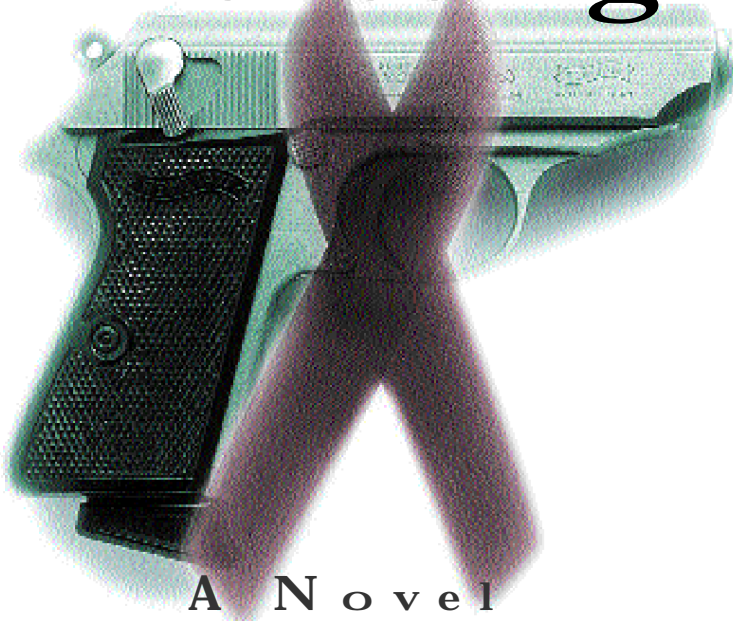


To ^{The} Key Believing



A N O V E L
by Janet Kuypers

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A M E R I C A



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FROM CHAPTER 19

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Going over her drilled moves in her head and knowing to only move when the tower light was pointed farthest away from her location so that it was as dark as possible when she moved, Sloane started to bolt to her next hiding place; she quietly but swiftly darted to the next set of bushes by ducking and rolling to the bushes. She performed a similar move when the lights were low to get behind a set of barrels that were near the building; she successfully got in through a side door of the warehouse when the guards were changing.

She had no idea if she was in the right place. But now that she was inside, she knew she had to stay quiet in the darkened halls so as not to be found. She tried to look around her in the dark. Because she had not been in the light for so long and her vision was adjusting to the darkness, she saw rows of aisles in the main center of the warehouse. The halls had tall walls and she couldn't see past them well enough to see what was in the next space. Most of the aisles were filled with shelves, mostly with glass containers; she had no idea what was in any of the containers or what she was sneaking past. And she still had no idea if she was in the right building.

She tried to remember to control her breathing to get more air but didn't make too much noise by breathing heavily. Also, as a result of her yoga and exercise program, she could easily crouch down so she was not in other people's line of sight.

Only once she was well inside aisles with shelves did she feel safe enough to flash her light on and off on the ground in front of her very quickly so she could get any bearings to see where she might have to go. Thinking she spotted something from a small light source at the end of one hallway, she approached it in the dark, trying to not make any noise or alarm anyone outside the warehouse. Spotting test tubes along the shelves as she walked toward the small light source, she knew she had to be at a medical storage site, though she didn't know why these materials were here or why they did not need to be refrigerated. Trying to read any of the signs and labels as she walked through the hall, she was able to scan tags enough to read records from patient's names, though she could not tell what they were records from. Numbers followed the names, and she gathered that all of the last four digits out of eight on the first line of numbers were years. She began to wonder if the first row of numbers were birth and death years and the second row of numbers would be for their social security numbers. If so, most

of the people she saw had death dates in the early 1980s.

Fear filled her, because if her guesses were true, these records filed and listed deaths, and she didn't know why these files set up in this one warehouse. If they were medical records, then what for? What happened to all of these people?

Still having no answers to her hypothetical questions, Sloane got to the end of the hall and was three feet from sliding glass doors with faint light emanating from under them. She looked through the doors. The cabinets housed a lit interior of rows of vials, cased and labeled. Scanning the containers, each case had vials filled with a solution, but there was a vast array of containers of vials, each labeled with something different. Trying to read any of the labels of the vials or the cases before she opened the sliding glass door, she scratched her head in amazement at everything there. The bottom shelf had containers filled with vials, but she read that each container of vials was labeled with the flu and what year it apparently was a vaccine for. She glanced over the set of vials.

“FLU 1988”, “FLU 1989”, “FLU 1990”, “FLU 1991”

And so on.

She was stunned when she deduced that these were records of vaccines for past illnesses, they were vaccines that needed to be kept and refrigerated, probably for future research. She jerked her head up higher. She saw cases with listings for anything from small pox to hepatitis to herpes.

She didn't know whether she should be amazed or stunned by these vials sitting there, full of vaccines and cures.

To the back and in the corner of the center shelf, she saw one rack of vials, labeled

“HIV ANTIDOTE 1982.
Mastered from original virus”

She couldn't believe what she was seeing. She had *found* it. Tucked away amongst a slew of other medications and cures, almost hidden away so you wouldn't see it unless you were looking.

She was stunned.

Her heart raced.

Her breathing changed.

Standing there for she didn't know how long, and after the shock wore off that she had found the cure, she opened the glass door so she would have access to the set of sealed vials in the container.

Somehow, when she was about to grab the HIV antidote, she realized that she apparently tripped an alarm. She heard two or three sets of footsteps echoing around her in the warehouse getting closer to where she was.

“Was it when I opened the door to this case?” she wondered.

But she had no time to wonder.

This was her only chance to grab the cure, if she'd even be able to take it with her.

Making a violent rush to grab at the case of sealed vials labeled “HIV ANTI-DOTE”, she heard gunshots fired in her direction. She grabbed what she could from the container and started to run.

Thinking she saw feet at the end of a hall when she crouched down to look and not knowing if people saw her leaving the case, she realized that the shelf by the glass doors she was at was lit, so she started running. There was an occasional gunshot, but in the dark no one seemed to be able to find her, much less hit her. She tried to listen to the footsteps or guess where people were, because when a gun was fired the sound echoing throughout the warehouse made it impossible to know where it came from.

Trying to remember the way she got in and trying to take her steps in reverse order, she took a turn and someone was in the aisle she was about to go down. Guessing that it was a Marine or a member of the Army, she tried to move out of the aisle instantly.

The man drew a weapon.

She did the same in record time.

“This is what I trained for,” she thought. Since she practiced firing one-handed, and without being able to take time or focus quickly, she fired back in the dark, but she didn’t know if she hit anyone. All she thought was not to fire too much because the sound of her gun would let them know where she was. She took off again after firing two shots.

Then she remembered how gun shot noises echoed, so she thought that maybe other people *didn’t* know where she was located.

When she got to the end of the aisle, another set of boots walked in front of her and a man knocked her over. When she fell, she had to make sure that the vial in her hand didn’t hit the ground, because all that was on her mind was saving the one vial she had been able to get from the container on the glass shelf. She lay on the ground, not knowing what other move she could make. The men thought she was unconscious, so they slowly walked to her. Thinking quickly about how to get away, she started to roll. In the dark it surprised the man in the boots. As she twisted she turned her gun toward the dark object and fired once more. The body went down, but he was not dead; he grabbed at her arm and started to twist. She could hear him yell as he tried to ram her arm along the metal at the side of the aisle, but she kept trying to get away. She believed at that moment that nothing could stop her.

Breaking free and moving around the corner of the aisle, she knew that nothing would stop her.

She didn’t have time to think, and she couldn’t believe everything she had just gone through. Her arms were killing her from fighting people, and she was using them with her legs to hold herself up while she ran.

Now all she was able to think of was getting free, as quickly and as easily as she possibly could.

“Everything is right now, girl,” she said to herself. “You can do anything.”

She took another deep breath. The word “Go!” raced through her mind.

Looking around, she searched for any chance to escape. Spotting an opened win-

dow, she shoved the vial along her waist under her clothes, because it could fall out of a loose pocket. She hoped the vial wouldn't break while she tried to escape.

Her heart was beating a mile a minute; she couldn't believe how loud her beating heart was.

She spotted the open window; she scanned hallways, looking under the bottoms of shelves by crouching low to see if anyone was around so she could make her move.

She hoped.

Remembering how Carter told her that she could do anything, she decided to quickly make a run for the window. Avoiding rays of light from inside the warehouse, she ran, attempting then to dive through the window.

After cutting her left arm on the glass she broke in getting through the half-open window, she actually dove through the window, rolled on the ground, straightened herself up as quickly as she could in her dive-roll to save her life, and then ran to the closest bush so she would be hidden. She was about twenty yards from that window.

Sloane didn't know if they had seen her leave. Shaking her clothes once she was behind the bushes, she saw scraps of glass fall to the ground around her, either from when she dove or when she rolled on the broken glass to escape.

Unsure if she would be able to get to the perimeter, she had to decide on the spot if it was safe for her to move out of that area. Making the decision to try to run in safely covered areas, she darted to and then along the perimeter, still looking for any sign that she'd been spotted. Then she tried to see if she could somehow get free. About two miles from where she started running at the perimeter, she finally saw a mailbox at the other side of a street.

This was her first sign of freedom in her struggle. Quickly, she darted across the street, hoping at this point everything was safe.

Walking down that road for about two miles, Sloane, exhausted, scraped and bloody, found a gas station in her attempts to get cleaned up before she got back to her hotel. They had a bathroom at the side of the building, so she went into the washroom first, removed some of her clothes so she wasn't covered in dark colors. Also, she worked to smudge as much of the make-up off as she could. Effectively getting it off at the sink with the white liquid soap in the dispenser attached to the wall, she knew that she was a filthy mess, but tried to make herself look better.

Moving her pants to see that the vial was still there, she was able to grab it from the seam, still sealed. She was still angry with herself that she was only able to get just one vial, when she thought that she could've somehow gotten more. Assuming the alarm that alerted the men to her was in the glass door that sealed the vials, she thought that if she knew about the alarm she would she would have grabbed more vials instantly, stuffed them inside leg pockets, then grabbed her gun and ran like Hell.

Reminding herself that she did the best she could, she went into the gas station to grab a cup of coffee and a plain muffin so she could try to remain in one piece before she got to the hotel — if there was no one waiting there to arrest her and take what she had just taken from the government.

Trudging three miles past the gas station, she got to the hotel. Wondering if she

actually got away with everything, she threw her clothes into a garbage bag to bring along to wash, because she didn't feel safe leaving a clothing trail that might lead back to her if the military found it.

Showering first, she then looked at her packed bags and comfortable clothes for the drive to New York, if she was not stopped for what she did. Looking at the single vial, she thought about the choice she would have to make: save the drug to possibly replicate it or save Carter. She thought that she didn't know for sure if it could be replicated, and if anyone tried to take it from her in transport back to Seattle, no one would get this cure at all.

She knew what her choice would be. When she thought of the options, her choice then seemed obvious to her. Give it to Carter, but hope the trace amounts from the vial could be used to duplicate the cure for the rest of the world.

She had survived; now it was Carter's turn. Maybe in the process she could help the rest of the world survive too.

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While showering she did her best to gingerly clean out the scrapes on her arms and hands. She was surprised that she had scraped knees and was bloody at her thighs under her clothes from when she was so violently trying to get away from military agents. When she got out of the shower she pulled out the hydrogen peroxide to clean cuts on her body: all bubbled repeatedly, but none hurt except when she attempted to put it on the cuts in her arm. Her next step was to attempt to put the Mycitracin on the cuts and scrapes to help them heal faster without infection; once again it hurt like Hell to try to help her arm, but she knew she had to do this to make herself better without going to a hospital for stitches.

With her other clothes already packed, she got dressed with a tank top so she could leave her bloodied arm open, because she wanted to be able to bandage it. Using paper towels from the front desk, she covered the cut with bandages from her first aid kit to cover the bleeding.

Then she had to brush her hair and try to make herself look presentable for her drive to New York. It had occurred to her that she had not contacted Carter since she left the night before for her mission, she figured that she better call him to have him look for a nurse to be able to watch him and get a needle for the injection. She knew she had some money left, so she dialed from her room and would pay the amount when she checked out a few minutes later.

"Hello?"

She loved to hear Carter's voice on the phone. "Carter, it's me."

"Are you *alright?*"

"Barely..."

"I love you."

"I love you too. I'm coming to see you."

“You are? Where are you?” He was hoping he could get her to tell him where she was located, because he was dying of curiosity.

“I’m not too far ... but I need you to do me a favor.”

“What do you need?”

“Remember that nurse that helped you when you first got out of the hospital and you were diagnosed?”

“Yeah, she was a nice lady ... why?”

“I need to have someone be there for you when I come to your place, and they need to have a regular hypodermic needle with them.”

“Why?”

“For the medication I have for you, I need it, and I don’t have one. Can you get someone, we can pay them, to be able to come to your place?”

“I suppose.”

“You don’t sound pleased.”

“I’m getting concerned.”

“Don’t worry about it, Carter.”

“I worry, angel, that’s my job.”

“Well, you shouldn’t.”

“You don’t know how worried I was after I got that call from you yesterday.”

“Well, okay, on that one you should have been. But you shouldn’t worry now.”

“You scare me sometimes girl, that’s all.”

“I think we’re at the end of having to worry, so just call for a nurse to be there with-
in the next few hours.”

“With a hypodermic needle?”

“Yes.”

“They can’t just carry that around.”

“What if they’re doing it for your doctor that traveled across the country to give you the medication? See if the nurse can somehow pick it up for me, please, please, please...”

“...I’ll somehow get it done. And angel?”

“Yes?”

“Please be safe.”

“I try to. I love you, and I’ll talk to you soon.”

“I love you too.”

Sloane hung up the phone, and got ready to pay for the phone call and check out of the hotel, to make her way to the next state to try to save Carter.

This book was published in 2002, and chapter three from this book was published in the book *Survive and Thrive*. This is electronically published through <http://www.yotko.com/jk/jk.htm> and <http://www.deepthought.com/scars/deepthought-dot-com/kuypers-writing.htm>. Portions of this book were read at a feature performance in Chicago on December 10, 2002. Copies of the book were donated to Oprah Winfrey at Harpo Studios, and Rush Limbaugh. A copy of *The Key To Believing* exists in the main libraries of the Ayn Rand Institute as well as the Libertarian Party. There is a listing for this novel at BarnesandNoble.com, and it is available for sale at amazon.com.