

Do you like gay people? I do, let's visit the Dalton household for once. Considering it's a superhero movie we're talking about, this place is just the right amount of nerdy for us to get people earnestly talking about that. Like any proper American household, there's a man, a father, and a daughter.

Actually, before we get into them at all, are they even all american? I need to make sure my jokes work, hold on, let me get my notes... I'll even throw in some extra info while I'm at it.

Declan Dalton... That's a very European name... oh immigrant family eh? Done quite well for himself in that case, he's following the American dream, that counts. He's somewhere in his 50s I think? Main interests listed are... 'Mechanics, Cleanliness, Reading, and Family' ... overall he doesn't seem like a complex man... What else can I say about him? He has a smarter, cooler brother he won't talk to. Only similarity between the two is they're both unmarried.

Kila Dalton... I know her very well. As long as she's had sentience she's been in this land so I think that counts. Ok her age is listed as exactly 20 but that's supposed to be for the future and this is a year and a half before that... so either 18 or 19 depending on her unlisted birthday. I mean, I of all people should know her birth date but I can't keep count of every one of *those* children. Her primary interests are written as 'Superheroes, Mechanics, Astronomy, and Women' and I think that's funny.

Drew Rian Mortis... Very Irish name I will... oh hold on I know this one... I'll say he's American enough, if your body was born on American soil I think that counts. His age is listed as 'ambiguous' so take that as you will. Interests are listed as 'Magic, Relaxation, Mechanics... History, Fashion, Photography, Golfing, Gardening, Archaeology, Travel, Languages, The Arts, Music (apparently good with various instruments), Theatre, Cooking, Trivia, Museum visits, Taxidermy, Fishing, Hiking... you know what I'll stop listing these here...'

Now that it's been solidified that my joke works well enough, let's actually get into it... wait a moment, is this even America? I mean the city is in the same place as New York is in most realities so I just sorta assumed, though it's a lot larger... hold on, let me check my notes again...

Uh huh...

What does 'sort of a city-state' even mean? Okay sorry I'm getting distracted, I'm just *sure* you're not here for this type of info so I'll cut back to the Daltons (and Drew)

Now just a bit more preamble, I have to always be behind Kila, those red eyes of hers allow her to see me no matter how invisible I try to be, which is very annoying let me tell you. I mean it makes sense considering her eyes are pretty much the same as mine but it's still a nuisance so let me complain a bit. Can't see through walls like me though, unmatured.

The Dalton household is quite large, as you'd expect from wealthy people, it's situated close to the middle of the city, not too far off from Holiday Tower. Sits above a hill of sorts, good amount of trees around, no neighbors. It's neat.

I'm considering doing a whole house tour, but that's probably not for the best. I'm supposed to be here to look at people right... eh their rooms are extensions of themselves, this counts. Plus the actual story that started here didn't commentate much on the household itself. Mostly because Kila was the narrator and I guess she doesn't think about those things often.

First off, Kila's room. Not that much of a mess at the moment (given as Drew is alive) but still not the best condition, just slightly messy, few water bottles around, you know the sort. Also, you can definitely tell her favorite colors are black and red right now (wonder if they fit Shadow the Hedgehog).

Inside of her closet here we've got the standard fits. Mostly smart or casual wear, pajamas, there's... oh hold on, action figures in the corner of the closet, neat. For some reason I thought her the type to keep those proudly out there. Though I guess she doesn't carry herself with pride in general. In a neat little box in the corner of the closet there's her namesake, a phurba (also known as a kila) dagger. In perfect condition as always, I always thought she'd grow up to use the thing but she seems to prefer hand to hand.

Apart from comic books, she's got some regular books. A signed murder mystery book, quite a few space related books that look like they get read often, and the opposite, several books for social skills that were either never touched or barely read at all.

Hidden in the drawer, there's a notebook with quite a few sketches on it. Comic character designs? She's a pretty good artist now that I see it like this, damn she would have killed it if she ever opened a tumblr page. Anyhow, let me look through some of these.

A multitude of designs are the first thing I see. I think some of these are in-universe comic heroes while others are ones she made up herself. Ooh I can stay on topic here, flipping through the pages, I see the burning heron protagon girl here. Despite being called that I don't think her suit has any bird theming in the slightest which is funny. Kila's art has her depicted with flames around her, visor broken, looking beaten, yet her right arm raised up heroically with a white holy light emanating from her arm.

Bunch of other drawings around and... hold on again, character profiles for heroes she made. Some of these are interesting but... here it is, Marionette. 'A puppet created by Edalbe for malicious purposes. Unlike most of Edalbe's creations however, they managed to find others who'd help support and enforce them. Eventually Marionette would manage to break their own strings, turning them into a tool for good. Still struggles with what they were inherently created for in the end. Note: Successor of Space-Woman.'

I suppose Space-Woman was the one who represented her beforehand. Interesting. I can say a lot here, but I feel you're smart enough to interpret this. Ok moving on to the next page we have... oh selfship art. I should probably stop looking through this now. Next place.

Declan's room is fairly standard. Very nice looking. Not too big a room. He has some accolades on the walls... engineering and mechanics, about what I expected. He has standard clothes, nothing too interesting really. The room walls have a lot of pictures displayed. Pics of a younger him with his parents (with his brother edited out), pics of him with Kila, quite a few pics of him with Drew and the occasional other person (mostly Drew).

This room is rather uninteresting but to be honest he probably doesn't keep things around in his room, no notes or designs of projects. I mean, what's the point in a room if I can't bring out any chekov's guns for me to bring out later. There's not even a red herring or anything. Though I did see a fishing rod in one of the house walls earlier... I guess he doesn't decorate his room all too much.

I was looking forward to finding stuff cause I already know the other two... like ~~Rian~~ Drew is one of the few people in this world I could name off the top of my head while Kila is the only reason I've been here before in the first place. To be fair, the only other people I knew beforehand here were... Radia (she's the damn protagonist) and The Holidays (personal reasons). Everyone else to me has just been a rando. If you're wondering how I still act like I know everyone... just don't think about it.

I should move on... Drew doesn't actually live here so I won't tell you about his apartment right now, that one'll have to wait. Well... this house does have a rather large workshop, sort of because Declan loves working from home, even if he has a much better workplace somewhere else in the city... I'll hold off on visiting the workshop for now, though, I have a feeling we'll be there later anyways. Enough stalling let's get to it.

In the Living Room, sitting on a couch, is Kila Dalton, who is watching what I assume to be the previous Burning Heron movies, guess she's getting some watches in before the finale comes out. Her eyes seem pretty focused on that so I doubt she'd look around and see me by accident.

Her soul are those strings of hers, just looks like a fucked up version of the nervous system... notably she lacks a soul aura in general, which means offensive magic should tear through her body like a bullet through paper mache (unless it connects with a string). Maybe that's why she wears the Marionette Suit (which limits her strength, speed, and mobility significantly). Also I did not need to state this but her soul is red. (like me 😊)

I have been informed that I should not be using emojis, my bad, moving on.

Drew and Declan are having a chat in the kitchen, Declan is holding a cup of coffee, while Drew just seems to be around for conversation, his expression is off but I can't say for what.

Sigh, okay, souls. Declan's soul is that of a creator, i.e it's red... a darker one though. His soul seems like a knight of sorts... just sorta headless if you understand. This means his head is very very open to magic attacks, must have sucked growing up with that. Actually now that I notice it, there's a small scar on the back of his neck. Wonder what the story behind that one is.

Drew's soul is... not a rabbit's soul. A hare instead, a very notable difference if you care about animal behavior. Soul is... many many shades of gray, filled with scratches and imperfections. Purple tears are right below his ever-open eyes, purple splotches are over his hands, as if blood fell on them, its mouth is stitched shut. The hare is expressionless. The hare is powerful.

"That reminds me... what's up with all your visits lately?" Though he'd have a heavier accent to be honest.

"...just been feeling like taking some more time with you two, is that a problem?"

"Of course not! You're always welcome here, you know that."

"Still can't get over the fact you offered me a room to live here."

"Come on, that was years ago."

"And it's still funny to this day... I'd say if I wasn't taking care of Zeb then I might have possibly considered it."

"...you really care for that kid don't you?"

"A fair amount."

"Come on, that's pretty much your son."

"You've said this since the day I took him in."

"And I'll keep saying it until I'm 6 feet under, that's your boy."

"..." He looks conflicted.

"Is something wrong?"

"...It's a nice thought is all..."

The two seem to stay calm as Declan sips from his coffee cup, which I just noticed has text on it. It reads SuperDadGuy... I imagine Kila commissioned this one herself.

"Yeah, no reason to be ashamed of it, you raised a fine man."

"I'm sure he would have ended up fine regardless, he's always been a good kid. Plus I was only in care of him for his teenage years..."

"A father is a father, just be happy with it."

"It's funny..."

"What is?"

"You weren't exactly eager to take care of a kid yourself at first and now here you are."

"Oh come on Drew, that was different."

"What, red eyed baby scare ya?" Says Kila without turning away from the tv... she's got some good hearing it seems. Declan doesn't seem surprised so I guess this is just normal for her.

"What? No, that's not it!"

"I do remember you getting pretty freaked out..." Drew the instigator.

"That was more over my good friend bringing a baby and a knife to my door at 3 in the morning than it was over the red eyes" It was 2:52 actually... or was it 2:53? You forget the little details over time.

"Wait what? I've always imagined this happened at like a normal hour, what do you mean that it was 3 in the morning?" This got her attention enough to actually pause the thing on tv and head towards the kitchen, gonna have to be dodging her eyesight now... actually no I'll just stay on the ceiling, she can't see through walls.

"Our favorite Mortis over here looked like a goddamn lunatic let me tell you."

"If I groggily woke up to see a seven foot tall man with a child and a phurba on my front door I think I'd probably be freaked the fuck out too."

"Okay you don't have to put it that way."

"No no I mean it I'd close the door on baby me forever."

"But what about the joys of fatherhood?" He says in a purposely exaggerated but sad tone

"Wasn't gonna get that anyways seeing as I'm not a man."

"Nonsense dear, you don't have to be a man to be a father." Drew nods along as if he just heard the world's greatest wisdom yet spoken in the last 267 years. I hate them (endearing)

"You know what, I'm going back to watching the movies."

"Aren't the heron movie things supposed to be later today?" Then what the hell was Kila watching.

"Yeah, I just felt like watching movies the whole day, again..." I guess this is normal for a girl with no social life. Actually no I feel mean for saying that one...

"I see... since I still haven't seen them I just thought to ask... is it fine if I watch along with you?"

Even watching from afar I can see her red eyes quite literally glow in happiness... as in generating actual red light. I guess she doesn't have much trouble in dark rooms. Mine don't do that

"Uh... yeah, I'm sure you'll like them." Trying to act chill but eyes give it away, oh well. The glow is fading away so I guess it's only for a moment.

"Good, call me when it's time ok?" Kila gives him a thumbs up before returning to the couch

"Anyhow, where were we?"

"We were talking about fatherhood for some reason." Declan finishes up his coffee as Drew talks.

"... Okay I think it's time tha-" and an interruption by the doorbell ringing, very loudly by the way, Declan looks annoyed, Drew seems undisturbed, and Kila covers up her ears almost immediately, really can't blame her, if I didn't have a volume setting I'd do the same.

"Is it supposed to be this annoying...?" A bit of electricity surging through his fingers, he's pointing it like a finger gun at a random part of the wall.

"No! It'll be fixed up soon." With that as confirmation, Drew shoots a white beam of electricity that shrinks as it harmlessly goes through several walls, connecting with some wiring and immediately shutting off the alarm... from what I see he didn't even damage the wiring itself. Extremely precise magic yet unnecessary, he's just being a show off.

"There ya go, feel free to check on your guest, fix up that doorbell too later."

"You don't have to tell me that..." He walks through the kitchen, the living room and whatnot to get to the front door where our favorite Corsican-American male is waiting calmly. Yes I'm talking about Storm. Declan looks about neutral to see him. Also Storm has a cool coat now.

“Good day to you, are you busy with anything right now?”

“Uh... not particularly no.”

“Good, Winter sent me to check out... recent work, she wasn’t actually too specific you know.”

“...Oh I know what she’s talking about, I can show you that... though if you don’t mind I have something else to fix up at the moment.”

“Oh that’s fine, no problem at all, do I come in later or?”

“No, no, be my guest, fixing this shouldn’t take too long anyways.” Leaving the door, Declan walks back to the kitchen.

Storm follows too. I figured he’s been inside here before but he’s sorta just looking around the environment, probably having paragraphs of dialogue in his head right now, but he’s the one who cares about furniture. I’m a higher being and can care about much more important things, like college football.

On their way, Kila completely stops watching the movie to stare at Storm like a bug, who after noticing stops in place.

“Hello to you?”

“Your eyes are weird” says the girl with glowing red eyes. Declan stops, looking concerned.

Storm is completely still for a moment, he passively glances at Declan for a moment before turning back to her.

“Really? What do you see in them? ” The ability to not call out her eyes here really is an impressive show of restraint from him, bravo. He also doesn’t sound insulted at the slightest, just... attentive for her response.

“...I don’t know.” I don’t think Kila actually expected an honest sounding response.

“Just a gut instinct then?”

“Kinda???”

“Fair enough, you know this reminds me of-” His voice trails off as he spots Drew walking by... Oh I forgot Storm dislikes the guy.

“Hey there errand boy, how is it?”

“...good, it’s been good.” The air is tense... not literally, which I feel the need to emphasize because Storm tends to make the air around him literally tense.

“Ok so is there something between you two or?” It’s really obvious to the point that even Kila can tell something’s off.

“No, no, nothing at all.” The Storm lie counter goes up today... well technically he lies like... extremely commonly but that’s more about him having social courtesy.

“Yeah yeah... anyhow before you ask me Declan, the source for the thing is... over there.” says Drew, pointing and literally highlighting the problem point in another room.

“Oki, be right back then.” The man walks out and leaves this trio be. Now that he’s gone, Storm ignores Drew, turning back to Kila.

“Anyhow, we didn’t formally introduce each other did we?” Drew doesn’t look too pressed to interrupt... off in thought at the moment.

“I already know who you are though.”

“...okay, but what’s your name?”

“I thought you knew?”

“What’d make you think that?”

“You don’t seem put off by my eyes.”

“Little bit of red never hurt anyone, did it?”

“It’s like... *the evil color*.” Mean.

“It’s the color of passion, of sunsets, of warmth... “

“...Also the colour of danger and aggression.” Also mean

“That’s part of passion, if misplaced, but we’re not arguing semantics, the point is, I think your eyes are cool, nothing else to it.”

“...” Small talk, ask about the weather, talk about movies, literally anything, please.

“Thanks I guess... yours are um... neat too.” At least she’s trying.



“Thanks, hope you enjoy your movies, I’ll be-”

“You were interrupted earlier when you saw me, mind finishing what you were saying?”

“Ah... yes that, *you* don’t have to tell me that.”

“So, girl... here’s a piece of advice. You seem like the type to get into fights commonly... so let me tell you a little something. If you see someone that has blue eyes that are *weirder* than mine, don’t even interact with them, alright?”

“...why not?”

“I know fully well what you’re capable of, and so I also know your limits... just keep that in mind.”

“Weird but sure, I guess.”

“Anyhow, nice little chat, see you some other time.” Right on cue of Storm wrapping up this conversation, Declan shows up... Storm seems to be timely like that.

“Well, got that issue dealt with, don’t know why it bugged out like that anyhow.”

“So, on to show the work then?”

“Yeah yeah sorry for the wait, follow me.” The obedient Storm follows without a word, just looking around, passing a decorated vase.

“Were you the one who decorated this home?” He says with no positive or negative intonation.

“Yeah, why are you asking?”

“Seems nice enough, nothing else to it.” I need to see a version of Storm that lacks the need to be formal. Anyhow, Declan barely acknowledges the comment as he walks up to a door with a keypad and puts in a code... which I won’t bother repeating. In they go to the workroom.

“I don’t exactly get why Winter wants you to see things here, the company mostly does manufacturing anyhow, so my personal projects aren’t actually important right?” He brings up this complaint now? Weird.

“I suppose not, still, Winter had a feeling there’d be something interesting, that’s about it. I assume the logic is that you’re a rich man with lots of free time.” Storm seems to stare off into the left corner of the room before looking at anything else.

“Fair enough, follow me then lad.”

Kila seemed to have missed to mention how large this ‘workstation’ is. The home being built up a hill means they’ve got... well... a hill to work off spacewise, and this place uses that to its advantage... or well, kind of. Most of the important stuff is up here in a more conventional (though still pretty large) room but there’s a lower, really wide floor, probably rarely used. Anyhow the reason I’m talking is Declan writes in another separate password (paranoid much?) into the wall, which activates a short elevator from the wall. Without a word, the two of them enter. Cute little elevator music plays as it goes down.

“This is Mortis’ fault isn’t it?” He says, referring to the music.

“I thought it charming.” Of course you do.

Arriving at their destination, the two get out, the place is far too large for what it needs to be, lights turned on as the elevator went down as the place is fully underground and the ceiling is a real way up, though supported by pillars. Walls and floor are fully lined up metallically however... How much time and money did this take I wonder?

“Way too big a place right?”

“Better to have more than less, anyhow, these are your projects?” He says, pointing at the nearest wall where five metallic suits are lined up, there’s also another that’s covered up more to the side..

“Yep, been on and off with working on these for the last while.”

“Those for you to wear?”

“What, no no, I’m a bit too short for those... they’re uh... automatons.” Storm looks at him oddly.

“You’re making robots? I don’t believe you have technology that advanced.”

“Combination of mechanics and magic mostly. They’re not exactly sapient but they do know how to identify friend from foe, and then how to fight.”

“Then turn one on... let’s say the green one.”

“Oh... really?”

“I mean it, I’m pretty curious, feel free to explain what it does once it’s activated.”

“Alright then, here goes...” Almost hesitantly Declan’s hand gets filled with a red aura, which he then snaps away as a green automaton rises, it seems to be designed in a way resembling tree bark. Its ‘eyes’ turn a purple light which glances at Storm.

“So, what does it think of me? Also what’s its name?” Declan seems to have picked up his phone, and is reading through it.

“No name yet, just green, also no detected aggression from you.” Storm points a finger gun with the surrounding wind tensing up around it.

“What about now?”

“It says you’re a foe.”

“Is it not going to attack me then?”

“...While it can detect threats... it only attacks if I order it to.”

“Don’t want it attacking someone accidentally then?”

“You got it, code is a rather messy thing, and it could sustain damage that could mess with the code, so the attack function is as restricted as possible so no mistakes can occur.”

“I won’t test it myself but how capable in a fight would you say it is?”

“Well... it’s a robot, a hit from that thing could take down just about anyone... additionally it’s metal is extremely resistant to both physical attacks and magical, extreme heat and cold don’t do much to it, and-”

“So that’s why Winter wanted me to look at these...”

“Huh? What do you-”

“Moonshards, Dalton.” I was staying quiet about it... how’d he know that?”

“...I was going to get to that. Yes, each of the robots is infused with a moonshard.”

“...Where’d you even get your hands on that? Actually nevermind the answer is Drew isn’t it?”

“Mostly, I found one of them myself and when I asked him about it, he explained its properties... of course then I asked him, what can you make with one of these? One thing led to another and we ended up on the idea of robots.”

“Why?”

“It’s a personal project, I’m not making these for any explicit reason... mostly to see if I can. We are cheating via the moonshard but the hope is that the knowledge we gain from this can one day be used to make an authentic one.”

“...fair enough, I assume the moonshard helps with defensive and offensive capabilities.”

“Makes magic attacks do mostly nothing, yes, though the main thing is how it affects the AI inside. Helps give it a controlled level of intelligence in combat scenarios... of course they were all built in mind with this intelligence only arriving when told to fight first.”

“Hypothetically speaking, if you removed the code limiters, could it actually be sapient?”

“It was only trained for combat scenarios, so... if I removed it then they’d simply be... animals with an extreme capability for fighting...”

“Does it not have the capability of learning?”

“It just replicates combat data while having enough intelligence due to the moonshard to adapt slightly in combat, in any other scenario it’s worthless. You could train it to do one type of task really well, but not much else. If the five of them were unrestricted I highly doubt they’d be able to even figure out the elevator.”

“Okay, what about... that one.” Storm says, pointing at the covered up sixth one. Can’t believe it took him this long to bring it up.

“That was the first one, the rest could one day go out into the field but this one...” He walks up to it and takes off the coverings, revealing it to be a rather large robot sitting against the wall... If this thing stood up I’m pretty sure it’d be taller than Drew (which is ridiculous). It’s mostly white with a bit of grey, it’s texture looks like that of a golf ball, you know, the dimples or whatnot. It also has a rather fanciful purple cape (which I assume is made of a strong material) and an empty gun holster... it has an aura of its own, that’s curious, rather shapeless and fluid however as it’s not a person, lacks a will.

“So this is the failure from which you started? Quite an unique look.” Storm seems to admire the thing

“Yes, looks like a golf ball, Drew nicknamed it Birdie while we were working on it.” Cute name for a not so cute thing.

“So why exactly is this one... different? Moonshard issues I ima... wait.”

“...?”

“The others have one moonshard inside them, like a light mix of fumes into the air... this one however... what the hell is up with it?”

“Mostly Drew’s work but... this one has... several shards mixed into the metal itself.”

“...”

“...”

“Excuse me, what?”

“It’s a-”

“I didn’t even know that was possible, typically trying to break a moonshard just has it reform, how do you mix it with something?” Does this mean this new metal would reform after damage?

“Drew said he knew someone, and that someone did it, I just worked with the metal after.”

“And you trust that?”

“Why wouldn’t I?”

“Why would you?”

“Because he’s my friend, it’s that simple.”

“You rely on him too much, are you not the slightest bit curious on how the hell he got that metal?”

“I trust him with everything I’ve got. He’s been there to help me in my worst times and he was there to celebrate with me when it got better, there’s nothing else to it.”

“Never rely on the company of a Mortis, that’s an old saying. Quite literally came from his family... don’t get attached to things that die or break easily, that’s what it means.”

“...”

“I’m not saying to hate him, or anything of the sort, I’m just telling you that... it could be any day, and you seem to ignore that. I know he’s different from a typical Mortis but he still is. I don’t mean to come off rudely.”

“Just stop talking about him.” Declan looks disappointed

"Fair enough, back to the robot, I assume the problem is with the moonshards interfering with the code?"

"...yes that's it. Along with it being our first attempt it... sort of... acts irrationally."

"So the most powerful of the bots doesn't even work, is it dangerous?"

"It has the combat data the others have but can't exactly be controlled, so I just shut it off. It's likely harmless, and the combat program is more than likely inefficient compared to the others but... I'm not one to take chances."

"Seems smart, let that thing stay deactivated, personally I'd scrap the thing... though trying to recover the moonshards at the least."

"Yes yes, Drew's supposed to do that in two days time."

"Ah, all's taken care of then. I suppose that's all I was... supposed to see today, so I'll be out now..." His voice trails as the elevator opens up, you know who it is.

"Well what are you two doing loitering around Birdie?"

"Nothing, just admiring the unique metal behind it."

"Feel free to keep admiring it then... or do ya have any questions?"

"A lot of them actually."

"Oh really? Well, how about this, I can give you answers... if you agree to a little spar." Oh this will be fun

"What immature nonsense... why exactly would I do that?"

"No answers then, got it."

"...fine, you piqued my curiosity enough, it'll just be a spar and nothing else."

"Good, how about we-

"You two are not fighting inside here." He says way sterner than I thought he could.

"Best we leave then, I saw all I had to anyhow, you're a good man Dalton, goodbye." And with that Storm and Drew both get on the elevator, I imagine they're not going to talk much on the way up so unless you just want descriptors of them walking up and out I'm going to leave the both of em, clearly you have no reason to care about this so let me get to uh... Kila I guess.

Credits are rolling on whatever the hell she was watching, but she's still just lazily on the couch, truly a life she leads, she lets out a string from her hand which goes out of the room and then comes back with her phone.

I walk up behind her just to peek at whatever she's doing, she goes online and searches for a movie theory of sorts before the phone turns off... seems the charger wasn't plugged in right, ain't that funny.

For some reason she just stares at the dead phone's surprisingly clean black screen as another string leaves her screen... she's probably thinking about how stupid she is or something overdramatic in her head as... wait, what in the...

She quickly stands up and turns around, I try to teleport out of sight but a string on my hand prevents me... she looks at me but before she can say a single word I slow the pace of time to a halt. Well, aren't I the idiot? She saw me on the reflection of the phone, didn't she? Well shit, cover blown... or not, I can work with this. I'm not explicitly allowed to alter memories today but I've got other means, might as well enjoy myself here.

I'll let automatic narration handle this next bit, I'd rather not get distracted by narrating to any of you. Got to play my role, and I love this one.

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Time goes from stopped, to just slowed to a crawl, at which Kila can at least perceive what is happening, the world around them shatters as it remains right in sight of her... the two of them seem to be in a featureless whiteness void now.

"Greetings, young one. I am NOMA" The currently lanky anomaly's red eyes stare into her like an animal. Its voice protrudes a multitude of voices, some masculine, some feminine, some confident, some fearful, yet all equally as hearable. Among all these voices Kila swears she can hear her own. The entity is almost twice as tall as she is.

"What... do you want?" Says the girl hesitantly.

"I want to know what you want." Kila's expression seems to relax

"What I want? I don't get it." The anomaly snaps its finger as it dissipates.

Light surrounds Kila as she's transported, perhaps to another world as a sort of ghost as she overlooks another version of her wearing a suit as she dances with a silhouetted woman in a dress.

"Is it love?"

Another world, where this version of Kila seems to stand above a defeated silhouette of an opponent, a crowd of people cheering for her as she proudly smiles.

“Is it recognition?”

Back to the void, except this time, there's a mirror, Kila stares at it quickly before seeing an equal reflection of herself in every way, discounting one key detail, her eyes are normal, a simple natural set of green eyes.

“Or is it just to fit in, to be normal?”

Kila doesn't respond, instead staring at this other her in disbelief. The anomaly appears again, at her side.

“Does this really fascinate you this much?”

“...”

“I see then...” The entity hand elongates and crawls into the reflection, claws that weren't there before grab onto the green eyed kila's head before ripping out the front part of her entire head back onto the regular world.

“You want it so badly, then take it.” The reflection shatters and every other part fades away except the two eyes now being offered to Kila. Kila is left in complete silence for a moment.

“W-why?” The entity tilts its head in a fakely innocent matter.

“Does your own death concern you this much, I assure you it's... surprisingly common.”

All around the both of them flashes of possibilities of her own death appear, an unconscious her about to have her head stomped on by a metallic boot, a vision of a fire consuming her, a red sword cutting right through her and her soul, a zombie version of her, a masked person holding a gun against her head before finally firing, her innocently watching a bunny, her own strings enveloping her, and ultimately, a vision of a fist covered in electricity punching right through her heart.

From behind, it's hand grabs onto her shoulder. “See, it's qui-” overwhelmed and in a rage, she quickly turns around to punch it... but before the hit lands, the red antelope resemblant humanoid is replaced with a glass replica of Declan Dalton, Kila can't stop the hit as it lands on his face, instantly shattering it, the remaining part of the sculpture is still grabbing onto her shoulder as it... struggles.



Slowly struggles... as if gasping for air... drawn out for far too long. Kila's rage is replaced with a sorrow of sorts... which doesn't end as the remainder of the statue shatters.

"You deny yourself a purpose." Says a singular voice from behind as she's teleported to another room, one that has a multitude of daggers, with names written. To list a few, there's a badek, a keris, a phurba, and a rondel.

Turning to stare behind her, Kila sees a human, red eyed just as her and with long green hair, they're wearing a regular outfit you'd see out, shirt, jacket, pants.

"You're stronger than nearly anyone simply by being born. your strings beat out all other forms of magic. you're naturally intelligent. you've got *everything* you could want with that."

"But I-"

"But what? People are mean? If you learned to talk to people, that wouldn't be a problem. You're just lazy and apathetic, that's all. Put some more effort in. Those others you tried, you know."

"Did the ones who die, also try?" She says spitefully

"Some of them, but they're just possibilities, minor little things to worry about. Just don't make their mistakes. be better. you are better. you are stronger. you are superior."

"..."

"Your future is harsh, you have much to lose Kila, but maybe you'll be lucky, or maybe fate will guide you right. who knows what you could lose going forward."

"What in the world are you trying to say here?"

"..."

"Hello?"

The Human begins to twitch as the floor behind them collapses, sending Kila hurtling downwards until eventually falling into a complete darkness, no illuminating light except her own eyes as naught but a splash is heard as she finally lands.

"You aren't the most clever and your future is uncertain." The usual multitude of voices returns, feeling everpresent, as if coming from every direction.

"Stop being so fucking mystical and just tell me."

"You've got so many possibilities. Can you guess in how many you get to keep everything you love?"

“ ”

...

“0”

“So I’m not allowed to be happy, is that it?”

The moon appears above, reflecting a light that doesn't exist into the darkness. Now it's quite obvious that she seems to be walking atop an ocean somehow, she is also wearing the boots of her marionette suit. The enigmatic anomaly appears once more

"I never said that, did I? One can persevere through loss, can't they?"

“But it’s better to not lose anything in the first place.”

“Then how about this, I offer you a little deal. I-” Offering a hand and a pleasant smile.

“Yeah no, I’m not an idiot. Not making a deal with something like you. I don’t even believe you anyways, nothing’s gonna happen to dad or Drew.” Its smile doesn’t fade away in the slightest as it puts the hand back.

"I wasn't talking about either of them." A singular voice emanates from the entity.

"What then." Kila can't sense it yet but... she's starting to sink.

“Who knows? Maybe you’ll finally open up your heart, find yourself a girl that loves you back... just to find she belongs to death.” It begins to fade away

“Wait wait, can you-” Before she can finish speaking, the entity is gone and immediately, she falls into the water below, sinking at a fast rate.

Immediately realizing the problem, she tries to take off the suit's boots but is completely unable to, desperately, she tries making strings, many strings, which try maneuvering through the water but... there's nothing to hold onto anywhere.

She tries to think of a strategy but there's nothing

There's no one, no life

There's just the ocean.

And so, with nothing left, she tries to swim upwards, she really really did, desperation rising over time as her breath runs out more and more and more. And so... over and over again, she

[illegible]

---

Automatic narration is done, now back. Wasn't that fun?  
...Dear Reader, why are you looking at my words like that?

Anyhow, Kila is over there sleeping on the couch, you know, having dreams, she'll remember it as a dream.

So where was I? Oh yes, Drew and Storm were supposed to fight, now let me teleport and... dammit it's already over. Spent way too long dealing with Kila I suppose. Storm is just sort of standing around looking frustrated and Drew already left... hard to say who won. There's a paper flying off in the air and Storm feels the need to draw it into where he is. He reads it and seems majorly annoyed before going on his way. Well darn, that's that. I usually hold an inbetween thing between each section but I'll count my escapades with Kila as the inbetweener, I'll just teleport to the next place.

Right outside a fairly large storehouse, there's a man wearing a standard business suit and tie, the type someone would wear to a job interview to look formal, the tie is cyan though, which is odd.

His soul is really simple so this should be short, a weak sickly mostly humanoid purple thing with various clumps of metal grafted onto the hands and other random locations. The metals are a pure black... I think it's aluminum though I'm more of a connoisseur of the magical than a metalworker.

The man knocks on the storehouse door and waits a second, the door opens slowly as a large gun is pulled on him immediately by some short lady. The man looks completely unsurprised. "My name is Kavi, now put the gun down." The girl backs off as he walks by, there's a decently sized group of people around, most of them have guns at their hips. Some are playing board games, others are on their phone, there's even a gaming console on one of the sides, I guess crooks gotta get entertainment somehow.

The man ignores all this and goes straight to a room in the back. I don't really know what purpose this room served beforehand, but right now, sitting behind a table, there's a blonde woman, wearing a white suit and red tie. The woman seems to be eying him up, I wonder what for. He sits down.

Oh yes let me go over the woman's soul pretty quickly. This is the first creator soul you're looking at, which means it's stronger than anyone else's you've seen... well it's supposed to be. Anyhow, her soul looks like an owl statue, but one that has seen better days, notably degraded in spots but especially the face, which looks rather unrecognizable. The degraded parts are a washed out gray while the rest is a sparkly beautiful red... wonder how much red she's got left?

"Kavi buddy... you did not need to bring a full suit, you know that?"

"Oh... sorry, I just thought that since you're always wearing one it'd be... fitting."

"You need to understand, I'm always wearing a suit because the title of "Suited Woman" spreads around faster than Karine will. You don't exactly need a brand yourself now do you?"

"Understood, I'll."

"You can get an outfit change later, let's talk, it's been a while hasn't it?" A man walks into the room and hands Karine a cup of coffee.

"About 3 months, so yes."

"Good on you for keeping count, anyhow, it's good to have you here, it's getting harder and harder to come by people as talented as you around here."

“It’s not talent.” he says, looking mildly annoyed at the prospect.

“It’s just a compliment Kavi, learn to take it.” So that’s the type of person Kavi is, interesting.

“It sounds insulting when someone says something you put so much time into is just a talent, or a gift, it implies I got to this level simply because I was born better. That’s the biggest insult that can be given to me.”

“It seems we see things differently, I myself am under no pretense that I got here on my own... yes I’ve slaved away hours of my day to day for improvement but... in the end of the day, I was lucky. I was simply born better than the average.”

“For you that comes from being a creator, that doesn’t mean anything for me and you know it.”

“Maybe so, maybe not. All that matters is that you’re strong and capable. You happy with that?”

“Yeah, that’s enough for me.”

“Good.”

The two sit in complete silence, awkwardly so.

“... I have a question” speaks Kavi hesitantly

“And I probably have an answer, go ahead.”

“Is this your typical base of operations or...”

“Oh, no no no, storehouses and warehouses and other types of houses are all just places we can set a temporary base of operations on. I mean we’re only in this one for a singular mission.”

“A singular mission? Are all these people here for a single job?” Must be a big one.

“Correct, and now you are too. I’ll fill you in on the details later.”

“I see...”

“As of now, want to play poker or something? We’ve got some time to kill.”

“Why play a game I know you’re going to win?”

“Hey, maybe my luck will run out one of these matches.”

"I'm currently 0-276 in games of poker against you. It can't be fun for you either can it?" Who keeps count of how many times they lose at poker? Actually he probably keeps count of everything.

"We've done this that many times already?... maybe I do need other games to play."

"Often between training and meetings and the like you'd ask me to play, and you'd crush me each and every time." Personally I'd stop accepting after like... the 24th loss in a row.

"Fine... let's talk then. So like what do you do for fun apart from fighting or training to fight or thinking about fighting or reading about fighting or-

"I have more to my life than battle you know?"

"Okay, name 5 absolutely non-combat related things you get up to."

"To start, I've been getting into bird watching recently" Boring but that counts. Karine raises her thumb to start counting.

"I play the piano to a level I'm satisfied with." That's a more interesting hobby to have. Second finger gets raised.

"I'm somewhat decent at chess also."

"Isn't that a battle of wits though?" Kavi just stares at her blankly until she raises a third finger.

"Cooking has become a recent comfort of mine."

"Ooh, are you good?" She asks, she seems weirdly genuine compared to her usual voice.

"No." He answered extremely quickly. A flash of disappointment passes Karine's face.

"Okay, we're at four, give me a fifth."

"On the weekends I like to see a movie or two."

"What type of movies? I'm curious"

"Mostly been watching romcoms and the like, though some action gets mixed in there too."

"That reminds me... how do you feel about those Burning Heron movies?" Finally.

“Far better than I expected in all terms is where I’ll put it. Most impressive to me is the fighting choreography, despite the off the walls level of powers they all have, the fighting is all realistic in a satisfying manner.”

“Realistic is a good way to put it.”

“I thought it was fitting. The story’s quite down to earth, minus the scale of power of course.”

“So what if it is real? Minus the strength.”

“What are you saying?”

“Let’s just say, I know **The Writer** for these movies. All her stories are based on real events... with some differences here and there of course. Names are changed, locations are moved, powers are changed around a little, you get it.” Ah, her.

“How do you know all that?” He asks, not in disbelief but in curiosity.

“I can give multiple answers to this question but I’ll just give the simplest for now. I actually met the real life inspiration of the protagonist.” Kavi holds a thinking expression for a bit.

“...You’re Dae right? From the second movie.”

“You’re a smart one as always, what gave it away?”

“Dae’s style did remind me of you as I watched the movie. Wears a suit, playing card gimmick, magic types were wind and creation, personality. Only real difference is that Dae is Korean while you are not.”

“Wanna know why?” He nods, Karine rubs her hands together as if she’s going to let go of a major truth, it’s gonna be something stupid isn’t it.

“Karine and Korean are almost anagrams, as long as you ignore the ‘i’ in my name and the ‘o’ in korean.” No comment.

“Are you serious?”

“Oh heavens no, I’m fucking with you. Actual reason is that Dae’s character is more of a mix between me and some random Korean merc with less importance than me.”

“That’s certainly a better answer, I imagine you’re the vast majority of the character still.”

“You’d be right, now moving on, did you-” A shot is fired off in the distance. Near instantly Kavi’s hands get covered in ice.



“Don’t teleport, just stand by. We’ve got a guest over.” Karine’s tone is more neutral and less playful than usual. Kavi does as he was told and he moves to the wall to wait.

It’s relatively quiet for around a minute until a certain blue eyed man walks in... somehow he keeps popping up, here’s Storm (again for the fourth section in a row), holding a bullet which was presumably fired at him, without a word he sits down and puts his coat to the side.

“Hello Karine.” His voice lost the usual appeal it has. Though I suppose you can’t hear it so it doesn’t matter.

“Hey there, glad you could make it. Apologies for the welcoming party by the way.”

“She seemed to be on edge, though I don’t blame her all too much. Seems you’re doing something rather dangerous soon right? Even by your standards. ” These two know each other, that’s a fun one.

“Ever perceptive are you, don’t worry about all that.”

“So Choutte, why’d you invite me over today? Finally took the job to kill me?” His voice has some sass to it now, that’s new. Also is that a nickname? Cute.

“Oh come on, you think that lowly of me? I’m not an assassin you know”

“Are all of those guns here for decorum then?”

“Killing may or may not be involved in missions but that’s not our main goal. If someone wants to hire for a hit job they hire someone else... like... Charis for example.” Kavi perks up at the name but stays silent.

“I’ll give you that one. But what I mean is... a constant life of struggle and debauchery isn’t going to get you anywhere. You’re not even making enough money to justify it.”

“I’d rather take my time than skip right to the end like you. You don’t have any goal in life anymore, and that’s a worse existence than mine.”

“I’m merely free to do as I wish, nothing else to it. Now, did you call me solely to berate me or what?”

“I just wanted to see how an old friend of mine was doing, that’s all there is to it really.” Storm seems to eye her for a while.

“So you were just reminded of me and called me up I imagine, so what was it?”

"I finished watching a biopic and the girl's parents died in a tropical storm. So I took it as a sign." Honestly I respect this way of living life.

"Of course that's how it went... say, may I ask who that guy over there is?"

"Not that you'd remember the name but that's Kavi. He's pretty strong, both in character and in capability." Storm turns to Kavi for a second, awkwardly waving at him before turning back.

"You sure love your K's eh? Why did you even talk to me when we were kids again?" Karine thinks for a second, as if considering his full name before being a Holiday.

"I just thought you were fun to mess with in class, you know?"

"..."

"Hey Kavi, did you know he was really really antisocial as a kid? I was probably the first girl he talked to. Not counting his mother of course."

"Sadly you're right, though I'm far gone from that now."

"Oh I know that, where are you now dating wise again? Boyfriend number 42? Girlfriend number 20? None of the above number 7?"

"Okay I can't even talk you back on that one that's probably about right. Still, I'm happy with what I've got... though I was just wondering since it's been years if you ever found yourself a second person to date? You've got quite the charming personality you know? Especially with that 'super' luck of yours."

"I haven't really been looking romantically to be honest, but regardless, I haven't found anyone to match the first yet."

"If you ever find another do try not to shoot them this time, might help keep your relationship going for longer." So these two... he sounds rather angry.

"Oh come on Stormy, it was just one bullet wound, can't let bygones be bygones can you?"

"..."

"..."

"Did you get what you wanted out of this conversation?"

"Pretty much, feel free to leave."

Storm stands up immediately, before collecting his coat, he stands at the door.

"For what it matters Karine, I do still care about you." I can feel him wanting to say more.

"No no, you don't."

"...You're probably right." He leaves, the door seems to close on its own as the air around the room returns to normal.

"Can't argue back on that one huh..." For one second she looks to be introspective.

"Anyways, feel free to sit down again Kavi." Aaand she's back to normal.

"I feel like I wasn't meant to see this." He says, sitting down.

"It's fine. Say, you're good at reading people right? What could you get from him?"

"He looked tense, ready to defend himself at the slightest provocation."

"Really, I couldn't tell, anything else?"

"Rather complex feelings regarding you, mostly negative however."

"Seems about right... say, do you have any questions about him or?"

"None at all."

"I see... well anyhow, we should get moving before an 'anonymous' tip gives us away to some trouble. So go and stand up." You just told him to sit down like 30 seconds ago. What is wrong with you?

"Understood, let's go." He gets up rather quickly.

"I'll inform you of what we're doing on our way there, now stay quiet and we can get the gang."

Well, no more reason for me to keep following these folks around. I got what I wanted and more, plus, we're on page 7 of this section (unless you're on mobile in which case ew...) and like... that's a lucky number.

You all respect luck right? Yeah you do, let's get out of here.