

Blind Sky

by Kerry Gordon

A sample of the opening pages

Prologue

I stood in front of the bathroom mirror before I retired to bed, and faced the girl in the mirror with the memory of blood stained hands, whose last notable achievement was a High School Diploma, until today.

I pulled my wet hair into a pony tail, then wrapped a towel around my naked body, but there was not enough water, or soap suds that could erase what I did. And I couldn't celebrate. There was no medal or trophy to honor such a victory, but I didn't need it. It felt good. I prevailed, and couldn't wait to do it again.

1

Two Years Ago

Get up, get up," the voice barked.

The sheet wrapped around me was snatched away, leaving me coverless on the bed. There wasn't much I could see besides a shadow, hollering and instructing everyone to the hallway outside the bunkers. I rolled onto my side and noticed Misty; one of my best friends looked dazed, though still beautiful even without make-up. Misty had the height, charisma, and dark hair that hung effortlessly just above her collar bone, and was one thing I envied, because each strand of sun-tanned bronzed curl on my head demanded constant grooming and attention, or my hair would run wild.

"Rule number one, always be prepared and alert. Leave nothing to chance," yelled Tadao. Tadao, our instructor poked the gun into my thigh, then directed me out of bed. He was a petite and slender guy, with skin as translucent and smooth as a porcelain doll, and large almond shaped eyes designed like a Lark.

And instead of filling out college applications like the average 18-year old, I opted to enroll with a recruiting agency that send agents on covert missions to kill enemies of Australian Authority Official's, plus submit to Tadao's loud mouth hammering in my head.

As if his strident demands weren't enough, I also had to move around the condensed room, which was even tighter with another body roaming inside shouting orders.

It was week one at Logue's Agency training facility.

"Get into formation. Men to the right, women the left," he instructed, and if not for his commanding voice, he could be mistaken for an adolescent boy.

A sea of recruits piled behind one another, and my eyes were still burning from being jolted from my sleep. I didn't sleep well. I was cranky.

In that moment, I wanted nothing more than to thrust Tadao's gun into his leg, to prove how agitated I was. After eight hours of non-stop training drills yesterday, flanking maneuvers, endurance fire courses, and team defense field exercises, I was more exhausted than I've ever felt in my entire life. But I couldn't afford to lose focus, I wanted this.

"Someone will escort you to your destination today. In the meantime, everyone march to the front of the building."

No one had shoes on, but we formed lines and marched in the hallway outside our bunkers wearing blue shorts and blue shirts, our mandatory sleep wear and uniform.

We stopped in front of the gray dome shaped facility surrounded by a row of guards marching in line to the commands over the speaker. It was still dark, and probably another two hours before the sun arrived.

The blue uniforms were representative of Logue's agency colors, and the blare of the guards chanting their recited mantra got louder. We won't stop 'til... we win this fight. We won't rest 'til... we find you. The sight was patriotic and served as a reminder of their dedication and devotion.

There were two guards outside standing near our formations, but only one bothered to look over at us. I was first in the line of women. The guard approached and skimmed over me with suspicion.

"Name," he shouted automatically.

"Sky McClair."

"Inside to the left, instructions will be given for your physical today. Name," he shouted again and examined Misty who was in line behind me.

"Name," he bellowed once again, but with more assertion.

Misty stepped forward apprehensively. He glanced up from the clip board and scrutinized her with his popping gray eyes, studying her underneath the brim of his hat that highlighted the shadow across his face.

"If you're reluctant, maybe you shouldn't be here," he said with aversion, and didn't hide the repugnant expression speckled across his face. I knew Misty wanted to be there, but I could tell she was in pain from the drills yesterday, judging by her fidgeting uncomfortable in the line, and

the way one side of her body collapsed awkwardly to the side. Misty was tough, but a lot more sensitive than me. Surprisingly, the guard wasn't even distracted by her impressive 5'10 physique, which was unusual considering men usually fall like sand in her presence. I've witnessed it happen countless times.

"Come on. Give her a break. She's just a little tired from yesterday that's all," Derek, my best friend chimed in. He stood third in the men's line, with an undeterred look on his face, and ruffled his hands through his dark hair.

The guard approached and despite Derek's 6'3 well developed body, he faded in comparison to the guard's grizzly shape.

"Name," he yelled and eyeballed Derek suspiciously.

"Derek Tillman."

"Step aside," the guard scowled.

I glanced over at Derek who was fuming and obviously annoyed, and I prayed he didn't do anything stupid. I knew him well enough to know, if provoked he would make a scene.

The guard moved closer and punched him in the stomach, and he coughed from the impact. Derek stood up and growled at the guard, tightening his fist by his side. My heart was pounding, and the urge to do something kicked in.

I began to doubt my decision to join the agency, because I couldn't believe they would do this. The second guard remained positioned like a manikin in front of the building's entrance. He made no attempt to work anything out and positioned the clip board at his side and stared off into space, standing as still as a frozen corpse. I didn't even think he blinked.

I tried to get Derek's attention, but his focus was geared toward the guard. The guard shoved Derek to the ground with no remorse, and on instinct I jumped out of line and screamed for the guard to stop.

"Sky stay back," Derek advised and brushed his self-off. "Sky don't do anything."

But I wasn't going to sit back and let this happen. This was ridiculous and I couldn't allow myself to stand for it.

Derek blocked his body in between me and the guard, and then Tadao walked up beside the guard with his sleek black hair swiped across his face like an anime character.

"What's the problem out here?" he inquired.

"Tadao," the guard saluted.

"Would anyone care to explain what is going on?" and stared at Derek who was still pinned between me and the guard.

I put my hand up. "I would."

He examined my expression, scrutinizing me with what seemed like doubt, but I wasn't afraid and maintained my focus.

"What's your name?" he asked and focused his stonily reservation on me. He didn't demand the question; rather he employed a subtle tone that had a hint of interest.

"Sky."

"Are you involved in this matter?"

"No, she wasn't," Derek yelled before I even had a chance to answer.

"Yes I was," I reinforced. Tadao glanced over at the guard who reverts back to his post, then surveyed Derek and I, and rubbed his chin which had no visible hair at all, not even a stubble.

"Then what happened?" he asked me.

"Difficult over there," I said and pointed at the guard with attitude, "hit Derek in the stomach and pushed him to the ground," and I glared back at the guard who seemed unapologetic. It took every fiber in my body, and muscle in my bone to restrain from kicking him in the jaw, though I wasn't opposed to doing it anyway.

Tadao refocused his gaze to the guard. "Is this correct what they say Bay."

"Yes, sir. But only because he got out of line."

Tadao turned back towards us. "I apologize for the unwarranted behavior, but please do know, if and when someone gets out of line, the guards have permission to follow through with their job."

He paced back and forth with his hands behind his back, examining Derek and I over like a scanning metal detector. I was repelled by everyone's lackluster behavior. There was no excuse for what the guard did.

"Do you both want to be here?" he questioned and stared back at Derek and me.

"Yes," we answered together.

"Clip board," he shouted.

The guard handed it to him without reservation and he wrote something down, returned it to the guard and disappeared through the doors, and we were ordered to enter into the building.

2

Once inside, a towering shadow in a full piece blue leather suite walked with precision down the hallway aisle, and for a second I thought whatever it was or whoever it was, was headless. No one flinched or peeped, and I tried to restrain the cough in my throat trying to escape. I weathered the uncertainty and tried not to look out of place, though clearly we were. I deliberated walking away from training, the agency, and Tadao, but I made a commitment and

had to see it through.

I caught Derek's awareness of my dilemma. Unfortunately, I was never good at hiding my discomfort. He supplied reassurance with a subtle mention not to worry, then the mystery of the headless shadow was revealed with an icy greeting. The figure clearly had the prim and poised characteristic of a robot down.

"Follow me," she directed.

Derek had to be impressed and smitten because I noticed he smiled while he inspected her body. She seemed to ignore Derek's useless attempt to flirt. Her coal black eyes rolled toward him with a guile of warning, then she turned around mechanically and proceeded, and we followed diligently.

We weren't allowed to tour other parts of the building outside our bunk quarters, so we marveled at the large columns and white tiled hallway. The room we entered was large and spectacular. It had a modern design with high ceilings and slender lighting sectioned in rows, plus bright green flooring that highlighted the soft white paint along the wall. The room was designed to the nines, and far from the small bunks we were assigned to.

A large rotating circle with the words LOGUE inscribed in the center of the floor stood out like a Giselle in a small card board box. The spinning stopped, then a blast of colorful assortment of striking lights whirled around the room as bright and prominent, as a sea of firework shows on New Year's Eve.

The lady escorting us stopped, and swiped her pastel blue hair situated down her back behind her ear. Derek and I stood behind her, and I wasn't sure if we were the only ones that would meet today, because there were no other recruits.

"Welcome recruits," a voice over a loud speaker greeted. "We are glad you are here because there are intolerable groups threatening our security and livelihood. Overtime you will become familiarized with our procedures and expectations. Don't be alarmed. Training will be tough, but necessary for survival."

"Sky to the left please," our robotic sounding lady said. "Derek to the right, please. Physicals will be performed now."

Robes were handed to us and we were summoned to individual rooms. Derek's black belt in martial arts put him at an advantage, so he was classified under experienced and taken to another section of the facility.

I stood on the circle platform which had a plush padding that absorbed nicely underneath my bare feet, and then Derek appeared accompanied by Tadao. Derek smiled over at me and I smiled back.

"Today, we're doing something different." Both Derek and I gave each other a puzzled stare.

"Usually, I save this part of the training until the end, but I think both of you can benefit from this." Tadao gave a nod to the robotic lady, and she walked away, only to return shortly after with a white chair in hand.

"Sky, Derek, each one of you will take a seat in the chair, and Marina will give you a glass with liquid inside to drink. Once the liquid settles, your entire body will go numb and testing will begin."

"What exactly are you testing?" Derek asks.

"Tolerance," Tadao replied. "There will be five levels of electric shocks administered, mild, transitional, intense, extreme and severe. Think of this as your advance course on enduring torture."

"Sky, please take a seat in the chair."

At Marina's request I did so and wondered how much pain I could endure. My tolerance for pain was in the realm of average. A small wound or minor injury wouldn't bother me, or would it I thought, because I never had to deal with an injury, and any small scratch or scrape I might have had growing up was too trivial to compare to receiving electric shocks.

Derek had his arms crossed in front of him and appeared more concerned and nervous than I was. He was a good friend for caring, and I loved him dearly for it.

Marina placed the chair in the center of the Logue inscription, explained some of the drills and requirements, which included simulators with gun battle, combat and weaponry training, and LOGUE System Protocol Classified assignments. "But those tests will be later," she said without ever blinking once while she addressed us.

Marina gave me a small cup the size of a shot glass. There was enough liquid inside that I could finish it with one sip. It looked like water, had no smell, or flavor, but trailed down my throat like swallowing an oyster. A silver metal shaped like a bracelet snapped around my wrists and Marina stood in front of me holding a miniature notepad, then began typing something.

Nothing happened immediately and I considered if what they were testing was merely a reaction.

Then a quick jolt jumped from my body. My head dipped to the right and then to the left swiftly, but I couldn't feel anything.

Marina kept her face buried in front of the screen, while Derek watched me nervously and Tadao stood to the side with his arms behind his back.

A few more jolts jerked my body intermittently, but I felt fine, until an unexpected shockwave of discomfort vibrated through my chest with the sensation of pins pricking my arms. My body began to shudder and shiver like falling into sub zero water temperature and the pain no longer felt like sharp stings piercing through skin, it was worse.

The feeling of barbed ice absorbing into my skin came to a halt, replaced by a dynamic force surging my body through a wind towel. Darkness traveled around me like the rings around Saturn, as my head spun around in circles, then it all stopped abruptly and my body throbbed and ached with drumming pulsation like a parade of elephants tramping on my head.

A tortuous spasm of pain coursed and scraped across my abdomen. I tried to bear the persecution of being severed and shredded apart by piranha teeth ripping and tearing every piece of flesh connected to my body, and at that moment, I rather my body exploded than suffer through the experience of teeth slashing and hacking every layer of skin.

"Stop it. Stop it. Do something, you can't just let her scream like this," a voice shouted, though it sounded like it was coming from a distance.

"If you're not going to do something, I will."

"She's holding up well, a minute longer and she will make it through extreme," a voice said.

"The hell I will. Her face looks like it's about to explode."

"Sky, snap out of it," but I couldn't, I continued to scream. The warmth of someone's hands shook me back and forth, the way one would when trying to wake someone from a bad nightmare.

Everything faded and I felt as though I had been released from a bottle I was trapped inside of.

"Sky, Sky....it's alright." I could barely open my eyes and the atmosphere was dim and extremely hot.

"Are you happy now," he shouted.

"Derek, this is part of the training. It's something she and everyone must go through."

"Are you alright?" I tried even harder to open my eyes further. "Sky it's me Derek. It's alright, I'm here." And the locks around my wrist released.

End of sample

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