

*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.*

*This story was inspired directly by the story Quiet Desperation by **Danjo3** available for reading on this site and in principle by the works of M. Night Shyamalan and is offered in response to an old forum topic by **Emperor** on switching around the girl's handlers.*

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## "Spin Theory"

A Gunslinger Girl Original Story by Kiskaloo

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As I do every morning, I wake up before my roommate. The spring sun shines around the drawn shades, offering just enough illumination to allow me to climb down from the top bunk. I go over to them and pull them back, enjoying the brightness washing over me. I unlatch the windowpanes and push them wide open, the cool spring air rushing in to displace the warmer air inside the room rustling the folds of my pajamas. In the distance, I hear the cry of a hawk and look up to see it circle overhead on a thermal rising off the roofs of the compound buildings.

I hear the usual muttered curses from the bottom bunk as my roommate slowly wakes.

"Good morning," I greet. An incomprehensible mumbled sentence is the response.

I decide to get dressed and start my day, being sure to take my treasured item with me. I don't know why I keep it, much less treasure it. As a cyborg, I have no use for it. But there are strong emotions attached to it, so except for when I sleep or bathe, it is always with me.

Unlike the other girls, I don't have a handler so my time is my own. I have come to enjoy the quiet and the freedom to explore my own interests at my own pace, but there are times when I resent being trapped inside the compound while the other girls get to travel across Italy on missions with their handlers.

As I have a physical examination later today, when I enter the dining room I spoon some vanilla yogurt into a bowl and pour myself a glass of ice water from a carafe.

I see Henrietta and Rico already at a table, holding hands and singing a song. While they've been here for over two years, they still act like the 10 and 11 year old girls they once were. We spoke of inconsequential things until, one by one, all the other girls left to meet with their handlers and I was left alone.

I checked the clock on the wall and saw it was time for me to take my pills for the examination later today and return to my room to change into sweatpants, sweatshirt and athletic shoes to work in my garden.

My garden is quite bare, but during the winter I tilled the ground and shored up the brickwork surrounding it. Now that spring has arrived, I can finally start to plant new seeds and transplant the herbs I had been growing in the music room.

The soil had thawed and I could now easily dig holes with a garden trowel. I dug five holes for my herbs and a few more for the seeds, following the examples in the gardening book. The work was not hard, but in combination with the warm sun I worked up a sweat. I went to the laundry room to grab my watering can, which I filled from a spigot in the sink. I then returned and watered my morning's labor.

I returned to my room and changed back into my usual skirt, leggings and sweater. I then went to what I liked to think of as my "private library". It was located in the Handler's Dorm, but was unused. I had a key so I could go in and out as I please and I would often lie on the bed for hours, either reading or sleeping. Sometimes I dreamed strange dreams of a man fishing on a lake, but his features were always cloaked in shadow. I don't know what it means, but then I read so many books, it could just be my imagination stimulated by some story I once read and my conscious mind had forgotten, yet my unconscious mind still recalled.

I searched the hundreds of tomes on the shelves until I found a book on geology, sitting down at the desk. I flipped through the index until I found what I was looking for and turned to the entry on meteorites. I read through the chapter, paying close attention to the part about iron and silicate specimens known as mesosiderites. As I often do, I keep reading and decide to move to the bed, removing my dress shoes and lying on my stomach, flipping the pages one after the other in a steady cadence.

All too soon, my watch alarm interrupts my studies, informing me it is time for my physical examination. Often these take place in the main medical facility on the other side of the complex, but today the examinations only need the smaller facility on the main grounds so I do not need to walk very far.

As I undress, I comment to Doctor Belgonchi that he doesn't look very healthy and he responds that he and his partner are preparing for a medical conference next month using the data they have learned from studying me. In a way, it kind of makes me feel better. I may not be contributing the same way the other cyborg girls are, but in my own way, I am still helping.

I quietly lay on my side while they perform various tests on my artificial heart and general circulatory system. I wish I could read, but instead we also talk of inconsequential things.

When they finish, I dress and leave. I don't feel like going back to the library nor do I wish to lie in the sun. Instead, I head for the music room and practice on the piano. Most of the cyborgs conceal their weapons in cases designed for musical instruments, yet only Henrietta actually plays an instrument - the violin. I was allowed to learn to play the piano and I try and practice a few hours a week.

Out of the corner of my eye I see the door open and I stop playing. I turn and see it is Jean Croce, Rico's handler. I knew it was past the time for my movie viewing, but I just didn't want to be inside a dark room on such a sunny day so I deliberately blew it off, forcing him to come find me. I expected him to be angry, but instead he seemed more concerned about my welfare, which I found odd since he has never struck me as the concerned type, at least as it comes to us cyborgs.

I follow him to the auditorium and as we talk while he prepares the movie, I learn that the ground I was working on earlier once belonged to a nobleman and before that a monastery.

Wednesday is when I watch foreign films, and this one is from the United States. Titled "A River Runs Through It", I see scenes of the natural beauty of the world. For reasons I cannot explain, these images stir deep emotions in me of happiness and longing. I suddenly feel very sad, yet I find no tears form in my eyes, though I often awake at night to wet cheeks.

I decide to take a circuitous route back to my dormitory to help try and clear my head. As I walk, I come across a single-story building. As opposed to the other structures, which are all in classic Italian architecture and made of brick, this one is square, squat and made of reinforced concrete.

I don't recall ever seeing it before, and yet I feel something drawing me towards it so I climb the steps and open the door.

Inside, it looks like a normal room, with two interior doors and a security station. I approach and the man behind the partition looks up from his paper at me.

"Sorry, but you cannot go to the range unless you are accompanied by an adult," he says.

*Range? Ah, this must be the firing range. That would explain the construction,* I think to myself.

"Oh wait! I recognize you. You shot the VP," he said.

*VP? The Vice President? No, the current Vice President has been in office for years. He must mean something else. Maybe it's a weapon.*

"Giuseppe's already inside, so if you want to shoot, just ask him to assist you," the man said. I nodded and headed for the door.

Stepping through, I found myself in a long corridor with rifles and pistols on one side and lockers on the other. A low bench ran along the length of the room in front of the guns, with open areas to allow access to the wall behind. None of the guns looked familiar except for one short one with two handles. I squeezed my eyes shut to try and remember, but nothing comes so I continue on through the other door and down a staircase.

As I exit out onto the landing, I hear a sharp report and I shrink back in shock. I hear another and then another and recognize them as pistol fire. It sounds like a 9x19mm round, though I do not understand why I would know such things as I have never fired a gun in my life.

I continue forward and enter a large room with multiple partitions. This must be the indoor firing range and as I look down the line, I see Giuseppe Croce standing slightly back from one of the partitions. As I

approach, I see Henrietta in a firing stance, the gun kicking slightly in her hand with each shot.

The three of us acknowledge each other and I mention I was just passing through on my way to the dormitory. Giuseppe and Henrietta nod to each other and return to their practice while I continue on towards the exit. As I walk past the shell casings on the floor and smell the gunpowder in the air, again I am assaulted by strong emotions and memories I cannot place.

I return to my room and the movie today inspires me to start a painting of an angler on a lakeshore. I ask Olga for a book on Italian Alpine lakes to use for reference and I set up my easel before the window and first sketch an outline and then begin to apply my watercolors. As the sun sets, the bright moonlight bothers me so I rise to close the shades. As I do so, I see the case on the dresser top. I reach for it and gently lift the top, looking at the glasses nestled inside.

"I'm home," my roommate called as she opened the door.

"Welcome back," I respond as I quickly close the case and put it back down on the dresser.

"How was your day, Triela?" my roommate asks.

"Mmm, the usual," I respond, heading back towards my painting.

My roommate walks over and picks up the case I was just handling.

"Honestly, Triela. How many times have I told you not to play with this?" she asks.

"I'm sorry, Claes," I reply. "You usually have it on you so I was surprised to see it lying there."

"Hillshire had me practicing on the close-quarters combat course all day and I was afraid they may get lost or damaged," Claes replied. She removed the ribbon that tied her long dark hair back and shook her head to let it settle outward. I admired how her hair was so beautiful and luxuriant compared to my plain blonde locks.

"Why do you wear those glasses, Claes?" I asked. "You have perfect vision."

"They were a Christmas present from Hillshire. He said they complimented the suits I wear," Claes replied, though today she was wearing a sweater over a tactical shirt and tactical pants.

"Besides, you always carry that small teddy bear around in your pocket," she added.

"I know," I replied, reaching into my pocket and pulling it out. It was a bit worn and threadbare, but I cherished it more than any other of my possessions, though I know not why I do. Sometimes I pretend my father gave it to me before I came to live here at the Agency. When I feel alone, thinking this often made me feel better.

Claes sniffed the air, coming closer to me.

"Triela, you stink of gunpowder," she accused.

"Really? Weren't you the one shooting guns all day?" I retorted.

"Hmm, perhaps you're right," Claes said, pulling off her sweater. "I want to go to bed, but I guess I should take a shower first."

"I'll join you," I said, after taking a sniff of my sweater and indeed smelling gunpowder on it.

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**The End**