

My father's workshop has always been a favourite place of mine to go to. It's funny to think about how originally I wasn't supposed to enter it. If it weren't for me setting up a hidden camera to see dad put in the password, I'd have never figured it out, though dad was meaning to let me in eventually anyways, so I guess that was worthless.

"TARDIGRADE_2303"

23/03 is my birthday, or at least when we celebrate it. It's more of a happy "got adopted" day for me. Got to say, big fan of having a home so that is worth celebrating. I still don't know what the tardigrade part of the password means, apart from that part of the password being placed by Drew, not like I can ask him anyways.

Who cares though, enough dilly dallying... why the fuck did I think that, "dilly dally." Guess Mortis rubbed off on me more than I thought he did... I can think about all that later, into the workshop.

Everything has just been cleaned recently, dad tends to do that once a week. Everything is neatly organised and categorised, maybe to too much detail but that's dad. Maybe he was an obsessive janitor in a past life. I could never keep things this nice myself. Although personally I'd never keep things this drab either. Everything is just white to grey to black here, which works but is just dull. Even had to go as far as to colour a previously red table into silver.

Anyhow, here there should be some bits I can use. Ah, aluminium scrap, neat. I pick around the box for a bit before picking up what I need. Out of my duffle bag (which I've had on me the whole time) I take out an almost finished drone. If only I finished it last night... idiot. Add that to my list of fuckups, which grows ever longer. Anyhow, let me just get on to working.

... ..
... .. and we put that there
... .. gonna melt that later... ..
... .. Damn, I'm a genius
... .. fuck I measured this wrong

... ..there she goes, an idiot girl who should've never gotten her hands on engineering... ..
... ..
... .. okay this works
... .. fixed that blunder, suicide postponed
... ..

... .. this was supposed to just take 10 minutes god dammit
... .. wires seem right code works
... .. structure's alright... .. wings are good... ..
... .. I'm fucking done.

Okay, time may have passed me a bit but this should work, if not then I'll shoot myself in the head, go to sleep, wake up and then clean up the blood I left while I curse myself... anyways what should I call this little drone... Maybe Drew... no that's too sentimental, also he'd probably think it stupid if he was here. Let's see... Puppet... too obvious, Marionette... same thing. Rione works, just take the Ma and now it almost seems like I'm not bad at naming. Also fitting cause I never had a "Ma." Actually that joke is fucking stupid, good that I'm not a comedian, more of a to be laughed at kinda person here, typically that's how it's gone.

Now that I'm all done with the drone, it's time for me to actually go out... even if I'm late it's not like this is a job or anything. Moving on, to the left corner of the room, my little secret area, I had to dig this place out myself while making it fit in, not even dad knows about it. Got to open it up though, time for magic. Out of the tip of my fingers I create them, red strings, they pass and move on into a nearby vent. I can control them if I want but they're somewhat sapient enough for basic tasks. I hid a little thing in the vents and I just have to wait for the strings to touch it for a couple seconds... done.

The walls open up... shittily but they definitely do, shoddy work on my end, gonna have to fix that up later, I can almost feel it stuttering. That's for future me to worry about, that dipshit won't know what hit her. On to what actually matters, the suit. Can't get enough of looking at the thing, it feels real nice to know this was my work.

My personal superhero suit, a dark grey sleek metallic one, of course that'd have been boring if it were just grey, and hypocritical too, so there's red lines scattered across made to look like a mannequin puppet, even had to put some indents to add to the resemblance. Of course though, I had to put something on the mask, leaving it blank would be too bland.

I really really struggled with this one, what would the eyes be? I remember early on before I figured out my puppet thing I was planning to go for spider theming, because strings and stuff.. Anyhow, I went to make spider eyes... but spider eyes aren't really friendly are they? People don't really like spiders in general so I doubt I'd have been received well at all had I gone with that. It's not like puppets have a historically heroic look either but you know, different things.

When I started I swapped out the head piece all the time, which actually led some of the public to somehow think I was different people, they even made different names for each one, which is idiotic but expected for the public. To be slightly more nice towards them, I did also somewhat adjust the suit, certain matters like colouring, reinforcing certain parts, weight changes, yadayada, but it should still be blatantly obvious that I'm the same fuck. Most people aren't smart, truth be told, for better or for worse. Enough of thinking about my past though.

I carefully get to putting the suit on, got to do it in pieces, first the "pants" or whatever the armour equivalent of that is, then the chest piece, then the arms, shoes, gloves, and finally the head piece. I probably look awkward right now, suit too big, parts of my skin being visible in between pieces, on to the final step, I click a button on the wall and the suit contracts itself, connecting all its pieces together. That's better.

I always have to take a moment after putting the suit on to move around a bit, the extra weight does change things a fair bit, it's mostly a habit now though, I've been pretty good at this stuff for a while. I punch, kick, and jump around for a bit til I feel like I've got it. Funny to think how just putting the headpiece of this on a normal person would almost definitely kill them, and yet wearing the full thing I'm moving around faster than an athlete could. Just a boon of being superior.

Have to do the string thing again to close the door to my secret area again, thankfully my little puppet suit has enough space to let out my strings. I'm aware strings aren't supposed to come out of the puppet but practicality over theming is my motto.

Before I leave I take a look in a nearby mirror, looking good as always, nothing dirty on the suit at all so we're good, any improvements I can make... yeah I can't think of much that's actually practical. I wanted moving lenses at one point but nah. Just regular red lenses work I think. I pick up the drone and get to walking out, we live in a remote area so I don't really need to think too much about the safety of leaving, just for tropes sake I do like to leave out the window though. I go up the stairs, photos on the wall as always, dad always seemed so happy in these... been a while.

Moving past unmemorable parts of my home I get to my room, guess I'll get out through here. I always forget how much of a mess this place is, clothes and underwear are piling up in a corner, the latest issues of Vengeance Comics are strewn about (those are not dirty though, I care about those), the shelf I said a year ago would have figurines on it is still empty, with nothing but a gifted one from dad a week ago. Oh, and the multitude of bottles of water in various states of fullness. One day I'll clean up this place, but that day is definitely not today. Open up the window, take a full breath, and jump out, shutting the window as I fall using the strings. We live up a hill, pretty damn high up. For a normal person, this fall'd be enough to break their legs, but I'm above the average person, superior. I land legs first into the ground, not even a bit of pain, the earth below me cracks, God I feel wonderful.

Well, best get to work. I'm much later than usual but it's not like crime sleeps so I should be fine. I hope there's some criminal to beat the living hell out of, I'll just be walking out of here into the main bit of the city. Actually fuck it, I'll be running. This area is full of greenery, felt pretty cool to run through a tree once, or twice... actually let me do it right now... done, feels nice... moving on, jump a fence, run some more, jump another fence, and now I'm in the main part of the city, close to the centre.

There's a bar close by, one of those late night ones, it's almost 2 in the morning yet I see it lit up. Brings me memories, when I was 14 I was really curious and wanted to try some alcohol. Dad never kept drinks around the house back then so my only opportunity was this nearby bar that Drew went to often. I was a fast one, and managed to snag his bottle of vodka. I'm reminiscing here as I walk into the same alleyway I snuck my way into. I drank the whole bottle in a couple minutes... and didn't get a bit buzzed, just nothing. On the other hand, Drew tracked me down

here nearly immediately. I can remember it all exactly. The memories flow through my head as I start setting up the drone.

“You know, you really shouldn’t be drinking at that age, you good kid?”

“...”

“Nevermind, you don’t have to respond, I get it, just go on back to your home and sleep, even I shouldn’t be up at this hour. I’ll leave ya to it.”

“Shouldn’t you be mad at me?”

“Huh? Oh yes, you did steal, from me no less, so that’s pretty bad. However... I can’t really stay mad at you over it though, if I could have gotten a good drink at your age I would have honestly.

“Well, I’m not getting drunk”

“Yeah, some sort of resistance you’ve got, even less reason to drink don’t you think?”

“I mean, yeah, fair enough old man.”

“I already assumed you couldn’t get drunk... your body is wired pretty uniquely.”

“... you let me steal that from you didn’t you?”

“Well you’re a smart one, as always. Didn’t think you could put one over me did ya?”

“Yeah yeah whatever... now that I think about it, never knew you as one to drink, why did you even have that on you? Were you-”

“Oh come on, the world doesn’t revolve around you. I mostly go to the bar to talk, you wouldn’t know how many interesting sorts there are, also some real freaks but that’s besides the point. The bottle was for a friend... though I guess I’m gonna have to buy another... oh well.”

“...Sorry...”

“Ah don’t fret over it, you saw a chance and took it, maybe not in a good way, but it’s important to take what you’ve got.”

“I don’t really get what you mean but sure”

“Just... keep an eye open I suppose, I wouldn't want you getting hurt.”

“You're being weird... but thanks... I guess. ”

“Well, enough dilly-dallying around, let's bring you back to your father..”

“He'd be sleeping right now, can't I go with you?”

“Sorry but no, this hour is when the strong and/or weird sorts pop up the most.

“And? You're walking around without a care.”

“Genuinely kid... look at yourself, you stick out like a sore thumb. Especially in the night. ”

“I can take care of myself”

“Really? Okay then... show me what you got”

“You want me to fight you?”

“You just have to beat me, simple as that.”

“Well, you asked for it.”

With full confidence I ran at him, arm raised, he stood perfectly still. With no technique at all I tried to punch him, but he dodged aside, practically floating behind me before I felt a shock of electricity strike my back, it didn't hurt too much.

“Feel free to try again.”

Without any response, I just rushed him again, the air around him sparkled with electricity. With the flick of a finger, a bolt of electricity was shot at my feet, which I just barely dodged, losing my balance in the process. He aimed a finger gun at my head, the tip of his index was charged with electricity.

“Repeatedly running towards me ain't gonna cut it at your skill level, do try changing things up.”

I took a deep breath, moving as fast as I possibly could to hit him. He calmly moved his hand and shot me straight in the chest, pushing me back onto the wall.

“Impressive speed, though that's not enough. Being strong or fast doesn't really matter over skill, sure it gives you more possibilities but you ain't using any of em' right now.”

I dug my hands onto the wall and threw a chunk of it right at him, faster than I could blink he teleported slightly to the right, a purple aura covering him as he did, the wall behind him cracked heavily. He didn't even stare behind him as he extended his hand, grabbing the fallen piece of the wall. He stares at the piece for a second before dropping it.

"Now that's an option, with a bit of property damage attached but you don't need to care too much about that."

"Can you take this seriously?"

"Oh, sure."

His hands glew as he put his hands together briefly before separating them, electricity sparking between them, first time I saw him put in effort to any action, it was like the whole alleyway was filled with static, before I could think of what to do, he stared at me straight in the eyes, closing his hands together again, white electricity forming around me. I was trapped in an electrical prison, I believe it was shaped like an octahedral.

"What in the?"

"Have you heard of Solid Light? It's like that. Try punching your way out of it if you want."

He went to sit down, that same electricity forming below him like a reclining chair. I tried breaking through the electricity, but it shocked me painfully as I tried. The cage wasn't hurt at all from that, it was like trying to punch through rubber... if the rubber also hurt to touch.

"You can't keep this up forever, what's the point?"

"Kila... I'm a professional at this, I'm not going to run out of magic. I'm just going to sit here until you figure it out"

"I always thought you were just some nerd that occasionally worked with dad."

"Not eager to be called a nerd but yeah I'm also that, I'm a man of many talents."

"Talents like what? Locking up teenagers?"

"..."

"..."

The cage shrunk down a little, giving me less breathing room

"Hey what's that for"

"Anyways, you should try breaking out, use that bright mind of yours for a moment. You're different, that gives you opportunities, use them."

"You want me to?"

No response. I knew he was referring to my strings but back then I felt insecure about them, they made me different, which many people around me never liked... I never really used them for anything back then, so I didn't know what they were capable of. Still, with no other choice, I concentrated, summoned and gave power to a string, extremely hesitantly of course.

The singular string, completely on its own will went into the electrical bar nearest to me, it penetrated through it, and then stitched itself similarly across the whole cage, which dissipated not too long after. The string withdrew back to me, I felt energised with power. Drew stopped relaxing and backed slightly off, attentively watching. He was around 10 feet away.

"Look at that, so much potential... This blows my expectations out of the water"

"I... didn't know... what?"

"I theorized those strings of yours would have some sort of draining ability. Nice to get that confirmed."

"..."

"You considered it a curse, so you'd never give it a shot unless you were forced to. How'd you like it?"

"Didn't feel bad...the whole dangerous people thing was made up right?"

"A little white lie here and there, as long as you're with me nothing could have really happened to you, but now you're stronger, that's better right?"

"Yeah!... so I can come with you now right?"

"Who said our fight was over? Beat me first."

"You got it."

Renewed in confidence, strings came out of every one of my fingers, I gave it as much power as I could, they locked onto Drew immediately. Unfazed, he did finger guns again (two fingers this time) which shot a spray of electricity, as he ran towards me, six of my strings automatically redirected to catch the attack, leaving 4 to attack him. He chained teleports together, dodging each of them with ease, at the fourth dodge his body was covered in that purple aura, intensely

so, and with the speed of a lightning bolt (or at least it felt like it) he flash stepped, grabbing me by the shirt and lifting me up in the air.

“And that’s tha-”

He teleported as the strings turned around to chase him. I fell to the ground as the strings entered me, they didn’t really hurt me, more ticklish than anything. I could feel him standing by behind me.

“As I was saying, that’s that. I didn’t rough you up too bad did I?”

I stood up shamefully, I felt like punching him but I knew there was no point.

“No... I’m good”

“Well then, let’s get you home”

“Fine, fine”

“Say, you seemed to be having some fun with that fight.”

“Sadly I’m shit at it compared to you.”

“Hey, this was like your first actual fight, you didn’t do too shabby, I’ve got experience in abundance, you never really stood a chance no matter what superpowers you had, don’t feel bad about it”

“Maybe... you can teach me?”

He smiled at me. “Sure kid, let’s train you up... though not at this hour. We’ll talk about this later okay.”

I was practically beaming with joy... maybe literally actually, my eyes change shade/intensity depending on emotion sometimes. Drew didn’t mention anything about my eyes so I’ll never know.

“Oh, just realised, you should probably not tell your father about all this. He’d kill me, ha.”

Back to Reality, I finished setting up Rionne a while ago. My child... no that’s too sentimental... cool drone thing I’ve got. It’s just for surveillance and recon but maybe I can incorporate it into combat one day, I’ll figure it out. Of course, let’s see if it works. I pick it up. Due to theming

purposes, I made it shaped like a puppet cross brace, I'll have to properly apply some red on to it later, it's just metallic right now. Anyways, if I got it working right I will forever be the coolest woman alive.

I prefer making the strings go out of my fingers but they can come from mostly anywhere if I bother. Strings come out of my hands, and feet, exiting through the armour. The visual would be like puppet strings, the strings slowly enter Rionne.

...

Nothing is happening, maybe I should bash my head against the- oh it turned on. Please work please work please work please work. Rionne starts to get up from the air, to my absolute joy. It flies right above me, the strings on it like if they were puppeteering me, thankfully I'm the one controlling em. I either look really lame or really cool right now, going for the latter in my mind.

Anyhow it'd be really impractical if people could actually see the strings for long... 3 of the strings go away while the fourth gets so thin it's invisible. The four strings were just to start it up. Really thankful that I discovered my "draining strings" could also do the opposite. Using magic to feed tech is usually a bad idea but I just stole dad's magic converter blueprints... took me like a month to figure that out anyways, had to steal some materials for that, and then configure it to my own magic, all just so I can make this cool drone... worth it.

Having even a one string connection with the drone lets me pilot it around well enough just using my mind. I think about it going right, it goes right, I think about it going left, it goes left. Way more efficient than any standard controlling method. Of course I guess the string could be broken but even then the drone shouldn't fall for like an hour or so at the minimum? Eh, that's more than enough time for me to reattach a string later.

On to the next test... my right lens is hooked up to a camera on Rionne, which is the main point of having her fly around, the string linking Rionne and my suit together, it's sort of like a stream. Let's see... it works. Nice, I was pretty confident on that but still. Actually hold on... oh damn it. While the feed works it's uh... way too choppy, I make Rionne look at me while I wave just to see... there's a delay and it's somewhat pixelated too even... this shit sucks. Although I guess it still functions, I'm going to have to make it work better. Which means I'm going to have to mess with the wiring, which leads to... nope, not going to think about it. I already spent the last week and a half on Rionne. I do not need to do anything more, choppy video it is.

Rionne flies up relatively high, it's hard to pinpoint people exactly, harder to find criminals in specific. This city is active, even at two in the morning, so I can't go towards the first group of people I see and follow them around... although... hold on. I flick the video off for a moment, instead making her take a picture... it takes a moment to send but it's clearer, I can actually see details, no pixels... the problem seems to be live playback, it's like how you can take a screenshot and anyone can see it but streaming can lag less capable hardware. Rionne works, it's just that my suit can't handle streams...fair enough, I lazily added this feature in, and it's

based off of my strings mostly because I don't like hardware/software on my suit, makes it hackable. I flick the video back on but set it to record, after the video is done I then afterwards send it to me via string, it has to load but it works... not exactly a fast method but I'll figure out how to manage it later.

I make Rionne spin around in circles recording just to look at all surroundings, it records the videos for 10 seconds, then sends it to me, I see it, and then the video automatically deletes itself before I get the new one. This is not how I wanted this to go but I guess this is my life. Walking around without a drone on you leads to me not finding too much going on, most nights are fairly still so I don't really get an excuse to kick ass as much as I'd like. This night was more of a test run than anything on Rionne's functionality though so it's not too big a problem. Only thing left is the audio test but... I'll leave her recording audio for now and check it out later.

I don't see much of anything worthwhile through Rionne though, just the city as usual, I guess I'll continue off of my usual schedule. I launch three strings to the top of the rightby building... rightmost, what the hell is rightby?

Two of the strings stretch down into the ground near me while the third goes in-between them, making a ladder. I always get ~~scared~~ intimidated whenever I try to go up it. I try to use the minimum energy to power it up so sometimes it's too weak and can't hold me, other times the strings are too long and it falls apart. Like trying to tightrope on a rope twice as long as the gap you're trying to cross. I take a breath, and take a step. It's fine. No need to worry. I carefully go up the ladder, eventually making it to the top, Rionne is still above me. I'll stop the videos being sent to me for now... god I need a guy in the chair or something, but for that I'd have to actually talk to people... one day, one day.

The other buildings around this area are all around the same height, so I can just run and jump across, it's fun to do so actually. I take a running start and jump to the next building, and the next, and the next. Strings cover my soles whenever I land, just to absorb the force of landing, don't want to crack the buildings after all, that'd be rude. I stop to realise that Rionne is still following me around. Which is convenient but uh... never instructed it to. I don't think I created artificial intelligence so what's the actual deal with this... oh, the string. My strings are sort of alive so it makes sense that it'd act independently... the more power and age a string has the smarter it is, that's what Drew and I figured out a while ago... wait wait, don't want a flashba-

Drew was sitting down, we were right outside my dad's home. Though by that point we'd been training for some time, he had a bottle of water on his hand, we'd just finished another spar, though you couldn't tell it by looking at him, I on the other hand was sweating my ass off, my hair was stood up via electric shock.

"Say, you thirsty?"

“Yeah... give me that.”

“Take it”

“We’ve made it blatantly clear that I can’t even touch you.”

“No no, without standing up, use your strings.”

“Really? You sure they won’t just attack you? When are you going to help me control them?”

“Eh, maybe later, magic comes second to your actual physical y'know? Anyways, take the bottle”

“Fine, fine.”

A couple strings left my hand, they rapidly approached Drew but stopped around the bottle, penetrating it before bringing it back to me, which I then grabbed. The water was obviously leaking but I grabbed and drank from it because I was a thirsty fucker.

“Huh, they attacked the bottle instead”

“Gotta be honest, didn’t expect that... hold on.”

Drew teleported out for like half a second before appearing again, another bottle in his hand.

“Do you just have a bunch water bottles lying around somewhere”

“Yep”

“Where”

“I dug a hole”

“To hide water in?”

“Secret water”

“Why in the world are you like this?”

“Does the surname Mortis mean anything to you?”

“Not really”

"Oh, thought you knew for some reason. To make it short, I'm probably among the least annoying mortis to be around for long periods of time"

"I'm trying to imagine a whole family of fucks like you, it's horrifying really."

"It's more varied than that but we're getting sidetracked, take this bottle."

"Again?"

"Your strings are a bit inconsistent in how close they get to me, sometimes they go straight, sometimes they curve around, I've even seen em dodge around before."

"So it's random?"

"No, magic isn't random, it has to be something else."

"...Oh, got it! I think, probably, I hope."

I quadrupled the power I used in creating the two strings, which looking back was a bit overkill but I wanted to be sure. The strings went far faster than the last pair, they stopped around the bottle, wrapping themselves around it before circling back to me. The bottle was completely fine.

"Well, there we go! Isn't that nice."

I was too busy drinking water to respond

"Seems your strings aren't just mindless beasts. Gotta feed em to grow smart though, think of the strings like small kids."

...what?

"Well... if you don't feed a kid, they'll uh... starve. Hard to get smarter if you starve."

"That's a dumb comparison."

"Yeah, yeah, fair enough."

"..."

"Okay that's it for today, I'll be going. Take a shower and relax for the day... what do you do for fun anyways"

"I uh... read"

“Uh-huh... what type of stuff do you read?”

“You know, literature.”

“...”

“Inquisitive stuff y'know, heavy topics..”

“So you don't like comic books?”

“Oh... you know.”

“Yeah. You don't really need to bullshit me y'know. Sure it might be a geeky hobby but I don't really care much, and anyone who does care is an ass anyways.”

“Yeah I know, thanks.”

“Let me tell you what, any comic you want? Just tell me, I can drop by and buy you some, just think about it, text me and y'know.”

“Oh, thanks uncle... wai-”

“Did you just... heh, nevermind. I'll be seeing you kid.”

This keeps happening for some reason, my perception of time gets slowed down while I experience an overly long flashback. That felt like multiple minutes but... outside it's like nothing happened at all. I remember this happening when I was in the middle of class, was listening to The Professor and had a flashback in the middle of a sentence. Not really good for paying attention.

Anyways where was I... oh, top of a building yeah. I might need a rest honestly, I already tested out Rionne y'know, I guess I should just... oh. Rionne seems to be circling a certain spot on her own, I wonder what's the deal with that. I guess she “sees” or “hears” something I don't.

Let's see... she's circling something past the last building I skipped over, I turn around, and jump back. Rionne then goes off to the west, no buildings to run across there. Next building down that way is too far to jump across, but it's way smaller than the one I'm on. Zipline it is, not too energy efficient but I can't care at this point. Got to make sure it's strong enough like the ladder though.

I start to zipline with my own hands, it feels amazing too. It's wonderful just how versatile these strings are. Drew always... oh I thought I'd have another flashback, guess not. Anyhow I arrive, Rionne is still flying away... I have no idea where

Now that I notice, there's not anyone out in this area right now. Buildings around here are inconsistent to traverse on anyways so I might as well stick to the ground. Usually I stay at the top for the eagle eyed view advantage but now that I have Rionne that's kind of moot isn't it? I guess it'd be awkward to walk around wearing a full hero suit.

There's many oddly parked cars around here, all empty. I wonder what's the gist with that... something feels wrong. Rionne stops by a warehouse building. Like do you want me to go in there or something? Rionne flies up and down, as if nodding. Smart girl, go stay in the sky while I look around now. The shutters to go in are closed but that's not much of a problem. Strings fit under the shutters which can lift them up just enough for me to put my hands in before I bring the shutters up myself, not bothering with keeping quiet or sneaking in.

The warehouse is relatively empty of any items but... there's quite a few people here. Some of them have guns at their side, all of them are wearing the same-ish leather jackets, and they're all staring at me in shock. I don't exactly know what's going on here but it feels criminal. There's a bit more than 10 of them from what I can tell. Their guns are pointed at me, and various other's hands seem to be surging with slight amounts of magic.

Usually low level crooks tend to be pretty weak compared to the higher ups, though there's probably one or three competent ones mixed in. Still, crooks usually fire at me pretty quickly, these ones are just staring me down. From the back, a woman unlike all the rest wearing a fancy suit approaches. She moves her hand around in a circular motion and immediately all the other people stop pointing their guns at me, dispersing back into manual labour, picking up boxes and cleaning up the floor.

"Good evening Marionette, that is the title you prefer is it not?" There's an air of nobility around her... or maybe I'm just imagining it, I nod as a reply.

"Say, to what do we owe this visit to? You're a fairly recognizable vigilante around these parts."

"Just investigating... what's going on here?"

"Investigating... fairly regular for a hero type I'm sure. We've just been hired for a cleanup is all. Nothing less, I'm the manager of these sorts."

"Alright then manager, what's your name?"

"Karine, with a K, keep that in mind." I also have a k name so that doesn't make her special. Not that I'd tell her that.

“Say Marionette, what’s your name, I’m curious.”

“You already know I’m not sharing it.” I have no idea why I even bother answering her questions, is it cause she’s ~~hot~~ attractive to me...? I better stop thinking about that.

“I suppose that’d drop the whole point of a secret identity wouldn’t it? Though not saying your name does give away a fair bit. See... I can say my name because it doesn’t matter that you know it, you can’t get anything out of it, because I only have one identity. On the other hand, you, my friend, have to have a secret one, which is where the whole Marionette nickname comes from.”

I don’t like at all where this is going, my eyes are completely on her, I feel like she’s about to do something.

“You have something to hide, don’t you? A life beyond just being a vigilante. That’s why I don’t believe any of those theories about you being an alien or a robot or anything of the sorts. You’re a human.”

“Are you done?”

“Here’s another question, it might be a bit of an absurd one but I hope you can entertain it. Do you believe in fate or luck? Which is more vital to you?”

“I believe in luck but there’s no such thing as fate.”

“That’s the way you’d like to see it, but I have a different point of view. Luck is the glance through where fate rears its head. The more you leave to luck, the more fate decides you. There’s a certain connectivity that reaches the world, to skillfully manoeuvre through it is to ignore those connections, life is yours... until you give something to luck. Then you’re back on your fated path, do understand.”

“I mean.... Sure, what does this have to do with anything?”

“What I mean is... you were fated to come here, because your luck sent you here, because you were lucky you got here. You were on schedule, and you took a gamble, which left you here.” Does that mean Rionne just... wait no, I’m assuming what she’s saying is true, it all seems like bullshit. Let me entertain it though

“And why would fate send me here of all places.”

I believe there’s two distinct meanings it could have, based on experience. So here’s a question, does your name start with a K?” Wha- who... how does she? what!? She slowly grows a smile as I panic about things.

"I'll take your silence as confirmation. But that's irrelevant to me. I mean, think of all the K's you could be, Kathy, Kennedy, Kimberly, Kevin, **Kishinev**, Kai, Ketc, Ketc. Truly the possibilities are endless." Five of those names were normal but she put emphasis into Kishinev... the fuck's the deal with that. I can't get a track of this woman.

"Can you just tell me you're evil already? I don't like talking to you."

"Oh, and here I was planning to waste your time for even longer." She reaches under her suit as she talks, only to pull out a golden handgun, pointed straight at my face. "I'm surprised you let me drag on this long."

Usually my suit can take any bullet but with her level of confidence I feel like I should dodge it. I stand still as I let out a string to get her, only to get shot from the back, knocking me forward to the ground.

"You forgot my 11 employees didn't you? Oh well, it's rather appropriate, I don't particularly wish to get in a fight with you today anyhow, so I hope you have some fun with the matters present. I'll be seeing you" She walks away through the shutters I myself opened long ago.

I get up to chase after her only to realise that I'm surrounded. Seems some of them managed to go around the back while she was distracting me, damnit. Usually for big value targets like her I'd just leave the group of nobodies and chase after her but Rionne should be on that right now.

Protective magic surrounds me as the ground beneath me gets covered with plants, before being set ablaze... classic tactic, any regular person has no counter against this, But I'm better. I could use my strings but I'd like to have some fun with this, no magic. I punch it once, it shakes, I punch it twice, it cracks, I punch it a third time, it shatters. All the while their burning attempt doesn't do anything to me.

Some idiot decides to swing at me with a metal bat, must be enhanced. I easily grab it while someone shoots a stream of water at me from behind. I let the water hit the idiot head on while I chuck the bat at some random other person. 10-9 left depending on how hard the water hit the first one, I'll leave it at 9.

I suddenly get hit in the back of the head, which knocks me partly to the side but altogether no pain, a tall guy (6 ft 8 or something? Still shorter than Drew though) with fists engulfed in fire comes up to me on the front, before trying to slug me right in the face. Too slow though, I dodge to the side but before I can punch back he teleports to the right.

Turning around would be a liability, so I rush towards a girl forward. She has a name tag, with the name Joanna S. Why the hell is a criminal wearing a name tag, I don't know, but whatever, she's farther back than anyone else here so I'm no longer gonna be surrounded. Just gotta beat J over here. She seems unprepared at best for me, yellow energy covers her right hand while some type of stone is on her left. (sandstone maybe?) Projectile Ground then.

A simple projectile gets shot at my feet, looks like a weak attack but I slightly jump over it anyhow. She swapped the stone to her right hand, still yellow. Her eyes look panicky before she goes to hit me holding the stone, I go to easily dodge but suddenly she shoots another projectile through it. Which hits me and also crushes the sandstone into sand, surrounding me... some of it is getting into my suit, though it should leave after Joanna's magic runs out, always found sand pleasant though.

Joanna sorta disappears into the sand, though I do hear a loud "sorry!" in a weirdly cheerful manner. Following the sound I strike wildly (but not too hard) and hit something. The sand dissipates and I see Joanna on the floor, eight left. Wait... I do still feel the sand on me, does that mean she's still...

No time to answer though, 5 others walked up to me together. The fire guy from earlier, someone with an ice axe, a girl with wooden gloves and shoes, and then two nondescript randos with guns.

Ice axe person goes in first, swinging at me at a blinding speed, seems like an enhancer, I jump backwards to dodge, while both randos fire at me with guns, at least one of the randos seems to be powering up their bullets with electricity, which would matter if guns could fire through my suit. I just take the shots as they ricochet off of me harmlessly. They stop firing as the wooden girl runs at me, all the while the big guy teleports, behind me I assume.

Wooden girl's gloves seem to grow wooden vines, which I'm easily stronger than I assume. They try to grab at me but I jump high up into the air. Just as I assumed the big guy was behind me. I land to the side of the lot of them. Wooden vines go for me once more but I can break through them easily enough. Big guy shoots flames at me from afar while the one with the axe tries to rush up and hit me. The only threatening part of the trio here (I don't know what the other two with guns are even doing here) is the one with the ice axe, but that's only because that might actually damage my suit. I am faster than him though, so as long as I keep my guard up the other two aren't too big of a problem. Not that I can just ignore them though.

Ice axe gets swung, it misses me but hits one of the vines, splitting it in two immediately, which I felt was harmless until the cut off vine grows sharply at me while getting frozen, forcing another dodge, which leads to fire guy landing a shot on me. It only barely knocks me back but by that point the ice axe fella goes for another swing. You know what, fuck it. Rather than dodging like a coward I simply punch the axe... which will damage the suit but if I play defensively that axe is going to end up hitting much worse later. It shatters into a million pieces, my fist decisively lands on their gut. Which I feel is a knockout. I grab onto one of the vines and simply pull her in, protective magic surrounds her for a moment while the big guy teleports to my right, guess I can't take out the wooden girl that easily. Easily dodge the upcoming hit but he once again teleports away before I can hit him back... teleporters are so annoying. He does look tired though, most teleporters can't bounce around this long.

Wooden girl seemed to have backed away in the meanwhile though there's broken wood on the floor, still... it's fairly obvious that none of them ever had much of a shot against me. I check my arm to check for damages from the ice axe but it looks completely fine, guess I overestimated. Or maybe they were conserving power and didn't expect me to strike then... the end result is the same anyways, who cares.

Bullets get fired at me, which is annoying at worst but I feel like taking these two out already. I pick up the wood from the ground and simply throw it at the incredibly lame duo. Wooden girl and big guy seem to just stare at me from a distance, they both seem to lack confidence. Usually this'd be when one of them runs away but I guess Karine must be paying these ones really well.

Suddenly, one of the girl's shoes seems to catch aflame for a moment before she steps back, putting it out immediately... what's the deal with that? Seems to be because of where she stood and I doubt the... wait... that area is slightly yellowish isn't it... I look to the right, to see an injured Joanna standing up, guess I didn't knock her out. Oh well... now that I notice it though, the area that caught alight was from when she tried shooting me earlier. That explains why it was so weak, must be a secondary effect. Projectiles can sacrifice power for certain other effects, I suppose this one was heating. Thankfully none of that-

I feel a sharp pain... everywhere, as if I was being cut at least 3 times on every single body part. It felt like glass stabbing into me. Agonisingly painful on every end. It's hard to focus on anything for now. I do hold in screaming out in pain thankfully, but just barely. I can see blood seep out from my suit into the floor. Joanna seems to run off somewhere, she fucking did this didn't she? The remaining duo of jackasses realise it's their chance to fight me.

Big guy punches at me, I try to react but I'm too pained to think properly. For normal people adrenaline would kick in now but my body never seems to think it's near death so I just have to suffer. A punch of flame lands across my side, and then a wooden shoe knocks me onto the ground... no no no, FINE.

Almost automatically my body releases a large concentration of strings, and a moment after, my pain disappears. From this point, everything happens in automatic for me, as if the strings were in charge apart from me. The two fighting me realise something is up and try fighting defensively, for all its worth, they tried. The strings enter through the girl's vines, reaching her gloves before ferociously throwing her against the wall, the guy tries to teleport away but the strings predict where he was planning to run off to and surround him, fully covering him in it, there's a muffled sound coming from in there but I try to ignore it. After a moment the strings let go and he falls to the ground unconscious.

What feels like hundreds of strings shoot out, covering the whole warehouse while I walk to the shutter. There were 3 others remaining by my counting but something tells me they've already been dealt with by the time I reach the exit. The strings retract back into me as I leave, immediately, I feel like shit.

Whenever I get overloaded, my strings seem to sort of go into a frenzy of sorts. The only problem though is that the strings don't know proper magic usage for shit so I always feel horrible right after it happens. For some reason... I've always felt the proper name for that form of mine was "Edalbe." Not that that word has any meaning... I don't know.

"I'd like to have some fun with this, no magic" God I'm a fucking idiot. I'd be feeling just dandy if I used magic there, wouldn't have been a problem at all. Joanna's magic fucking sand glass bs would have never gotten me but *oh no* here I had to be a presumptuous egotistical fuck and decide to go hands only. Well whatever, I may be tired as fuck but I have something else to deal with right now. Karine...

I'm sure someone has called the police already, at least after I went full Edalbe earlier, so I feel confident in just chasing after Karine already... I may be tired and weakened but that doesn't matter.

I don't know where exactly Karine is but I can see Rionne right now, do you know where she went to? Rionne "nods" again. Big fan of Rionne not gonna lie, off to follow her. I'd go up buildings again but at this point I should conserve all the energy I have, so no string usage for now. Just run across the streets, who cares if people see me. I don't really obey traffic laws too much at this hour but I should be fine... easy to notice that I'm a lot weaker in general now, I've gone faster before... shouldn't be a problem with Karine in any way still... just gotta get to her.

Cross street after street, jump over railings when needed, it's all so simple. I run past my own university here, isn't that neat, class is starting up soon isn't it... I can think about that later... oh, Rionne seems to stop moving, as if noticing something, before panning to the left. I notice a small alleyway here and... a young woman wearing that same type of jacket all those other "workers" had, with what seems like a knocked out other guy on the ground. This isn't Karine but... I stop by anyways.

She turns around to see me... and I must say, she has a horrid fashion sense, cheap ass yellow pants, a frankly appalling shirt in different shades of green that all feel neon, and shoes I have to assume came from a dollar store. The jacket doesn't even fit her right, it's too big. If she could see my face right now she'd know my disappointment.

"Well, hi there, aren't you funny looking?" Well she's one to fucking talk but sure. Without saying a word (for my disgust would seep into every word) I just point at the knocked out guy. She looks at me, then the guy, and then back to me.

"Oh, you're that superhero... person. I've heard a bit about you." She's not answering shit at all. I'm not dealing with this, just gonna go knock her out.

I try to punch her but she dodges completely casually before hitting me with an uppercut... surprisingly staggering. She hurts more than the standard goon that's for sure. Or maybe I'm just feeling weaker. Still... that's definitely enhancement magic.

"Oh damn your suit really is metal, how'd you walk around with that?" I kindly want to shut her up already so I kick at her quickly, which she jumps over, her body covers itself in electricity before she kicks me across the face again midair. She really likes going for the face, it seems, what's her problem?

"Oh, non-conductive metal. Can't be too easy eh?" Her voice annoys me, I've been fighting her too lazily for my own good. Electric Enhancement is her deal and she seems to be a close range brawler, just have to catch her once though. I shoot out a string, extra fast. She seems to react to it without a care... reminds me of Drew. Her body is covered in orange light before she does a flash step backwards.

"I don't really like wriggly things too much in all honesty." She jumps up into a nearby fire escape and begins to go up, while keeping an eye on me... does she want me to waste all my energy on her. I shouldn't have used that string. She grabs and throws a bit of the railing at me, which I just grab and throw aggressively back. She reaches out her hand to grab it but seems to realise that's a stupid idea and just dodges.

"Whoops, almost lost my hand. That would have sucked. You know Mario, I use my hand for a lot of things... like punching people, grabbing people, throwing things at people. The usual." Okay, I'm going to beat her senseless.

"You did not just fucking call me Mario." I got on the fire escape just as well as she did, somewhat surprised it can hold the weight of my armour. I start going up the thing

"Amazing, it can talk. Isn't that wonderful?" She grabs two more pieces of railing while going up, charges them electrically and throws them at me, a bit too cramped of a place to dodge so I just let them hit me... apart from a slight recoil it isn't much.

"Are you trying to piss me off the most you possibly can?"

"Nah, I just tend to do that to people you know, call that my superpower." Another bit of railing thrown at me, don't know how many more she can take before this thing falls.

"Being insufferable isn't a superpower."

"And freaky strings are?" She scrounges for change, picking up a penny, she seems to be charging it up with electricity to a vaster extent than anything previous.

"Do not call them freaky."

“Not my fault you’ve got a dirty mind. Anyways, look at this cool thing.”

She holds the penny seemingly about to throw it at me, before she changes her mind and without looking shoots it off somewhere randomly in the sky.... Wait wait wait no she fucking didn’t. I can only watch in horror as the coin shoots off and hits Rionne straight through the middle, a pulse of electricity bounces off as Rionne falls to the ground and I lose any and all connection.

I am going to fucking kill this badly dressed woman.

I’m not caring much for property damage at this point, I jump with all I can upwards, destroying the fire escape above me as I grab her by the neck up in the air. I look into her eyes, expecting some fear but no, she looks weirdly excited actually.

With clearly nothing of value in this woman, I decide to punch her straight in the face. My fist filled with rage gets so close to her but... suddenly movement stops. What? We stopped going up or down just floating in the air, a red aura covering the both of us. Did she...?

“Uh... are you doing this?” She says, using a less annoying voice than usual. But if it isn’t her then what is this?

“What... no?”

Before any further thoughts can be mentioned, the red aura dissipates as we both fall down into the top of the nearby building. Red aura is still active on her, but seems to have faded off me... weird.

She seems a bit out of it right now, as if listening to something? I don’t know. Regardless I go to punch her, which she actually grabs instinctively. What the fuck is going on. She’s.... matching my strength. She seems to wake up from whatever trance she was in before punching me in the chest, which actually hurt... like bad.

“Where did that come from?”

“Honestly I have no idea but I’m not complaining.”

For once I have to fight defensively. She got stronger but that doesn’t mean she wins. I try to use my strings but they’re fritzed out right now. This... has happened before but never in this context... I’m so utterly confused. She tries to punch me using a simple hook but I dodge and land a solid hit on her face. This should absolutely knock out anyone but she simply gets knocked back, I can tell that hurt but she’s barely fazed. I noticed she’s not using electricity or enhancement right now either... she must be fritzing out too... are we equalised?

It's a matter of simple fisticuffs then. I go for a kick, she dodges, and punches, she goes for a punch, I dodge and counterpunch, she dodges, and elbows me across the face. Okay shit she's better than me in close up. This is a repeating scenario, I try my hardest but I just can't hit her. Slippery fuck. Suddenly though, her aura seems to leave her. And her next punch is barely felt. Perfect timing for me too, I was real close to the edge of the building.

"Ah, shit"

"Hope you enjoyed your little powerup."

"Thanks, I actually-" I try to interrupt her by punching, and she just barely dodges me. I try my strings again but they're still fritzed, though less so than before. I guess I'll have to wait till tomorrow.

"I was hoping to have a good long fight with you but uh... what's the point? You don't have your little stringy things you know. No fun in beating a weaker you" Why is she talking like she can beat me here. I can see a spark around her hand though, so I guess her magic is already back to normal unlike mine, lucky fuck.

"What I'm saying is... bye"

Before I can realise what exactly she's talking about, her whole body glows an annoyingly strong orange before she rushes at me at a speed I can't react to, at least with how tired I am right now. She pushes me with all she's got, and with that, I fall off the building.

As I fall down into the ground I can only think of how much I hate that girl. I'm going to have to spend I don't know how long fixing up this suit, she fucking broke Rionne, I lost any chance of finding Karine because of her... Whoever she is, next time we fight,

She's gonna lose.