling me this?”

“Because I know you are alone. Secluded from the world. But I’m here to tell you that you don’t have to be. Just because the one you loved died –”

“You have no right!” He roared calmly. His tone was a bit lower than hers, but the way in which he said it spoke volumes. He was furious.

“She was a human, wasn’t she? The woman you loved.” She went on. “She was someone like me – someone you took to train.”

“This was a mistake. You can stay the night here if you want, but I’m leaving.”

“Always on the run,” she went on confronting him. “Having no connections with anyone whatsoever! You’re scared of commitment, that’s your problem.”

That’s when he had enough. He marched straight towards her and walked up to her face with anger in his eyes. He could never hurt her, she knew that, and that was why she did not fear him. Instead of going all out, he regained calmness and spoke clearly.

“Don’t tell me what my problem is. You don’t know what I’ve been through .. You don’t know.”

After that Ryu walked away out of the flat and the apartment building. She watched him leave through the window, but did not follow him. She knew she would never see Ryu again, and perhaps it was for the best. Perhaps, Mimi thought, this dimensional detective business suited Ryu after all.



A PERFECT WORLD

The year is 2254. The existence of alternative realities had been discovered about five decades ago and portals had been established. At first it was expensive to travel and could only be conducted by heavy teleportational machinery. Now, every citizen has a chip in his passport that allows him or her to travel at will to any known dimension. People soon became aware of the fact that each dimension had its own version of a dominant breed. One was run by humans, others by woaaks, yet others by luizis. One luizi, in particular, had made it his mission in life to make sure that everything runs smoothly in all known dimensions; to make sure that whatever happened to the person he once loved would never happen to anyone else.

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