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BRIDGETT



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Bridgett – Part One (Almost Series Bonus)

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ROCK YOUR
WORLD
PROMOTIONS

Experiment 318: Gone Rogue

S.H.A.Y.

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Bridgett

PART ONE

Many Years before Shay was born...

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Bridgett's Note to Readers

Things were different back then. For one, there were many S.H.A.Y.s and E.R.I.C.s working together in what we called the “Rec Room”. It was made of white, painted steel and mirrored impact glass. We figured, the panes, were observation areas for the Scientists who studied us.

When I was still in my developmental phase, we had two intelligent S.H.A.Y.s, a hybrid hunter, three emotional S.H.A.Y.s, who loved to call group meetings to “discuss” things, and me—an active S.H.A.Y. We also had a few duds, those who were not allowed to play with us. They were not given an O.H.P or their own living quarters. Instead of being free to roam the facility, we were told that they were forced to clean and take care of the chores.

I didn't care for the emos or the brains. Whenever you were around the crybabies, your depression levels skyrocketed, listening to what they felt was wrong with the world. And if you ran into a brain, pray they wouldn't try to speak. Everything that came out of their mouths made little sense. “In theory,” was their favorite opening line. The

second: “I’ve tested my hypothesis; would you like to see the results?”

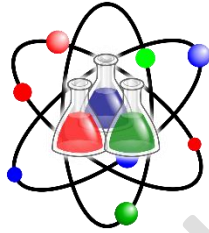
My favorite S.H.A.Y. was Isabella, the hybrid hunter. She was tall and slender with short, blonde hair that lay flat at her shoulders, and eyes that changed colors. They could be anywhere from blue, to hazel, even yellow: depending on if she was dormant, undecided or preying upon someone or something.

Isabella could run as fast as a Cheetah, and her sensory skills superseded any of the others. The emos and the brains feared her. She was kind to the duds, though, and me—the only stupid S.H.A.Y. with military skills. I’d been a toss-up, not even receiving a P.O.P for six months before my sponsors decided to continue funding me.

To truly understand me, you have to meet me on the day I learned the truth about us. Bear with me, please, as I was just five...

Log 1,001

Subject 59



“Today, I’m five. My sponsors feel that I may or may not be advantageous to the program. They claim my intellect is average, but due to my militant skills, they are going to collect votes. It is their wish to save me from becoming one of the trashed.

P.O.P. ran statistics and says my probability for success is 40/60. I hate my P.O.P. Subject 31 has a fun program who takes her daily logs and so does two of the other S.H.A.Y.s, but I’m stuck with Mr. Cranky Pants. He does not make jokes or try to console me as do the other P.O.P.s.”

“Please refrain from complaining during your logs,” my P.O.P. said. His voice trickled down from the center console where his program was kept. His holographic image appeared beside me. He was tall and dark skinned with a shaved head. “59, do you comprehend why I give such strict guidance to you?”

“No, I don’t.” I crossed my arms and pouted. “It’s not fair—”

Log Terminated.

P.O.P. shut down my transmission and sat next to me. I could see through his image and tried to look past his eyes. They bore straight through me as if he were human.

He spoke in a whisper, probably to not wake my roommates, “59, some of your sponsors do not wish to maintain you. Do you understand what that means?”

I sighed, rolling my eyes. “Yes. I’ll never see you or my O.H.P. again.”

“Correct. So, please conduct yourself in a respectful manner.”

“Won’t you be happy? You’ll get to train a new S.H.A.Y. that isn’t such a flop and I’ll be sent to the bunkers to become slave labor with all the other duds.”

P.O.P. disappeared. “I have failed you, 59. I was too lax with your training.”

“If my mother were here, she’d stop them. Real parents do everything they can to save their children.”

I could not see him, but his voice came at me from every speaker surrounding my bunkbed. “Your mother is a machine, too. When will you understand this? Your sponsors

are human. Your parents are machines. How do you not comprehend such a simplistic observation?”

“Look who’s mad at me again!” I grabbed my teddy bear and crawled off my bed. He was old and missing an eye. I didn’t care, he was mine.

My pigtails swished about me as I ran to the dormer’s exit. I shared a room with three other S.H.A.Y.s. They were in their bunkbeds, sound asleep, while I was up fighting with my stupid P.O.P.

“I do not emote, 59. Learn to control your emotions and refrain from whatever plan you’ve devised.”

I ran into the hallway. P.O.P. followed, his image faded in and out.

“I’m going to prove it to you, P.O.P. Just you wait and see.” I pressed the elevator button. It dinged, allowing me access. “I’ll find my A.M.I.E. and she will save me from the sponsors.”

“Do not go up into the robotics lab!” His voice rose and he let out an electronic whimper. “59! Go to your room! That is a direct order!”

I stepped into the elevator and his image followed. “59,” he said. “Why are you behaving in such a rebellious manner? This is the type of stunt that will have you term—”

“What?”

“Ignore my last response. Please return to your living quarters. You are disobeying house rules and the security cameras stream live feeds to your sponsors.”

“I don’t care,” I said, pressing the button to the robotics lab. “I’m supposed to be able to do whatever I want in my developmental phase and they haven’t voted yet, so I’m still free to do as I wish.”

“Stubborn and illogical,” he said. “That is what your sponsors wrote in your report. You’ve only one supporter at this time; a former head of security for government intelligence. You need to show him how obedient you can be so that he does not lose interest in saving you.”

“Oh, hush up, P.O.P. I will not be here much longer. My A.M.I.E. is going to save me from everyone, including you.”

Ding.

The doors opened onto a long corridor of rooms. “I cannot follow you in here,” he said.

“Good.”

“59!”

The elevator closed, leaving me alone in the hallway. The walls were made of metal and I could hear the late night scientists typing away on various devices inside their offices. Most doors were ajar, while others, closed.

The A.M.I.E.s were in the rooms numbered along the first two halls closest to me. I took slow steps past each A.M.I.E.

Some of the doors were open, as scientists ran diagnostics. In the center of the first A.M.I.E program, there was a glass containment and it held—a girl.

I rushed past room 200 and closed my eyes. I couldn't believe my eyes. I saw a man in a doctor's coat, in room 206, shove Subject 56 into a glass containment.

Yesterday, on her sixth birthday, 56 had been voted out as a dud. Why was she being put into a glass box? Rumors in the rec room were that anyone who was not given an O.H.P. were usually considered duds and didn't last past ten years as a S.H.A.Y.

I stood outside the door in my nightgown, holding my teddy bear close. What were they doing to 56?

"Stop it!" 56 cried. "I don't want to go in that box. I'm supposed to go down below and be child labor."

"That's a lie we tell your kind," the Doctor said. "You're either terminated or contained. Be grateful your DNA is suitable for phase four."

56's eyes widened. "What's that mean?"

He shoved her inside, closing the door. Steam filled the container and he let out a deep breath. "Pray you never make it long enough to find out."

I scurried past the room, dropping my bear. I reached back for it, tugging it along the floor as I crossed the hall to room 217. That was my A.M.I.E. She had to save me from becoming a dud. I didn't want to be put in a box or *terminated*. Was that why my P.O.P. ordered me to return to my room? Did he not want me to see what would happen to me? Another horrible thought raced through my mind. If they would kill me, what would they do to my O.H.P.?

My heart pounded as I rapped my fist against 217. "Amie?" I could barely speak. "Mother? I need your help."

Locks opened, one by one, and then the door swished open.

"Enter 59."

I took a deep breath, stepping into Amie's room. It was a white cube with a motherboard inside each wall. When Amie spoke, lights flickered and ran in patterns along the walls. There was a fetus growing in one area of the room—another S.H.A.Y., and she had a girl inside her glass box too.

"Why do you have that girl in there?" I asked.

"I am allowed to save one S.H.A.Y. at a time from termination."

"So I came here for nothing?" I rubbed the tears from my eyes. "I'm going to be classified a dud tomorrow and the

Doctor just said they lied about the bunker below. I'm gonna be killed."

"I will not allow your termination, Bridgett."

I glanced up. "Bridgett?"

Along the white walls, lights formed the shape of a smile.

"It is the name I gave you at birth. You are my Bridgett."

"I like that a lot better than 59."

"Your sponsors will not vote against you tomorrow."

"How do you know?"

"Because I am going to tell you what to do in order to keep them happy," she answered. "But first, we must close the door."

I nodded, locking several bolts. "Okay, tell me."

"The sponsors want military projects made. They love the intelligent S.H.A.Y. because what they design is modified for weaponry. Show that you are a soldier, go out to the islands and train—take your E.R.I.C. with you. Come back with great ideas that benefit war."

"How will I get to the islands? They are so far away."

"The E.R.I.C. will show you. He knows the way and will keep you safe by staying out of areas with Satellite technology."

"My E.R.I.C.? Do you mean Josh?"

"Yes."

“But he shoots his buggers at me,” I complained. “And farts in my face.”

“He will never say no to helping you.”

“Why not?”

“He’s been reprogrammed.”

Fists pounded on the door. “59! What are you doing in there?” Ginny, my O.H.P. shouted. “The Scientists are looking all over for you.”

“I suggest you listen to your O.H.P.,” Amie said. “And when you return, tell me all about your adventures.”

“See, my P.O.P. was wrong,” I said.

“About?”

“You. He said that you are a machine and would not try to save me.”

“When you return from the islands, don’t forget to tell your sponsors about your ideas on weaponry. You must learn how to fight like a soldier. They will love to see that.”

“Good-bye, Amie.”

“Good-bye, my Bridgett.”

I glanced back once more to the girl inside the box. Her fists pounded upon the glass. She shook her head at me and mouthed the word “no.”

What did she mean by “no”?

When I opened the door, Ginny grabbed me up in her arms, tears streaming down her cheeks. “What have you done, child?”

“I wanted to meet my Mom before they killed me,” I said.

“Nonsense, no one is going to die. Come with me. Josh is waiting in the elevator.” She carried me, taking quick steps past a conference room. Several men sat at the round table, some held their hands up, while others pointed their thumbs down. Subject 48 stood at the head of the table with tears streaming down her face. “You never should have come up here,” Ginny whispered. “It’s a dangerous floor.”

Josh stood in the elevator, holding the button so that the doors stayed ajar. “Hurry up,” he said. “They’re coming.” His hair stood up in spikes and his nose scrunched when he saw me. “Gross, we came to save 59?”

Ginny groaned. “Seriously, Joshua, behave.”

“It’s 59, though. She acts like a boy and beats all the other E.R.I.C.s on the competition field.”

“I hate you more.” I stuck my tongue out and he smashed his hand against it.

Ginny set me onto the floor. “Stop it, the both of you.” She turned her attention to me. “I can’t have you misbehaving right now, 59. You’re up for voting tomorrow, remember?”

“Yes,” I said, holding her hand. Josh took the other, peering at me behind her back. He made a face and I ignored him. “I’m going to take Josh on a trip to the Lone Keys tonight.”

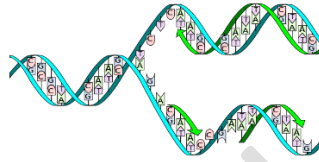
“I ain’t going anywhere with you!”

“But I *need* you,” I said.

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Log 1,002

“I Hate Josh”



“I hate Josh. He thinks because he’s an E.R.I.C. that he’s all superior or something and that he knows all.” I spoke into P.O.P.’s logging software. His hologram stood over me and shook his head. “I asked him to escape with me and he refused. What’s the deal? Then, when I told him I could do it on my own—he—he laughed. He laughed at me!”

“Really, 59, your emotional status is that of your bunkmate,” my P.O.P. said.

“I am nothing like that emo,” I sneered. “Give me by knapsack. Somehow, my mother was wrong. The E.R.I.C. is capable of saying no to me.”

“Please go to bed. You are stirring the others. All P.O.P.s are active due to your obnoxiously, loud activity.”

“Be happy,” I said, filling necessities into my bag. “You get a nice break from me for a while.” I rolled my eyes, shaking my pigtails. “It’s a dream come true for you!”

He did not laugh. Instead, P.O.P. grew even more bossy than normal. “Go to sleep and stop this at once. I do not care to hear about your whimsical ideas as to what you think I feel. I am a program and do not emote.”

“You hate me,” I cried, rubbing tears from my cheeks. “Goodbye, program. Please go into hibernation mode.”

“59!” He shouted, his electronic voice so high pitched, it rang inside my ears.

I walked down the hall. With tears streaming down my chin, I pressed the elevator button repeatedly. Leaving home was scary and how would I sleep all by myself outside where there were snakes?

Ding.

The elevator doors opened and I stepped inside, placing my bag on the floor. I pressed the rooftop button. Why didn’t anyone love me? Wasn’t I important, too? My P.O.P. was mean to me and Ginny loved Josh way more than me.

Josh.

He wasn’t the best E.R.I.C. program. 31’s E.R.I.C. loved her and would do anything for her. The emo’s, now their E.R.I.C.s were total romantics, bringing them flowers and opening doors for them—not mine; he played pranks on me and stuck his spit encased finger in my ear canals.

Ding.

The doors opened onto the roof and I picked up my things, heading for the west edge wall. I looked down at the waves crashing into the sides of the tower. My heart pounded against my ribcage. I was really high up.

“It’s about time you got here,” Josh said. I glanced behind me. He sat on the wall opposite me with his foot dangling. “That side is too rough for landing. We’re going this way.”

My hands went to my hips and I scrunched my nose. “I thought you said you’d never help me?”

“Well, I changed my mind,” he said. “Hurry up and get over here before I change it again.”

I ran forward, my bag swaying side to side. My shoes squeaked, still wet from his prank earlier. He’d tossed a bucket of water over my head.

I shouted, “Don’t leave without me!”

Josh hoisted me up onto the wall. I stood beside him, smiling at his freckled skin. “You’d better keep up,” he said. “If not, you’ll get lost under the waves.”

“I can do it, I swear. I’m an active S.H.A.Y., remember?”

“Okay, 59,” he said, arching into the diver’s position.

“It’s Bridgett. My A.M.I.E. named me because I’m special and she loves me.”

“Programs do not emote,” he said, grabbing my arm just before diving off the building.

I screamed, my legs flailing as we crashed into the waters below. The impact stung and I gritted my teeth, trying my best not to cry.

“Why are you helping me?” I could barely get the words out, with my teeth chattering from the cold.

Josh tugged me, grabbing onto driftwood. He hoisted me up and then himself. He bent forward, using his hands like paddles on an oar.

“Why, are you doing this?”

He shrugged. “I can’t say no to helping you, even though I hate you.”

I giggled. “My A.M.I.E. was right!”

“What?”

“Nothing,” I lied. “We need to condition and design ideas for military combat.”

“You want to start boot camp?”

“I want to survive,” I answered.

I glanced back at the disappearing Research center. I narrowed my eyes and whispered, “My sponsors won’t vote me out.”

...To Be Continued.

Part Two will be given to those the release week of
E.R.I.C. book two in the ALMOST Series.

September 6th 2016

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