

Breakpoint – Part Two

a Patreon-exclusive work

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Part Two

Rin

Putting Sally in the ground was something that Rin had expected she'd be doing eventually since the day she'd gotten here. While the woman may have been an accomplished operative before arriving on Honeywell Island, there was something about this place that could rattle anybody's cage, and Sally had always seemed like she'd been under pressure.

The woman had been around a few months longer than Rin had, but she'd never seemed to find stable footing, always seeming jumpy and on edge. It had been enough that Rin had actually gone and followed Sally around a couple of times, hoping she might catch her engaged in some obvious transfer of information, but somehow she was sending her information up the ladder some way that Rin hadn't been able to spot, or just at times when Rin wasn't looking.

Tex cut Sally's lifeless body down as it slumped to the ground atop of the pool of blood and feces beneath it. There was no dignity for the dead, and the residents of Honeywell Island saw corpses too often to give them any particular respect. Rin suspected she'd been cut into while she was still alive and then strung up and hung. Nasty way to go.

They loaded the body on top of a plastic tarp on the back of one of the carts and drove towards the edge of town where a graveyard had been constructed, although rarely did people get a tombstone or grave marker. Typically they were just put into a hole in the ground and covered in dirt. No ceremony, no words to mark their passing, just the disposal of someone who used to have a name.

Tex and Rin took turns digging the grave, wanting to make it deep, but not so deep that it would take up too much of their time. The graveyard portion of the island was under enough heavy foliage that the rain mostly didn't get in, although they were still slinging as much mud as they were dirt, it felt like. But it was better than letting the body sit out until morning.

It wasn't the first grave Rin had dug on Honeywell, and she fully anticipated it wouldn't be the last. There had been talk about other ways to dispose of bodies – taking the boat out and tossing them out at sea, but that always ran the risk of the body washing up ashore again at some point, something that Tex had told her had happened once, and nobody had wanted a repeat of that. The smell of it still haunted Vin, the man who'd found it.

Once the hole was big enough, they threw Sally's body into it, and started scooping the dirt back on top, covering her up as quickly as they could. “You know her well?” Rin asked Tex. Every conversation on Honeywell Island was always a bit of a dance, two people interrogating the other at least a little bit, trying to gain a foothold of information that they hadn't had before.

“A little bit, but not all that much,” Tex sighed, starting to pat down the dirt, making sure it was packed good and solid atop the corpse. “Like I said, I always thought she was an Employee, but she never struck me as very good at getting info out of people. Too direct, too much to the point, never enough patience or subtlety.”

“Are *you* an Employee, Tex?” Rin asked genuinely. “Are you secretly *Management*? It would explain how you got your own bar and how you seem to have your own functioning crew here, in a place where everyone is all for themselves all the time.”

“Don't I wish,” Tex laughed. “Nah, I'm just the guy who sensed an opening when he got here. Place needed a little more structure, a little more organization. And whoever it is that's *really* running things, seems they don't mind how I keep myself busy. No warnings, no threats, nobody showing up in the middle of the night to string me up or run me down. All any of us can hope for, I guess.”

“Fucking odd, not knowing who's Management, Employee or Guest here,” Rin said. “Month

and change into it and I'm *still* not bloody used to it.” She liked to throw in odd slang bits from all over the world, knowing it would only add to the mystery of her backstory. The less anyone reliably knew about her, the safer her place on Honeywell Island likely was. She felt like she'd led people into thinking she was from Hong Kong for the first few weeks after her arrival before ditching most of the accent and shifting into something more eastern European. This week she'd been leaning into local London flavor, and the novelty of it was starting to wear a little thin.

“Like I told you on day one, Rin,” Tex said, smoothing the top of the grave over a bit. “Just assume everyone you meet is out to try and get something from you. Trust no one, believe nothing, and other than that, have fun. For a long time, I've suspected this is eventually going to become some spy training school or something, and that we're just the first runthroughs on breaking potential recruits, making sure those Employees among us know how to extract secrets from anyone they meet.”

“Two years is a long time to be having a 'test run' for a school, Tex.”

The two of them checked their handiwork, making sure the body was fully covered, then headed back over towards the cart, climbing into it. “There's a mistake right there,” he said, switching the cart into the on position once more.

“What's that?” she asked, as he started to bring the cart back onto the path that led to Tex's bar.

“The only reason you think I've been here two years is because I *told* you I've been here two years,” he said smugly. “I'm just as capable of lying as anyone else is. I could've gotten here literally just a few days before you did.”

“Except that you'd have to get *everyone* else's stories to line up with yours, Tex, and that's way too many false stories to keep juggling all at once,” Rin said with a certain smugness. “Beyond that, you have work logs dating back over eighteen months, so either you wasted several hours building a paper trail that I can, and have by the way, asked other people about, or you've really been here around two years time, and you're fucking with me because you think you're being clever when really, you're not, at all.”

Tex laughed slapping his knee with one hand. “Tarnation, ya done got me there, I suppose. Would've been far too much work to fake alla that, and then get everyone to memorize their bits so you could check against it. Maybe I ought to burn the old work logs.”

“If you're gonna try pulling that story on anyone else, you'd better,” she grinned. “Otherwise you're just gonna keep getting caught with your hand in the cookie jar.”

“Yeah, maybe I'll retire that one particular gag,” he said. “I know the idea of having anything down in paper runs contrary to our general line of work, but it makes it feel like at least there's *some* record of what's gone down here. Who's been here, who's died or left... a record of some kind, beyond whatever the Evil Eyes have recorded for posterity's sake.”

The endless number of hidden and concealed cameras were called 'the Evil Eyes' by many people on the island. Every so often, a newcomer would try and tamper with them or track them, and it never ended well for those people.

“For all we know,” Rin said, “this could be a test pilot for some new reality TV show, like 'Love Island' or 'The Bachelor' or some such.”

Tex brought the cart to a stop back in front of his bar, moving to plug it back in, giving the machine a chance to recharge some overnight. “I can't imagine any production company being okay with the number of bodies we've accumulated over here,” he said, as he walked back inside of the bar with her.

“Audiences are getting pretty bloodthirsty these days,” Rin said, moving over to sit in front of the bar as Tex slipped behind it, taking over for a Latino man who called himself Carlos, but was definitely trying to hide an Argentinian accent. “And you remember that old movie, 'The Running Man'? This could be like that. There could be some audience of rich folks funding this whole thing. Maybe we've even got nicknames like Fireball and Sub-Zero!”

“Maaaybe you're letting your imagination run a little too wild,” Tex laughed, pouring her a shot

of Jameson. "Here, on me, for helping me take care of the body."

"It's *always* on you, Tex," she chuckled. "Nobody pays for anything around here."

"Sure, but I didn't *have* to give you the *good* stuff," he said, grabbing a pad of paper and a pencil. It was just second nature for Rin at this point to be reading what he was writing upside down, but it was only what was expected – Sally's death notice.

If a body was found or a person had gone missing for more than, say, four or five days, a notice was filed with the central office, so that the housing could be marked as unoccupied and other people could move into the space. Also, it provided at least a little bit of closure as to when someone was gone. As far as Rin knew, nobody Tex had ever sent a death notice for had ever reappeared, but Tex himself admitted that some half of the time he filed one, the possibility was still there.

"Anybody have a list of all the names of the people on the island?" Rin asked him, as Tex folded up the paper, grabbing one of the pill containers from the rack beside the bar.

"Have I not been mentioning that lately? Sheee-it," Tex groaned. "Yeah, you can just drop a note for central and they'll shoot you back a handful of sheets with the most recent phonebook, although it's just names and location of residence. Nothing all that juicy." He opened the container and pushed the sheet of paper into it before closing it up once more, making his way over to the pair of pneumatic tube pipes that ran to the bar itself. Tex opened the slot, put the container into it, then closed the slot once more, and moments later the pill gave a satisfying 'fwoomp' sound as it went rushing downwards, making its way across town over to central processing. "Still, I guess if you wanted to know the name of everyone here on Honeywell, it wouldn't be a bad place to start."

"I'll make a point to file a request for one when I get back," Rin said. "Anyway, it's well past late. I should head home and get some sleep."

"Less than an hour ago you were putting a fresh corpse in the ground and now you're already relaxed enough for bed?" Tex shuddered. "I'll be up at least a few more hours, trying to shake the image of poor Sally strung up like that."

"After a while, you sort of detune from dealing with bodies, Tex, and you realize that after they're dead, there's nothing special or important about what's left behind, just a body," she said, walking towards the door, heading out of the bar.

Lots of people on Honeywell got an early start and went to bed early, to take advantage of the daylight, but Rin had been running counter to that for the past few weeks. At night, it could be harder to see and get around, but there were less people to worry about when she was exploring the island, which was what she'd been doing for at least a dozen nights.

The island itself was large, meaning she'd been forced to do her recon a bit at a time, never venturing too far from the explored areas, although as it got closer to dawn, she would push it, simply because she could always just get to high ground and figure out where she needed to head back.

Whatever the Soviets had been doing on this island during World War II, they'd certainly been committed to it, with quite the assortment of buildings all over the place. She hadn't explored the island fully, but had so far counted over forty structures. Several residences, but also more than a couple of labs, and at least a couple of what had been weapons depots at one point. There was also what seemed like a helicopter landing spot, although it had grown over heavily, with no signs of use in years, maybe even decades.

It was the cameras that drove Rin crazy, simply because there were so many of them, and attempting to cover or prevent them in most places would result in punishment or repercussions, although she'd covered the ones she'd found in her apartment, and those it seemed like were okay to cover, or at least weren't going to bring down any sort of judgment upon them. She was willing to put up with a lot of shit, but if she didn't have to endure people watching her while she showered, she wasn't going to.

Tonight, however, she was going to go inspect the infamous steel door everyone had talked about since she'd arrived. It was the one universal mystery that seemed to bother just about everyone

when they started exploring the island, and when she arrived at it, it was relatively easy to understand why it had everyone so perplexed.

To get up to it involved a good twenty minute hike up the side of a mountain or dormant volcano, it was hard to tell the difference. The door wasn't concealed – far from it. There was a well-trod path leading up to it, nothing paved, but something that saw regular foot traffic, or at least had at one point or another.

The mountain wall had a steel frame basically built into it, and it looked almost like the stone had been melted or liquefied around the frame until there was no purchase point to try and jam a chisel or a wedge into – just the slightly recessed heavy, bulky door, with no handle or mechanism on the outside of it. Based on the shape of the door, it had to swing inwards, the hinges on the inside designed to keep the door in place when it wasn't locked, which, if people were to be believed, was never.

But Rin wasn't quite so sure.

While the door was a foot or so above the ground, there were still signs of muck and dirt around the lower part of it, but the place where the mud should've been one solid unbroken piece had a slightly visible split in it, showing that the door had been opened at some point over the last few hours even, otherwise the mud would've just been one solid piece still.

She wasn't especially surprised by that, as the camera feeds clearly had to go *somewhere* and nowhere else on the island seemed like a great place for it, unless there were subterranean bunkers or something hidden in some of the structures, something that seemed unlikely but still wasn't *so* unlikely that she felt safe in ruling them out.

The door had been weatherproofed several times, as if the last thing anyone wanted was the constant exposure to rain and wind to wear it away, and she even noticed that the area of the mountain around the door had several plants that looked younger than expected, maybe transplants or things that had been added at some point to give the metal door some base protection from the elements.

As for the steel of the door itself, it was thick, ungodly heavy, like it was almost a blast shield door, or something designed for a nuclear fallout shelter. She wished Mick was here already, because demolitions was really his specialty, but until then she tried to remember some of the lessons he had reinforced in her over the years, and the number one rule of demolitions was to look for the weakest point of whatever it was you were attempting to blow up.

She was deathly afraid that when he finally got here, Mick would tell her the weak point was the mountain itself.

Rin had used a heavy-duty flashlight to get around, and she flipped it over and tapped the base of it against the steel door, a quiet gong-like sound resonating, telling her that it was indeed a door of a thickness that could only be summarized as 'No, *YOU* Fuck Off' thickness.

She flipped the flashlight back around again, and started using the bright light to sweep around the mountain outside of the door, and a few feet above the door, there was a slight reflection for a moment, something that Rin suspected was an inset protected camera pointed straight down at the door itself, so whoever was inside could have a look at whoever was standing at the door.

Maybe nobody was watching.

Maybe somebody was.

She flipped the camera off, just in case. She had a reputation to uphold.

The trip back down the mountain was a little more challenging than the trip up, made slick by the rain which had muddied up much of the trail, but to Rin, it actually made it safer, letting her get more purchase by sinking her feet in deeper.

When she got back toward the central city area of Honeywell, she stopped and took a moment to wash off her boots and pants, wringing the fabric out, making sure she wasn't tracking mud anywhere. Most of the people didn't seem to care one way or another, but Rin had made a point of making sure she wasn't leaving easy to follow tracks in her wake.

Despite it being only a few hours from morning and nearly no one being awake, the haunting

ghostly glow of neon still kept the area mostly lit with a sort of haunting presence. When she'd first arrived, she'd expected there to be a flurry of activity at night, and while there would sometimes be a couple of people milling around, poking their head into places while the majority of the island's residents slept, it wasn't something they commonly did. It was more the sort of thing new arrivals did on their first few days on the island before coming to the common consensus that moving around during the day time was both easier and more enjoyable.

There were still a handful of stops she wanted to make before returning to her quarters and packing it in. The first was Sally's apartment, to see if whoever it was she'd been banging earlier in the night was still there. She tested her boots on the concrete first, making sure there weren't still mud flakes shaking off of them like fleas, and when she was satisfied she could traverse the stairs without leaving a trail behind her, she hiked her way up to the third floor and slowly pushed open the door of unit four with one hand while drawing her knife from its sheath, holding it blade down in her grip, in case she was expecting trouble.

What she found was even more confusing.

The lights were on, and there stood Len, pants on but no shirt, casually going through whatever Sally had left behind, not even looking over his shoulder to see her coming into the place. "Heya Rin," he said to her. "Saw you cleaning your boots by the stairs, so I'm assuming that's you, and not the goons who were here earlier."

"Weren't *you* the one who taught *me* never to assume anything?" she said, tucking her knife away once more. "Didn't you say it would get me killed?"

He turned to look over his shoulder with a sly smile, shrugging a little. "I also told you that no rule applied to *everything*, so at some point you have to learn to trust your judgment." He stopped his search and walked over to give her a hug. "How long you been here, Rummy, and how much did you retain?"

"About a month and not nearly enough," she sighed, patting him on the back before they broke the hug. "I'd say I've got maybe 50-60% of what should be there rattling around upstairs. Like I remember that when you call me Rummy, I usually call you Whiskey in return, but I can't remember where that's from."

"Our drinking habits," he said. "I think I got lucky. Feels like I've got most of it up there still, although there are big chunks missing. Call it 80%?"

"Weird question to ask, top, but you have any idea what you're missing?"

He bounced his eyebrows a moment. "It's like there are weird spots just blanked out when I try and remember things. Like I can remember my favorite color is orange, but not what my favorite food is. And what's the tactical use of taking something like that from me, right?"

"It's an inaccurate process, top," she told him. "Some people on the island claim to have almost all of it still up there, but there's also some others who are barely holding it together, considering how much they lost."

"We shouldn't stay here too long," he said. "Sally's likely to come back any minute now."

Rin frowned, looking away from him for a moment. "No, she's not, boss."

He stopped mid search, drawing in a deep breath before letting out, sounding disappointed, with himself or Sally, Rin couldn't quite be certain. "Dead, I'm guessing?"

"Yeah, someone hung her from one of the lampposts a few hours back. Carved an F into her chest. Me and Tex buried her over in the graveyard."

He shook his head. "I should've known when she slipped out after she thought I was asleep that it wouldn't end well. She was trying to press me for information, about myself, who I am, where I came from, and I could've, well, I guess I could've given her a little bit more than I did, but how much would she have needed to buy her way out of whatever hole she was in?"

"C'mon, Len, you know better than to go down that rabbit hole," she told him. "People make their own decisions and walk their own paths, so don't go around bearing crosses that haven't got your

name on them.”

“Who gave you such shitty advice?” he laughed darkly.

“I do believe it was you, top.”

“Then I'd better learn to keep my mouth shut more often.”

“You know you don't believe that, boss.”

“Yeah, I know I don't,” he said, grabbing his shirt to pull it on. “But maybe I should. How's your recon going?”

“How do you know I've been doing any?”

“Because it's what *I* would've done if I had gotten here first?”

“Fair,” she smiled. “Haven't seen the whole island because it's bigger than we anticipated it would be. I think they must have moles in the major satellite companies, doing everything they can to keep it off the maps, because while I've got a rough idea of where we are, it might as well be the Moon for as far off normal shipping lanes and flight paths as we are.”

“So where's it put us?”

“Best guess? If you imagine us as a third point on a triangle with Bora Bora forming one corner and Easter Island forming the second, we're somewhere deep in the South Pacific, way the fuck away from everyone and everything.”

“How big are we in comparison?”

“Maybe a third to half the size of Easter Island, so 15-30 square miles, all said and done? Probably closer to 15, but making an actual map of this place is a goddamn nightmare.”

He tilted his head. “Why's that?”

“Compasses don't work, there's loads of jungle wildlife, some of which doesn't make *any* goddamn sense...”

He raised a hand to stop her. “Okay, first, we should get out of here, but let's go through both of those points one at a time while we walk.” They both took a quick sweep of the place, being sure that nothing useful or informational was being left behind, then headed out of the apartment, moving down the stairs. “What do you mean 'compasses don't work'?”

“There's some sort of local electromagnetic field that screws up compasses, so no matter where you are on the island, a compass thinks 'north' is the mountain near the center of the island,” she said as they started walking away from the building. “Hell, it might actually *be* the center of the island, but I can't be entirely certain. Four or five people have made their own maps, and nobody's map quite lines up with anyone else's.”

“That's good information to have, though,” he said. “Weird magnetic center for the island. Now, tell me about the wildlife.”

“So there's the kinds of things you would expect – wild boars, monkeys, birds, all that sort of thing, although there's also some stuff that doesn't make any sense at all. We've seen a Bengal tiger at least a couple of times, and if stories are to be believed, there's a hippopotamus that lives in the raised mini lake along the far side of the mountain.”

“A hippo?” Len said, stopping in his walk. “Sounds like a ghost story to me.”

“I've been by the lake, and while I didn't see anything, I also didn't want to stick around too long, because I saw the tiger drinking on the other side of the lake when I was there,” she said. “And with no guns, hunting a tiger isn't exactly an easy task. A couple of people have been trying to make bows and arrows to hunt it down, but that's gone about as well as expected.”

“Any luck finding weapons left behind?”

“If there were any, I'm certain they've been picked clean and either used or disposed of,” she told him as they started to walk again. “Tex's story mostly holds, and despite how he sort of organizes a lot of the daily chores around here, I'm mostly certain he's not Management or an Employee, but an actual Guest just trying to make the most of his situation.”

“You recognize any of our fellow inhabitants? More importantly, anyone recognize you?”

Rin shook her head. “Nobody's recognized me, although there's certainly someone who *should* that *isn't*. Caulfield's here.”

That made Len stop walking again. “How certain are you that he doesn't recognize you?”

“He *hit* on me.”

He continued walking. “Yeah, I'd say *that's* a pretty good sign that he doesn't know who you are. And you've had a whole month here with him and haven't done anything? I can't tell if I'm impressed by your restraint or disappointed in your lack of initiative.”

“I didn't want to go around dropping bodies left and right until more of us were here,” she sighed. “And I *really* didn't want to be the first one here.”

“Well, you were, so there's no point in dwelling on what you wanted,” he said as they reached his building. “You've got a month's worth of information I'm going to need to glean from you as quickly as I can, so maybe we'll need to keep meeting up nights for a bit.”

“We could try and play the couple card,” she said to him. “If I was in your bed, I could brief you all night long.” She'd never had any interest in Len beyond professional, and Len had made it abundantly clear that none of the team should shit where they eat, so Rin had kept her gaze off both Mick and Harry, not that either of them had shown much interest in her either.

“And then neither of us is out gathering data, and using our best assets.”

“You almost sound like you're whoring me out,” she laughed.

“*Us*,” he corrected. “I sound like I'm whoring *us* out. Because I am. You know as well as I do that we use our sexuality like any other weapon.”

“Hopefully I don't turn out to be the black widow that you are,” she teased. “First person you fuck on the island ends up dead a few hours later. Maybe that's the reason you don't want me in your bed. Worried I'll end up like Sally.”

“Sally seemed desperate, Rin,” he told her. “You don't seem that way to me.”

“I'm not, sir,” she said, coming to a stop in front of one of the residence buildings. “Just not thrilled at how hard it is to tell the friendlies from the enemies around here.”

“Around here? That's always been our line of work, Rin. We never know who's with us or against us up until we have to put a bullet in their skull.”

“No guns here, boss,” she grumbled. “And you have no idea how much I want one. Anyway, this is me. Second story, unit 2. Meet up again tomorrow around the time Tex's closes?”

“Sounds good,” he said, offering her a hand, which she shook. “It's good to know you're okay, Rin. And I'm glad to have you here.”

“Glad to have you here as well, sir,” she told him as she released the hand.

Len

He felt a little bit better knowing that he had someone else from Scarab on the island already, although the vague aura of hauntedness around Rin had counteracted most of that ease he'd gained. In the month she'd been on the island, she'd obviously seen more than her fair share of unusual things, and the fact that she was putting a body in the ground came far easier to her than it had used to.

While he didn't remember everything about his and Rin's past, most of the key details were in there, and he remembered that Rin had been the third member of his four-person team, having added her after Mick but before Harry. He'd recruited her in Lebanon, over a wonderful order of migas. She'd been bitter with her previous employer and the idea of carving out on her own appealed to her a great deal. Their paths had crossed a couple of times before, but he made sure she had all the facts before she agreed to essentially go rogue. That had been six years ago, give or take.

It was nearly dawn, and he felt like he needed to get back to sleep. He'd gotten an hour or two after Sally had slipped out of bed to go meet her handlers before the goons had come up to try and quietly search the apartment while they assumed he was sleeping. It had been tempting to engage them in combat, subdue them and see who they were, but he felt like he'd gained a handful of details about

them that would let him identify them later, should he see them again.

He was certain that he would.

When he headed back into his apartment, he gave it another cursory sweep, mostly just checking for intruders because with unlocked doors, anything that was valuable had better be on his personage at all times. Not that he had anything of value on him.

Len moved over to the balcony, looking out as he could see that sky was shifting slowly from black towards blue, dawn probably only an hour or so away, which meant he needed to get his rest. He stripped off his clothes, tossing them into the hamper then he crawled into bed, and drifted off to sleep.

When he awoke several hours later, nearly midday or so, he wasn't alone in his bed.