

Simon Sez

By Serita Stevens

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN RUSSIA - DAY

A top secret military installation lies in the midst of the Siberian forest. In Russian, the words on the building are written Biological - Chemical Weapons Storage. These buildings are heavily guarded.

Military police patrol the area with their dogs.

A military sedan drives up. The driver gets out and snaps to attention as a RUSSIAN GENERAL walks out of the facility.

The general nods. Carrying a briefcase, he gets into the car.

Guards snap to attention as the car passes through a check point and exits the compound.

INT. WAREHOUSE - SOMEWHERE IN RUSSIA- LATER THAT DAY

It's a dreary, empty building -- obviously not used for some time. The general, flanked by several bodyguards, armed with Ak-47s meet with TWO CIVILIANS. These men also have their own armed body guards. Both sides appear nervous and have obvious disdain for the other.

The tension builds as the general opens the briefcase and shows the civilians a number of vials all with the bio-hazard symbol. He indicates the men are to open their duffel bag.

It contains large dominations of U. S. bills.

The general nods and the exchanged is made.

EXT. PASKIN HOME - LOS ANGELES - BACKYARD - SAME AFTERNOON

Wearing jeans and a loose sweatshirt, her delicate looks belie her physical strength, BONNIE PASKIN, 16, aka Little Bo Peep, walks toward her back gate as a man jumps out and locks her head in a choke hold.

Wasting no time, Bonnie breaks the hold, spinning around to face him in an offensive stance.

The man, her father, COL. JEFFREY PASKIN, M.D., an epidemiologist, grins.

JEFFREY

I almost had you. You're supposed to run, not fight.

BONNIE

Dad, it's called situational awareness. Remember, I learned from the best. You're just lucky you're not talking in a high voice. Besides, why would I run from my dad?

She points to the reflection off the car sitting in the driveway.

She hugs him, laughing.

JEFFREY

Okay. All right. I give up.

BONNIE

Aw. We were just starting to have some fun.

(grins)

JEFFREY

Beating up on your old man isn't what I call fun. Later, Bo. I have to get to the lab.

BONNIE

You know I hate that name.

JEFFREY

Yeah, but you were so cute as Bo Peep.

BONNIE

Dad...I was six years old in that play.

Jeffrey smiles fondly.

JEFFREY

You have grown up but you'll always be my little Bo.

(touches her cheek)

Listen, I'll talk to Chuck. Maybe he can spend more time with you. He can teach you more of his special tricks.

BONNIE

It's not just special tricks. He's teaching me the right mind set.

JEFFREY

You know, you can compete in some of the martial arts competitions, as well.

BONNIE

Yeah, but Mom thinks a proper young lady should participate in gymnastics and ballet, not fist fights.

JEFFREY

She may be right. It's a little unusual for the father to worry more about the boy she dates than his daughter.

They both laugh as she walks toward the house and he opens his car door.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

The swinging of male hands on the rings.

Parents and other spectators sit in the bleachers as ANTONIO COLIN, 16, captain of the men's team, performs his routine. His body shines with sweat. He's a great athlete, but his mental ability leaves a bit to be desired.

MAGDALANA DEGRAFF "MAGDA," 16, a red-head bitch, does a complicated floor routine. As captain of the girl's team, she carries herself and believes she is prettier and better than everyone else.

The judges scores go up. Two nine's and three 10's.

Bonnie nervously watches the Coach. She glances at the spectators, uneasily. She rubs her hands together on the talc bar, trying to de-stress.

In the front row of the bleachers, her mother, LORI PASKIN, sits jotting down scores and taking notes. Like her daughter, Lori is petite and energetic. A former gymnast herself, she knows what it takes to compete. She is driven to see her daughter excel, where she could not.

Next to Lori is geeky SIMON BRENNER, 16, a techno whiz. Simon busily works on his netbook and gives Bonnie a thumbs up.

DREAM SEQUENCE - GYMNASIUM - SAME TIME

Bonnie executes a perfect vault and a perfect landing. The judges scores go up. Perfect 10'S. Magda, Antonio and the rest of the team run up to her cheering, putting her on their shoulders.

END SEQUENCE.

BACK TO SCENE

a WHISTLE blows and Bonnie snaps back into reality. She glances toward the Coach and takes a deep breath to calm her nerves.

Out of the corner of her eyes, she sees the signal from her coach and, cuing the judges, she takes a running leap onto the spring board, touching the horse, spinning into the air. She takes a slight step as she lands.

She quickly regains her composure, hands in the air, to the applause of the crowd.

Bonnie hurries over to her mom while she waits for her scores.

Across the room at the judge's table, they hold up, three nines and two eights.

Jeffrey appears at the entrance and rushes over to stand next to his daughter. His hand goes on her shoulder.

JEFFREY

I'm sorry I'm late, honey.

LORI

Bonnie, your landing sucked. You got to firmly plant your feet.

BONNIE

I know, Mom, but the vault just isn't my thing.

LORI

It cost you points. Jeffrey, she needs to practice more, not waste her time with that karate thing.

BONNIE

Daddy, did you see any of it?

JEFFREY

Just the last little bit, Bo.

She makes a face.

BONNIE

You mean my landing?

JEFFREY

It was hardly noticeable.

LORI

The judges noticed. It's the small details. Why can't you be more like Magda? She would never make a mistake like that.

JEFFREY

I've seen Magda make mistakes that were much worse. It could happen to anyone. The important thing is she did her best.

LORI

Her best isn't good enough.
(to Bonnie)
You need to practice more-- like Magda.

BONNIE

(rolls her eyes)
I'm not Magda.

EXT. GYMNASIUM - LATER

As the spectators are streaming out. Her COACH walks over and pats Bonnie on the arm.

COACH

You're improving. But I know you can do better. You need to practice more.

LORI

She will.

JEFFREY

Lori --

He glances at his wife.

BONNIE

Mother, get a life!

Simon steps up to Bonnie.

SIMON

(hushed tones)
You were magnificent. You should have had all 10s.

She gives him a rueful smile.

Jeffrey's phone rings. He takes it out and talks softly.

Hanging up, he turns to his wife.

JEFFREY

I've got to go back to the lab.

EXT. PASKIN HOME DEN- THAT EVENING

Lori sits, in front of a full length mirror, on a matt. She's in a yoga position, meditating, as Jeffrey enters.

The den has a treadmill and, on the rack, are weights.

JEFFREY

Honey, I'm sorry, but you knew I was in the army and this might happen.

LORI

Why you?

JEFFREY

You know, it's part of the job.

LORI

The timing sucks. Our anniversary.

JEFFREY

Honey, --

LORI

Bonnie needs your support.

JEFFREY

I am going to be in Paris, too. I'll just be there a few days ahead of you.

LORI

(sigh)

Another anniversary alone.

He comes over and puts his hands on her shoulder and leans down to kiss her.

JEFFREY

I don't have to leave for a couple of hours.

Lori looks at him through the mirror and smiles.

INT. EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE - LATER

There's a lot of activity. From the waiting room windows, one can see cargo planes being loaded.

GENERAL LEO BRENNER, mid-50s, strolls in hands clasped behind his back as he observes the details. He's a West Point grad and is military precise.

Bonnie stands with her father at the window, watching. Lori stands on the other side of Jeffrey.

BONNIE

(tears in her eyes)

Daddy, don't go.

JEFFREY
I have to, Sweetheart.

He brushes the tears from her cheek.

BONNIE
You're coming to the competition in
Paris to see me. Aren't you?

LORI
(fighting tears)
He'll try.

She glances at her mother.

BONNIE
Dad --

Jeffrey looks briefly at his wife.

JEFFREY
I wouldn't miss it.

BONNIE
You don't understand what it's like
when you're not here.

BRENNER
(irritated at the wait)
We need to get this show on the road.
We can't hold the plane.
(nods to her)
Miss Paskin.

Bonnie puts her arms around her father's neck and goes on tip
toe.

BONNIE
If anything happens, Daddy, I'll save
you.

JEFFREY
I know you will, Bo.

BRENNER
I bet you will.

She glances back at the General, irritated.

BONNIE
I will.

Jeffrey takes her hands off his neck and pushes her away.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

You promise to call every day.

INT. NATO LABS, PARIS - NEXT DAY

Wearing protective gear, Col. Jeffrey Paskin attaches his umbilical as he nods to an assistant on the outside of the isolation lab. He moves cautiously, performing a complete safety check prior to going to his lab station.

He sits down in front of an electron microscope. Adds a component to the mixture and looks at the screen.

EXT. NATO LABS, PARIS - THAT NIGHT

Jeffrey, wearing his uniform, shows his ID to the guards at the entrance as he logs out.

He walks down some steps and onto the boulevard.

INT. GYMNASIUM - THREE DAYS LATER

Bonnie works on her beam routine as her mother sits critiquing her. Simon, also watches while working with his computer.

LORI

It's your dismount. You have the same problem with the vault. Do it again!

BONNIE

(exasperated)

Mom! I'm not stupid. I.. - oh, never mind.

Bonnie attempts it once more, but it's still not good enough.

Lori stands and goes to the beam to spot her daughter, imitating the landing stance.

LORI

Like so.

The Coach comes up to them.

COACH

Too bad you can't join the team.

LORI

Twenty years and a bad knee might present a problem.

Bonnie does her landing again. It's perfect. She smiles and glances at her mother.

COACH

Keep up the good work, Paskin.

LORI

Okay this time, but you need consistency. You need to do it right every time.

The Coach shakes his head.

COACH

It will be nice for Bonnie to have both her parents there.

LORI

Yeah. For a change.

Bonnie leans on her mother's shoulder.

BONNIE

Both?

LORI

Oh, honey. I forgot to tell you. Coach asked Uncle Chuck and I to chaperone. We'll be going to Paris with you.

BONNIE

That's just great. Does Dad know? We haven't heard from him for several days.

LORI

He's probably just settling in and hasn't had time.

General Brenner strolls into the gym and sits next to his son.

BRENNER

If only you were as good at sports as you are with that computer --

He pats Simon's knee.

BRENNER (CONT'D)

You need to go home. You're on KP, remember.

Simon sighs and packs up his computer.

BONNIE

Have you heard from dad?

BRENNER

Look, honey, when we talk to him--.

LORI

Don't bother the General. He's got more things to worry about than a phone call.

Bonnie sighs and goes back toward the beam again.

LORI (CONT'D)

Don't forget, you have ballet this afternoon.

BONNIE

How could I? You're here.

BRENNER

Show some respect, young lady.

Bonnie snaps to attention, salutes.

BONNIE

Yes, Sir!

She does an about face and marches away.

INT. BRENNER'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

The office is in the administration complex attached to a Biological Research facility.

LT. ALAN CRENSHAW, the General's aide, an African American, sits at his work station. On the wall behind him is a map of the Europe, Asia and Africa. Red pins, and a single yellow pin, sticks out in a cluster near the Congo.

Brenner walks toward him. He glances at the map, questioningly.

CRENSHAW

Col. Paskin's still missing. It's been two days, Sir. His kid's relentless. She called again twice this morning.

BRENNER

Just shine her on and keep her off my back.

CRENSHAW

I'm sure he's all right. Maybe he just wanted a couple of days in Paris.

BRENNER

That's not like him. Get intel to check it out. If something has happened to him, it's going to hit the fan. Just make sure it's not pointed my way.

CRENSHAW

Yes, sir.
(hands him a page)
Here's the answer to our query on Paskin's cell phone usage.

Brenner takes the page from his aide and reads it, then frowns.

BRENNER

Stay on it. If it does hit the fan, I'd damn well better know how to spin this. He's our only link to the virus.

INT. GYMNASIUM - LATER THAT SAME DAY

The gym is empty except for SIMON sitting on the bleachers. He's watching Bonnie as she practices. She shakes her head as she lands.

He holds up a piece of notebook paper with a 10 on it.

BONNIE

I screwed it up again. I'm not good enough to be on the team.

SIMON

Course you are.

BONNIE

(laughs)
That's because you have a crush on me.

SIMON

Do not.

BONNIE

Do, too.

SIMON

(flushes)
Not. Go on. Let's get back to work.

BONNIE

I've got to get it right.

SIMON

Better be soon. You're going to Paris.

BONNIE
You sounding like my mother.

She swings a karate kick, just missing his head by inches. He backs away.

SIMON
You almost --

BONNIE
Grow up. If I wanted to, I could have kicked your head halfway across the gym.

Bonnie sighs and takes a running jump and completes a double flip, still missing her landing.

SIMON
That's a little better.

She moves her hands rapidly, karate style, followed by an artful high turning kick with her right leg. This time three or four feet away.

She does a cartwheel over to him and stops inches from his face. He flushes as she kisses him on the cheek.

BONNIE
See. You do have a crush on me.

He makes a face.

EXT. GYMNASIUM - THAT EVENING

The kids walk home.

BONNIE
I wish my dad was here. He's on my side.

SIMON
I wish I had a mom to help my father understand me. I know she works you hard, but deep down, she's proud of you...and you love each other.

BONNIE
Yeah... Why's your dad so strict?

SIMON
He thinks it will make me the soldier that I'll never be.

BONNIE
Tell him how you feel.

SIMON
I don't want to hurt him.

BONNIE
(shrugs)
You're afraid of him.

Simon shrugs and stares out at the horizon.

SIMON
One day, he'll understand that a
computer in the right hands can win
more battles than a gun.

Bonnie puts her hand in his.

BONNIE
Come on. You promised you'd help me
with my algebra.

She grabs her backpack and slings it over her shoulder.

Simon takes it from her and slings it over his.

INT. PASKIN HOME - SHORT TIME LATER

Bonnie opens the door with Simon behind her.

BONNIE
Mom --?

LORI (O.S.)
In here, honey. How'd practice go?

BONNIE
Fine.
(under her breath)
You weren't there.