

*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.*

**Author's Note:** *The story below is drawn from Chapter 6 of my story Yoake. I know at least one other author wrote a story told from the perspective of the "villains" and since I'm nowhere near ready to tell the story from the side of Kara and Claes, I thought I'd take a shot (excuse the pun) at telling the story from the side of those on the receiving end of the SWA's operatives.*

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## "Specchio Rotto" [Broken Mirror]

A Gunslinger Girl Original Story by Kiskaloo

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The beige decade-old 5-door Fiat Uno motored down State Highway 6, its 1.4-liter turbo diesel clattering loudly to move the car and four passengers at 80km/h, belching occasional clouds of black smoke. The driver of the car, Stefano, rolled down the window to help ventilate the smell of unwashed bodies from the cabin. The person next to him, Marcello, had showered that morning, but the two passengers in the back row – Agnolo and Nicola – had spent the past 80 hours in transit by bus and train and their clothes reeked of stale sweat and cheap tobacco. All four were dressed in a "working man's garb" of denim pants, long-sleeved shirts of heavy cotton in various colors or plaids and windbreakers or worn leather jackets with scuffed and mud-caked work boots.

Stefano and Marcello had been friends since childhood, growing up in the commune of Carmagnola, located 29km south of Turin. Like much of Piedmont, Carmagnola saw explosive demographic growth during the 1960's thanks to a move towards industrialization. Their fathers worked in the FIAT plant in the city and both sons, rather than following the Liceo concept, which led to university, instead joined the "Istituto Professionale" which prepared them for moving directly into the workforce upon graduation. Unfortunately, in their fifth and final year, FIAT closed the huge Lingotto car factory and while jobs remained, competition for them was fiercer so both spent a few years working in garages and such before they were hired as assemblers at the Mirafiori plant in Turin.

Nicola also worked at the Mirafiori plant, as a quality-control technician for Lancia. He met Stefano and Marcello at a Piedmontese Union party

political rally in the mid-1980s and the three became fast friends. When Gipo Farassino broke away to ally with Umberto Bossi's Lega Lombarda party, the three men went with him. When Lega Lombarda merged with Lega Nord in 1991, the three were introduced to Agnolo, who was a regional secretary in Lega Nord and the son of a winemaker in Cuneo whose business had been damaged (in his mind) by government efforts to promote winegrowing in regions in southern Italy, even though many of these regions had been cultivating grapes since before the Roman Empire.

All three had been caught up in the labor unrest during the chairmanship of Paolo Fresco and were especially worried when he signed a partnership with the American company General Motors which would allow them to buy the company in four years, a fear shared by many within and without Fiat Auto. They saw the industrial centers of Turin and other northern cities start to recede under what they felt were unfair taxes to support the central and southern regions of Italy. Even FIAT was now building plants in the southern regions, taking jobs away from the north or forcing them to leave their homes and families to remain employed. As such, they were all amicable to the fear mongering the groups that would eventually become the Padania Republican Faction were preaching.

When the car reached the suburb of Finocchio, it turned off onto route SP67a. To either side were rows of single-family housing and small apartment buildings. As they continued southeast, the housing tracts gave way to farm tracts. They turned on a road that had a number of single homes spaced out with an area given over to farming behind them. They pulled up to a small two-story home and parked in the small drive that ran up beside the house.

Stefano activated the hatch release and Agnolo and Nicola both removed small suitcases that showed the effects of years of travel. Marcello went to the front door and rapped his knuckles against it in a specific pattern and counted to seven before opening it slowly. Agnolo and Nicola both shuffled in behind him and Stefano locked the car before following, stopping to make a quick sweep of the street and the houses across the way.

The quickness of his sweep made him miss the glint of sunlight momentarily reflected off a spotting scope as it was hastily withdrawn behind a curtain on the third house down across the street.

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Inside the house, all the shades were drawn, leaving the house in perpetual twilight. Low-wattage bulbs provided weak pools of illumination and the lack of open windows or doors meant the air was musty with the smell of smoke, old food, sweat...and fear.

2005 had been a trying year for those seeking the independence of the northern Italian regions. The Milan cell had been totally wiped out, leaving the PRF leaderless in their largest and most important city. Similar strikes had weakened the Venice and Bologna cells, leaving the movement in disarray. The return of Giacomo Dante and his audacious mission in Venice had stirred the fires in the faithful, but it had also resulted in an even tougher crackdown that sent many members into hiding or out of the country.

However, some had been inspired by Dante's words and actions to try and perform their own "great acts". The six men assembled in this house were some of them. A large man rose up from the couch and shuffled over, favoring one leg. He was tall with a prominently receding hairline. He too was dressed in jeans, though his polo shirt strained against the muscles of his chest and forearms.

"Welcome, brothers!" he greeted in a warm and deep voice.

"Thank you, Signore Peretti," Nicola said.

"Please, call me Damiano."

"How was your trip?"

"Long and arduous, Signore, but struggle is our life, is it not?" Agnolo replied. He and Nicola had travelled from Macedonia where they had secured explosives.

Damiano Peretti was the leader of this PRF cell. In the 1990's he'd been a professor of history at the University of Bologna and while he was more favorable towards the socialist and communist parties of Italy, he had not been a radical. However, that didn't matter to the Carabinieri trooper from the 5° Btg. ("Emilia Romagna") who had charged him and shattered his kneecap, femur, and cheek with his baton during a peaceful demonstration. During his hospital recuperation, Damiano had met others wounded by the government's security forces and had been introduced to the PRF. Damiano was not a violent man by nature and as a professor of history he was well familiar with "The Years of Lead" – the violent terrorism engaged by

both extremes of the political spectrum, in part orchestrated by NATO under Operation Gladio. However, as a professor of history he also knew that Italy's political system was inherently unstable with almost as many governments as years since 1945. As such, he felt that an independent and stable northern Italy might serve as a model for the rest of the country to reform and stabilize.

"Ernesto! The packages have arrived!" he yelled.

A short and thin man with a pinched nose and close-set eyes shuffled out of the kitchen area. He wore khaki pants and a grey t-shirt and had the hands of a jeweler and watchmaker – which he had been prior to his current occupation as bomb-maker.

Unlike the others, Ernesto was not driven by politics or a desire for autonomy. An Ashkenazi Jew, his family had lived in Venice since the late Middle Ages, working in the printing industry before eventually moving into banking and other areas. The last few generations had been jewelers and watchmakers and Ernesto had gone to university to learn electronics to allow him to fix modern timepieces. While there, he had found a strong interest in and aptitude for chemistry and physics. When he performed his mandatory military service, this interest and aptitude had resulted in his serving in a combat engineering unit, specializing in demolitions.

For him, bomb making was an art. He felt any idiot could wrap a couple sticks of dynamite together with an alarm clock, but he abhorred such crude devices and their indiscriminate effects. Instead, he used advanced military and commercial explosives in linear shaped charges designed to focus the explosive effect in a particular direction. This minimized "collateral damage" and none of the dozen bombs this cell had created and detonated had resulted in any deaths, even though they had created significant damage to government buildings and transportation structures.

Agnolo indicated the suitcase with the explosives and Ernesto came forward, slowly unzipping it and rifling through the clothes until he came to the explosives, which were shaped like candles and wrapped in scented wax to throw-off canines and customs officials. He removed the plastic and used a pocketknife to cut away some of the wax to reveal the explosives below.

"Excellent," he said, his voice high and reedy.

"It is sufficient quality and quantity for the mission?" Damiano asked and Ernesto nodded his head.

"Excellent," he said, nodding his head in approval.

"Agnolo, Stefano, you have both done well. You must be tired from your long journey. Go upstairs and take a hot shower and then relax. We've set up two beds for you. Tonight, we will celebrate!"

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Damiano, Stefano and Marcello were watching afternoon television when they heard a knock at the door.

"Go see who it is," Damiano ordered Stefano who, grumbling, rose from the chair closest to the door and went over. He released the bolt and checked the security chain before opening the door. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the bright sunlight and he blinked a few times until they focused on an attractive Asian woman in a black business skirt and blazer.

"Yeah?" he said.

"Good afternoon, sir. I'm with the Ministry of Agriculture and we're doing a survey of communal farms in the area..." she began, moving her writing pad from one hand to the other. As she did so, she fumbled and it dropped to the ground.

"Merde," she cursed, leaning over on her side and bracing herself with her left hand to pick it up. As she did so, she pirouetted on her left leg and high-kicked with her right, the sole of her boot slamming into the door with enough force to shear the chain off the wall and knock it back into Stefano, causing him to fall flat on his ass.

Stefano was still a bit stunned from the impact, shaking his head to clear it and starting to move his arms to lift himself up when he saw the woman step into the foyer, the soles of her riding boots smacking against the tiles. She turned towards him and with horror he saw the cylindrical shape of a suppressor track directly towards him. The three 9x19mm bullets stopped his heart on impact, but enough oxygenated blood remained in his brain to visually register the flash and aurally the sound of the bullets before his vision went permanently dark.

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In the kitchen, Ernesto sat at the table, sketching a wiring diagram on

a pad of drawing paper. He still had to calculate the shape and size of the explosive device itself to bring down the support structure holding up the Viale dello Scalo San Lorenzo overpass. Their mission was to drop the span, which would cut all the rail lines leading into Termini Station. The bombing was planned for the early morning hours to minimize the chance of casualties as well as to ensure that the lines were severed before the morning rush of commuters into the city, forcing them to the roads and hopefully bringing the Eternal City's roads to gridlock.

He heard a sharp bang from the front area and turned his head towards the door leading out into the living area. A second sharp bang from the area of the back door snapped his head back. He saw the door swing inward and a figure supporting themselves in the air using their arms and the railings on the landing. The figure dropped onto their feet and rushed in and as it approached, he identified it as a young girl with long dark hair, dressed in a white sweater and plaid skirt with brown leather boots.

*"What is a girl doing here?"* his mind asked itself.

That girl brought forward an object in her hands and time slowed for Ernesto as his eyes focused on that object, his brain mentally comparing it to a catalog of images until he identified it as a German submachine gun. Unfortunately for him, that connection was made as the girl pulled the trigger and sent six bullets into his torso, shredding his heart, liver and both lungs and killing him instantly.

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In the living room, Damiano and Marcello both involuntarily jumped when they heard the door crash into something.

"Stefano?" Damiano called out, to no reply. Both looked to each other and nodded. They were rising from the couch when an Asian woman dressed in black walked into the room.

"Chi siete?" Damiano demanded, and the woman answered by putting three 9mm rounds into his skull. Marcello didn't even have time to say anything before three rounds stopped his heart.

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As for Agnolo and Nicola, they went to sleep and never woke up, each being killed in their beds by the two female assassins. One of them quickly cased the place, securing items of interest while the other

snapped pictures of the corpses before emptying the wallets of cash and placing some drug paraphernalia to make the scene look like a drug deal gone very bad. They then disappeared out the back door, leaving behind no trace of their presence usable to forensics teams who would arrive the following day after receiving an anonymous tip from the agency that had sent the assassins.

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**The End**