

Carina vs Misery

by David Carner

Carina Miller meets up with an old friend and finds herself thinking about the past.

Rated: T · Genre: Angst, Hurt/Comfort

I don't own Chuck

The bar was dimly lit, and she was enjoying the gaze of the man watching her. She was sitting in the booth in the back corner, exactly where she needed to be to watch her back. She saw the man's gaze leave her, and she smirked. She looked toward the front door and there she was. One part pissed off, one part sexy as hell, all parts Zondra.

"Red," Zondra said in way of greeting. "You doin' okay?"

"Fine as ever," Carina replied. "So, he cheat on her?"

"Why is that the first place your mind always goes?" Zondra asked, shaking her head.

"No, it's a long story, but the condensed version is she doesn't remember the last five years in Burbank." Carina went to grab her purse. "What are you doing?"

"Getting Blondie out of Snoresville, that's what," Carina said.

"She's staying, Carina," Zondra said softly. Carina fell back into the booth. "She fell in love with him again." Carina snorted. "She's really staying."

"Well, if that's what she wants," Carina said, shrugging. "Different strokes, you know?" She glanced over at the guy at the bar and winked at him. Zondra followed her gaze, turned back to Carina and shook her head. "I'm sorry if I have failed your morale compass."

"You haven't, Carina, but I do wonder, why you do it," Zondra told her. The waiter came, gave them menus, took their drink order and left.

“Why would you do that?” Carina asked. Zondra gave her a confused look. “Why would you do something we don’t do, talk about the past?”

“Because maybe you have a skeleton in your past that you need to deal with and maybe you need someone you can trust,” Zondra said with a shrug. “But, fuck if I care, I don’t do feelings.”

“Yeah,” Carina snorted. She was silent for a moment. “You really want to know?” she asked in a small voice.

“Red, if you want to talk about it...” Zondra trailed off. “You don’t-”

“It was back before we met,” Carina said, staring at the table in front of her. “I was new in the DEA.” She glanced at Zondra, and then turned and looked away. She moved her jaw in a way that made it clear she was fighting emotion. “I was twenty-two, and I had just met Neal.” Zondra’s cell phone went off. Carina turned back to look at Zondra. She pulled her phone out and silenced it. “Is that your boss?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Zondra told her.

“Go,” Carina told her.

“Red,” Zondra protested. Carina shook her head. “I-”

“Go,” Carina said. “It’s fine, I promise.” She looked over at the guy sitting at the bar. “I’ll find some therapy.”

“You are damaged,” Zondra said, laughing, and rising from the table.

“But you love me,” Carina told her.

“I do,” Zondra admitted. “If you’re sure-”

“Go save the world,” Carina insisted. Zondra nodded, turned, and headed off. The man at the bar picked up his drink and came over. “Not tonight, sport,” she said, shooing him away. He shrugged, and headed back to the bar. “Not tonight,” she muttered to herself.

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She walked into her hotel room, alone. She found the song she wanted on her phone, and put it on repeat. She stripped her clothes off and looked at herself in the mirror. Carina Miller was a gorgeous, confident, sexual being, but that wasn't the woman staring back at her. Staring back was Maria Elena Alberti, the twenty-one year old, DEA agent, who was a no one.

She listened to the song playing on her phone.

I've been a mess since you stayed

I've been a wreck since you changed

Don't let me get in your way

I miss the lies and the pain

The fights that keep us awake

I'm telling you

She turned the water on as hot as she could stand it, she began to scrub her skin, trying to remove the memory of Neal Banister. They had both come to the DEA to change the world.

"So what is it you want, Neal, more than anything?" she asked him one fall afternoon.

"For you to go out with me," he blurted out.

She scrubbed her scalp, begging her mind to forget him, to erase him the same way Sarah had the years erased from her mind.

"I love you, Maria," he told her one night after they had made love. His arm was wrapped around her, stroking hers. "I've never been as happy in my life."

"I love you, Neal," she replied, the love in her heart feeling like it would burst through her.

She listened as the lyrics played through again.

I miss the bad things

The way you hate me

I miss the screaming

The way that you blame me

Miss the phone calls

When it's your fault

I miss the late nights

Don't miss you at all

She looked down at her fourth finger, where the engagement ring had been, and she scrubbed it with all her might.

"What's it gonna take for you to marry me?" Maria had asked him, grinning one night.

"I'm scared," he admitted. Maria became worried. "I'm scared on one of these assignments you are going to...."

"I'm going to what?" she asked.

"You're gonna have to sleep with someone," Neal admitted. Maria shook her head.

"That's never gonna happen," Maria promised him. "It's just me and you, I'm yours."

"You son-of-a-bitch," she said, scrubbing on the ring finger, still seeing the engagement ring there. "You mother-fucking son-of-a-bitch."

"I've got an assignment, a real one, I'm off the desk," he told her, excited. "I've got an informant."

"Just remember, no sex," she said with a wink.

"I only love you," he told her.

She had watched him with her. She was beautiful. She was everything Maria wasn't. She had an hourglass figure, blonde, and she exuded sexuality.

She remembered that night, she dreamed of it nearly every night since it happened. He got a text in the middle of the night. He kissed her, told her he loved her, and slipped

out of bed. She swore she wouldn't be that woman, but she followed him. He went to her apartment, and Maria made it to the roof across from there.

The music played on.

I like the kick in the face

And the things you do to me

I love the way that it hurts

I don't miss you, I miss the misery

She pulled out the binoculars, told herself as soon as she saw everything was fine, she would leave. She looked through them, and that was the end of Maria Elena Alberti.

She stopped the shower, got out, and wrapped a towel around herself.

"What are you wearing?" he had asked the next day when he came into work.

"Whatever the fuck I please," she replied, smiling the whole time.

"What has gotten into you?" Neal asked.

"Nothing, nothing at all," she said. "I wasn't the woman you were fucking last night, was I?"

"Maria," Neal began.

Carina slid the ring off of her finger and placed it in his hand. "Maria died last night watching her fiance getting fucked like his life depended on it."

"Will you quit saying that!"

"Saying what, fucking?" Carina asked. "Did you make love to her?"

"No," Neal replied. "I didn't mean to."

"You didn't mean to," Carina repeated. "Well how the hell did you get naked and kept managing to stick your dick in her?"

"Will you stop!" Neal hissed.

"I will," Carina replied. "Have a nice life, Neal."

"Can we talk about this?" Neal pleaded.

"You and her did, a long time ago, when she told you that it was you and her, that she was yours. You killed her last night, you killed you and her. And you get to live with that."

She walked out of the bathroom, her towel wrapped around her. "Fuck it," she muttered. She got dressed, walked out of her room, and out of the motel. She found a payphone, and she slipped some change into it, after she dialed the number. She listened to the buzzing on the other end.

"Hello?" the voice asked.

"Neal?" she responded.

"Maria?" he said, hope in his voice. "I've been thinking about you a lot."

"I've been thinking about you," she replied.

"I messed up, and I will never forgive myself," he told her. "Maria, can you please give me another chance?"

"Nope," she replied. "You killed her. I just called to say fuck you." With that, she hung up, and sighed. "Wonder if that guy is still at the bar?" She headed back toward her hotel.