

This story uses characters and locations based on the Gunslinger Girl manga written by Yu Aida and published in monthly shōnen magazine Dengeki Daioh. The characters of Kara and Michele are original to myself.

"No Regrets"

A Gunslinger Girl Original Story by Kiskaloo

"I want to thank you and Kara for teaching Triela to play," Hillshire noted to Michele as they watched the two girls kick a soccer ball back and forth in the dying sun of a July afternoon.

"She's really taken to it," Michele replied.

"Yes. She wants to be able to play against Mimi Machiavelli some day."

"She's Mario Bossi's daughter, isn't she?"

"Yes," Hillshire acknowledged. "Triela and I were part of the team that protected her during Mario's trial. Triela beat her in the indoor games, so Mimi challenged her to a game of soccer. They never had the chance during the mission, but now that Mario has testified, the threat to Mimi is gone."

"Odd that the Agency never had any of the girls play sports. You'd think it would be a good way to develop teamwork and camaraderie," Michele noted.

"Jean and Lorenzo are focused on results," Hillshire noted. "To them, drill and instruction are the only activities the girls need undertake."

"I'd say that was their military background, but then I came from one, as well," Michele noted. "Though I certainly lead a different life now."

"Do you miss your old life, Michele? The travel? The working with other people?" Hillshire asked a few minutes later.

"A bit, yes," Michele admitted. "Seeing new places and meeting new people was always exciting. I had a natural gift for languages and the travel I did as a young boy exposed me to France, Germany and Spain. Then when I graduated from University, my time in Formula One and the Aeronautica Militare took me all over the world. But then came the horrors of Kosovo and, well, you know the rest."

Hillshire nodded. "The world was far more evil then I thought," Hillshire said. "When I think back to my time at Interpol, I am disgusted at my naivety. That and my arrogance got a woman killed..."

"But it also brought you and Triela together," Michele noted.

"So you're saying it was fate?" Hillshire asked.

Michele shrugged. "Why did I decide to take a later train that March day in Madrid? I tell myself because I didn't want to cool my heels for an extra ten minutes at Guadalajara waiting for them to pick me up, but if I had taken that earlier train, I would have missed the explosions. I know somebody else would have rescued Kara, but I truly believe she would have died in a Spanish hospital, never regaining consciousness. Maybe Fate decreed that I took those extra few minutes in the hotel or on the walk so that I would be at that place at that time to save her.

"From what you have told me of Rachelle, maybe Fate required you two to be there to save Triela. And you succeeded in breaking the Amsterdam ring."

"There are others," Hillshire noted.

"Of course there are," Michele replied. "But as you said, the world is an evil place. One man - one agency - cannot make it good on their own. But what we and Triela and Kara do help move us towards that goal."

"At the cost of a future of their own determination."

"We didn't do that, Victor. Triela didn't choose to become the star of a snuff film. Kara didn't choose to be blown up in a terrorist bombing."

"I find myself wondering what Triela would have been if she'd been allowed to live a normal life," Hillshire noted.

"Don't. Nothing good will come of it," Michele replied.

"But when you look at Kara, don't you ever wonder what she would have been?"

"I was able to learn a great deal about Kara. She was a girl who loved cooking, computers and airplanes. A girl who liked to look at the stars

at night and read books or played soccer under the sun by day. A girl who played the piano and had many friends. And I tried to save all that when she was conditioned.

"Would she have become an astronomer like her father? Or an aerospace engineer like her mother? Or would she have pursued an entirely different goal? I'll never know, because the chance to make a decision was taken away from her by those men who carried out the attack. Since I cannot give her the freedom to decide her own life, I can only try and give her a life of as few regrets as possible."

"Well, neither of us really had a choice, did we?" Hillshire stated.

"No. When I saw Kara in the hospital, I knew I could not leave her side."

"It was much the same for me when I saw Triela. Do you regret making the decision to stay?"

"Do you?"

"No," Hillshire replied.

"Me neither," Michele stated.

Triela kicked the ball to Kara, who picked it up and the two of them came over to stand next to their handlers, who reached out to embrace them, much to the girl's mutual embarrassment.

The End