

*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.*

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## **"Roommates"**

A Gunslinger Girl Original Story by Kiskaloo

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"Your roommate is getting out of the hospital today," Michele informed Kara as the two consumed their breakfast in the main cafeteria. "If she follows normal procedure, she'll show up probably later this morning. As such, I've decided not to plan anything for your float day. Instead, I want you to show her around."

"Won't Gattonero be programmed with knowledge of the facility?" Kara asked.

"Yes, but you and she are going to be living together so you might as well start out on a friendly basis by being helpful," Michele answered.

Kara nodded. When they were done with breakfast, Michele released Kara back to her dorm so she spent the rest of the morning cleaning-up and organizing things. Since she herself had only been in the room a bit over a month, there was not much to do. The two handler's had worked together to choose the furnishings for the room and yesterday new bedding had arrived for the other bed.

Just before 11:00 there was a soft knock on the door, which opened a moment later and Yarrow Sandrelli peeked his head in.

"Good morning, Kara," he greeted.

"Good morning Signore Sandrelli," Kara replied, moving to a sitting position on the bed.

Yarrow stepped into the room and behind him a young woman with short black hair and blue eyes followed, dressed in jeans and a sweater jacket with athletic shoes.

"Kara, I'd like to introduce you to Gattonero. Gattonero, this is Kara Michele Pagani, cyborg to Michele Pagani."

"Ciao!" Gattonero said brightly, coming forward with her hand

extended.

Kara slipped off the bed and accepted her hand. "Benvenuto," she said.

"That's a pretty outfit," Gattonero commented.

"Thank you," Kara replied. She was wearing a white skirt and white sweater vest, both from Dolce & Gabanna.

"Kara's handler is from Milan and therefore she wears nothing but the finest fashions," Yarrow noted with a wane smile. "I'm hoping her tastes don't rub off on you, otherwise I'm going to sell some of my organs."

Kara responded by pulling down one eyelid and sticking her tongue out at him.

Yarrow laughed. "Will you show Gattonero around for me?" he asked. "They scheduled an all-handlers meeting so I'll be tied up for the next few hours."

"I'd be happy to," Kara said. "Have you eaten yet, Gattonero?"

"I had breakfast in the hospital, but that was many hours ago."

"Did the doctors say she was okay to eat normal food?" Kara asked Yarrow, who nodded affirmative. He gave both girls a wave and left their room, closing the door behind him.

"So...this is our room," Kara said. She pointed to a large six door wardrobe with four drawers. "This is where we store our clothes and weapons," she noted. She opened the two left doors and pointed to a single shelf on the bottom. She pulled it open and inside were two hard plastic cases, one sized for an assault rifle and one for a pair of pistols.

Gattonero's attention however was fixed on two pairs of shoes and a pair of boots with bright red soles.

"Are those Christian Louboutin?"

"Yes," Kara replied.

"Yarrow wasn't kidding about your fashions, was he?" Gattonero noted as she looked at the dresses, skirts, shirts and blouses hanging on the rack and softly reciting off the labels.

"Uh, the other half is open for you. You'll want to store your weapons on the bottom shelf on the right. I have the left four drawers in the middle and the ones on the right are for you. The center doors are for storing our jackets."

"Cool," Gattonero noted. She put her hand on the top of her head and slowly moved it over to Kara, where it touched just above her eyes. She then put one of her feet next to Kara's.

"We look to be about the same height and shoe size," she noted and Kara saw a smile break out on Gattonero's face, though her new roommate didn't say anything else.

Kara closed the wardrobe doors and pointed to the opposite corner.

"Over here is the reading area," she said. There were two chairs upholstered in black leather with a tall floor lamp covered in paper providing illumination.

"How many channels do we get on the TV?" Gattonero asked, pointing to the 27" Sony LCD TV located in a wall cabinet that stretched from the outer edge of the reading area to the far wall.

"We have SKY Italia along with the DVB-T networks," Kara noted. "I mostly watch BBC Prime, myself. There is also a DVD player though we don't really have any library of titles at the moment."

"I take it the bed with the car posters above it is yours?" Gattonero asked, indicating the one closest to the window. Kara nodded. Each bed had its own nightstand table with a lamp on a swivel arm.

The desk surface was clear, Kara having moved her Apple PowerBook to her side of the wardrobe along with her iPod and other accessories. She showed Gattonero the drawer unit, indicating the second drawer was for her use and they could split the larger bottom unit for storing papers.

"Lunch starts at 11:30 so we can take the long way to the dining room," Kara said. She went back to the wardrobe and removed the black leather Christian Louboutin boots, sitting in one of the leather

chairs to pull them on.

Gattonero followed her outside. Their dorm was on the eastern edge of the property facing the mountains, the handlers dorm within a short walking distance. As they walked around behind the building through an open grassy area, they saw a young girl with black hair working a hoe in a patch of dirt near a retaining wall.

"That's Claes," Kara noted. "She doesn't have a handler and she doesn't partake in missions," she added.

"What does she do then?" Gattonero asked.

"Michele said she helps test and calibrate the cybernetic systems. She also evidently helped develop some of the new systems in our own bodies."

"Aren't you going to introduce me?" Gattonero asked as they continued walking.

"Claes isn't the most...sociable...of people," Kara noted.

"What is she working on?"

"A garden," Kara replied. "Michele wants to make one, as well."

They continued on past the edge of the field and climbed steps to the upper level of the grounds and walked up a curved drive that went through a large L-shaped building.

"The cyborg dining room is on the right. To the left is another area for senior staff. Farther down is the main cafeteria and kitchen facilities," Kara pointed out.

Two young girls, one with short brown hair and one with short blonde hair, were walking along the path.

"Good morning, Henrietta; Rico," Kara called out. "Gattonero, I would like you to introduce you to the Croce Brother's cyborgs. This is Henrietta and this is Rico. Giuse is Henrietta's handler and Jean is Rico's."

The three girls exchanged introductions.

"Kara, are you heading to the dining room for lunch?" Rico asked.

"Yes I am. Want to race?"

"Ok!" Rico said and crouched down.

"Ready...Set...Go!" Kara said and the two of them took off up the drive. Kara had a longer stride, but Rico's athletic shoes provided better traction than Kara's boots so they were still neck and neck as they went under the archway and disappeared out of sight.

"Wait for me!" Henrietta called out, scampering after them in her loafers, giving Gattonero little but to chase after her.

Gattonero followed Henrietta into the building and down a short hall to the open door that led into their dining room. Along one corner were two sets of tables with a large buffet laid out. There were also four tables with six chairs each. As lunch was just starting, the catering staff were still loading chafing dishes and putting out the finishing touches.

Kara and Rico were both drinking from water bottles they had removed from a large bucket with ice.

"Sorry about that, Gattonero," Kara said between swigs from the bottle. "It's good exercise and, well, can you resist a smile like that?" she added, pointing to Rico's 750-watt grin.

"It's Wednesday, which means that whatever is for lunch should be...interesting," Henrietta noted as the catering team left.

Kara went over and carefully lifted the covers from two chafing dishes. "Looks like Thai and Vietnamese. So at least they're both from the same area of the world," she noted, brightly.

"I take it the chef is a bit flaky?" Gattonero asked.

"Well we have three different teams depending on the day of the week. The one that works on Wednesdays takes the concept of 'fusion' to illogical extremes. Last week it was Russian-Portuguese, so we had chouriço piroshkies. And the week before that it was Italian-Swedish and they made ossobucco."

"What's wrong with that?" Gattonero asked. Ossobucco was a famous

Milanese dish made with veal shank.

"The chefs used reindeer," Henrietta noted. "It was about as tender as veal, but much stronger in flavor."

The four prepared their plates and headed for one of the tables.

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**The End**