

Arin: 'What a mistake.'

After reaching Central Avenue, I fumbled through my pockets for a solid 2 minutes for my phone. It appears I left it at school.

It's night-time now, and the building is probably closed and locked.

It's not like that's going to stop me, though.

I turn and bolt towards the school. From a distance, I can tell that all the lights are out and the place is quiet.

Upon reaching the school gates, I pause to assess my surroundings.

[Raising output to 30%.]

I'll need to properly gauge the amount of ruckus I cause. Even though I could fight anyone who finds me with ease, that would draw a lot of unwanted attention to myself.

I augment my leg muscles and my hearing. There are as many as 20 people inside, with a large fraction of them seeming rather disgruntled.

Arin: 'I suppose they're guards, considering how alert they are.'

But why almost 20 for a school?

I guess there's no point in speculating out here, the only way to find out would be to enter and see for myself.

With that in mind, I begin to climb over the gate as carefully as possible. Gates like these can produce a symphony of rattling metal if you shake it around too much.

I make my ascension quick and easy, heaving myself over the top and lunging forward, landing solidly on both feet.

Thankfully, they don't lock the doors when the gate is sealed, so getting in shouldn't be a problem.

I stroll my way inside, making sure the door behind me doesn't slam against the frame.

I'm in the main hallway now, so the classroom is on the other side of this block. Getting there should be no problem.

Unfortunately, I sense 5 guards in the way of my objective, all of them relatively close to one another. It's a bit unusual for them to be so concentrated.

Arin: 'What a pain.'

This is uncharacteristically irresponsible of me. I seldom ever leave my belongings behind.

Moving forward with utmost caution, I gingerly turn the corner and crouch. Focusing on the guard's movements are a bit difficult with all this duck and cover nonsense.

Suddenly, a guard points his light in my direction.

I manage to hop away fluidly without being noticed, but I'm in a bit of an awkward spot now.

Passing by him, I see another guard vigilantly combing the hallways back and forth. His erratic pathing is making it hard for me to slip by him.

Arin: ‘Guess there’s no other option.’

Wasting no time, I tumble forwards and trip him from behind.

Before he has a chance to scream, I deliver a clean blow to his neck with the side of my palm, rendering him unconscious almost instantly.

With haste, I stuff him inside a locker before anyone else gets a chance to notice me. Surprisingly, he fits snugly inside.

The third guard is all that’s left between me and my goal now.

Shutting my eyes and covering my ears, I block out all interference from the outside world; I can hardly feel my own breath.

Arin: “Aphaca.”

A light pulse exits my body and reverberates off the walls down the corridor.

The waves catch a moving target. The third guard appears to be seated beside a classroom door, scanning the area frantically.

Calmly entering the hallway, I peer into the tunnel of darkness, seeing a thick ray of light emanating from one of the classrooms. I’m protected by a locker door, so he shouldn’t see me very easily.

With the way he’s positioned, sneaking past may just be impossible; so there’s only one other method that doesn’t involve embedding my fist into his jaw.

I stray close to the windows with little moonlight in the background, getting ever closer to the final guard.

Each step is as if I was treading on thin ice; I don’t think even a rabbit could hear my footsteps from where the opponent is sitting.

He’s now within my vision, and vice versa. If he turned his head towards me, my silhouette would be quite visible.

As if he were reading my mind, he does exactly that.

I don’t give him time to react.

Arin: “Alacer.”

The world around me grinds to a perpetual halt, even the falling leaves outside the window came to a stop in their airborne descent.

Guard: “Who’s there!?”

The guard immediately shines his light on where I was hiding just moments ago... only to find a silent corridor.

Guard: “God, now I’m seeing things... what a creepy school.”

I gaze at the back of his head and laugh internally.

Arin: 'Mission successful.'

Now free of obstacles, I break into a sprint and reach the classroom door in the blink of an eye.

The door is unlocked, too. I waste no time entering, and locking the door behind me.

My desk stands like a beacon of hope among the rows of others; finally this ludicrous errand comes to a close.

I rummage inside and grabbing my phone, almost in a panic. For some peculiar reason I was worried it wouldn't even be there.

To my surprise, my device still had power in it.

Arin: 'Time to get out of here.'

My sense of relief is interrupted by an unknown intruder racketing at the door, eventually busting it open.

Arin: 'What!?'

The invader charges inside, assessing the room with a luster.

I respond by taking cover behind my chair. Advantageously, it's situated close to the back of the room.

The unknown interloper has begun their search of the classroom. They obviously know I'm here.

???: "*sniff sniff*"

Arin: 'What are you, a dog?'

My stalker slowly closes the gap between them and I, careening between the desks like it was a sport.

Whoever this is, they can smell my presence. Or at least it appears that way, because I'm finding that awfully hard to believe.

The intruder has reached the third row of desks, and is now two away from mine.

I tense up and ready for a counterattack.

???: "Hmm... I smell the blood of an Arlento..."

Their voice crackles vehemently as it talks, like a sadistic witch. I say witch, because it did sound rather effeminate.

She's reached the fourth row and is now only a few meters away.

It suddenly occurred to me that she uttered my last name in her little taunt.

Arin: 'Then I can't afford to hold back.'

I ready myself to attack for when they come around the corner.

Seconds pass, then minutes. Nothing happens. Time is moving at a snail's pace.

It feels like it's been hours, as my concentration is so despairingly focused. Every slight movement my body makes becomes painfully aware to me.

Arin: 'Maybe they've left?'

If that was so, I would've heard it. More reasonably though, I don't sense anyone else in the room with me. Where did she go?

Arin: 'Better leave quickly while I have the chance.'

My body twitches ever so slightly, I'm prepared to escape as fast I can.

???: "Found you~!"

I'm not given a fraction of a second to react before my body is hoisted up and pinned against the wall.

Arin: "What on Earth is--!?"

My sentence is cut short by a pair of soft, moist cushions planting themselves on my lips.

Everything freezes, as for only a few moments I fall into a state of absolute euphoria. My eyes must be bursting out of their sockets.

At first it was mere contact, but now my romantic assailant has made it her objective to mix every drop of my saliva with her own.

...That was a rather disgusting remark.

My trance was interrupted, and I snap back into reality.

These lips taste familiar.

She breaks away from the embrace, and breathes a sigh of deep satisfaction.

???: "Hah... thank you for the meal, that was delicious."

At this point I already knew who she was, but my suspicions are confirmed by the individual's neon green mane sparkling in the darkness.

Arin: "Long time no see, Kairi."

Her lips spread into a victorious grin as she nods her head approvingly.

Kairi: "It's me, alright. How couldn't you tell?"

Kairi: "And what are you doing here anyway? It's late, and the school is closed."

Arin: "Don't tell me that when you're doing same!"

She shakes her head emphatically and steps back a bit.

Kairi: "I'm here because I want to be."

Does this girl have a few screws loose? Actually, forget that question, the answer is obvious.

Arin: "And why is that?"

Kairi: “My bodyguards kept following me around, so I tried to hide here and wait for the storm to subside.”

I suppose that explains the excessive amount of guards this late at night, but that doesn't explain why they were so on edge.

Is Kairi really that hard to deal with?

Arin: “And where are your bodyguards now?”

Kairi: “They're all taking a nice, long nap~.”

I feel bad for attacking that one guard before, he was dealing with enough trouble tonight. Those guards were put out of their misery for having to oversee this child in a woman's body.

The fact that they were so alert and fearful means that this is something they're aware of, but not quite used to.

Without a word, I make my departure out the classroom doors.

I explore the hallways with Kairi following closely behind.

On the way I meet several men, sprawled and unconscious on the cold marble floors. It's a scene out of a horror movie, where the monster shows not a flicker of regret.

One barely alive guard takes notice of us strolling past.

Guard: “Madame... Kairi... you m-must ret... urn home...”

He makes that pitiful, but humble request before slackening back into a mangled fetal position.

Kairi: “Don't wanna!”

How criminally spoiled.

Kairi: “Hehe, art thou not impressed?”

Arin: “Save your remarks for judge, Casanova.”

I stop walking.

Kairi: “Hey, what gives?”

Arin: “You must be punished. Honourably, in the name of all the poor souls who attempted to tame a beast so ruthless as you.”

Even though they're out cold, I can feel their spirits lift up and revere me as their chosen hero. That may or may not be a fib, but it's what I'd like to think.

Kairi: “Huh? Punish me? No thanks.”

Arin: “I wasn't asking!”

Kairi: “Ehhh...? But I don't feel like taking part in your S and M role-play.”

Arin: “It's not S and M!”

Arin: “Enough. I will end you this instant, wench.”

This girl is going to make me lose sight of my intentions if I let her keep this up.

I ready my fists and root myself to the floor, like a street brawler.

Arin: “Prepare yourself, Kairi.”

Kairi: “Sure. Bring it on!”

She also adopts a fighting pose and looks ecstatic at the idea of battling me.

Arin: “Here I come!”

Kairi: “Yeah!”

I leap forward towards her right side and unleash a roundhouse kick towards her abdomen.

Kairi deftly captures my leg and uses the momentum to hurtle me backwards.

I regain my balance before landing on the ground and recover on both feet at the other end of the hall.

Arin: ‘Just how far did she throw me?’

Kairi: “You’re open.”

Not even giving me time to breathe, Kairi manifests behind me and sends a punch aimed at my torso.

I manage to twist my body enough for her fist to just barely graze me, and I leap back a few feet.

Even though I dodged her attack, the force from her punch tore the side of my jacket.

When I look at Kairi again, she doesn’t have her usual jovial look. Her eyes have become blank and unfocused... like a puppet.

Her gait is one of a professional, it’s almost a bit intimidating. Whatever changed in her, she doesn’t appear to be a defenseless girl anymore.

If I restrain, I’m going to get hurt real bad.

Arin: “Hmph. Let’s kick it up a notch, then.”

All this time I wasn’t using my abilities because I didn’t want to go overboard, but I’ve come to terms with the situation and quickly re-activate them.

Arin: “Time to end this charade... ha!”

I leap forth with renewed speed and vigor, like a speeding bullet.

However, even with my swift advance, she doesn’t panic and maintains her pose.

As I reach her, she throws out a sharp kick, which I dodge with a mid-air spin.

Arin: ‘Now!’

I charge all my power and momentum into a flurry of blows, all aimed at her chest region.

Caught off-guard by my speed, she becomes visibly disoriented; it doesn't look like she can muster a proper defense to counter my onslaught.

She takes the battering by attempting to block with her forearm. After suffering a baker's dozen hits, she finally pushes me back with raw strength; beginning her counterattack.

Replying to her challenge, I take the offensive once more, deflecting her strikes with ones of my own. Our fists were locked in an avalanche of blows, exchanging punches at each other with astounding speed and force.

Any reasonably-minded observer would look at this fight as not one between people, but a quarrel of gods.

Our synchronized bombardments at one another perfectly extinguish themselves every time, yielding no visible openings for either side.

The hallway becomes marked with the by-product of our fierce battle. A plethora of dents and bruises lavish the walls around us, while various windows and lights have cracked and shattered.

We speed up and down the foyer, keeping our blows accurate and powerful.

Arin: 'How is she able to keep up with me?'

I sling my right arm backwards and gather momentum. When I send it flying once more, it contains both the speed and weight of cannonball.

Arin: "Iactus!"

My clenched hand lands precisely in her chest, sending a tremor of force all around us. I feel the air around us tremble and quake from the sheer magnitude of the impact.

The once intact windows that were so gracefully spared from combat were ousted completely, shooting broken glass in every conceivable direction.

Arin: 'Agh! What the hell is her stomach made out of? It feels like punching steel!'

Her body loses composure and becomes very weak. Her body limpens and her motor functions cease.

Arin: "Ah... maybe I shouldn't put so much strength into that..."

As I try to retract my arm and carry her off, she snatches my wrist out of the air and lifts her head.

The look in her eyes are very telling of what will happen next.

I'm carelessly tossed into the air like a sack of potatoes, and out of sheer confusion I don't retaliate.

Kairi: "Arin... you idiot!"

Arin: "UPH!"

Once again, I'm launched into the air, meshing into the ceiling with a satisfying *CRUNCH*.

After being suspended for what felt like eternity, my body falls to the ground.

Kairi: “Well Arin, looks like it’s my victory~!”

Arin: “Da... damn you... K-Kairi...”

The disappointment the guards must be feeling was the last thought on my mind before falling unconscious.