

Of the Cerulean

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Of the Cerulean

by [Melande](#)

Summary

She had to paint the sky for the solstice, for their and everyone's sake.

Of course, Farrah was one more step to turn the wheels of progress.

Notes

I wrote this months ago, but never posted it publicly. Now I've edited it up and I think it's ready. This will be one of many one-shots and smaller works dedicated to the same ideas of what Cloudbank is founded upon.

Over a month!

Thirty-five days!

Two weeks had been what she'd expected, would have been terrible by itself, but this was 2.5 times longer than acceptable. She had to make a petition. Surely Administration would give her a reprieve for what was really a minor transgression, wouldn't they? Compared to Mr. Shasberg's boasts that he'd fly into the northwest area of Goldwalk this was such a trivial matter. After all, it wasn't as if she was harming any portion of whatever was going on in the O.P.I. district. The skies above, briefly painted a glistening sapphire for the solstice, would never come into contact with any of the city buildings.

As Farrah stalked around the cul-de-sac she rubbed both hands together. There was no need for passersby to see her so discomposd, with her usually dreamy gaze replaced by fury and despair. Her suitor could comfort her, she knew they would. Still, she could handle this on her own.

The prototype electronic canvas lay on some pillows in a corner of her living room where she'd thrown it in a fit of anger, and shame kept it there for now. It still worked, of course, but if another skypainting made itself known she'd be snapped up by the local Administration or the Precinct before she could say "I'm off to the Country." The skypainter could barely stand to go outside where concerned citizens would offer their sincere condolences and remind her about just how much she had lost. What would they know about freedoms denied? All they had to do was vote and make it so.

A nearby terminal's chiming broke her out of her self-pity. Smoothing out her rose colored skirts, Farrah glanced up at the boringly familiar expanse before stepping over. Her pink icon flared then disappeared with recognition, pulling up the personal message portion. The usual ticker text caught her eye, and she glanced down with a disgusted sound.

Re: Petition. The title caught her eye. Before anything else she scanned the sender line.

Administration! And not just any, but one from Central. Administrator Kendrell, the eldest of their number, and most reliable of the bunch. He hadn't been part of the group who'd personally banned Farrah from painting, too, which had to be a plus.

Ms. Yon-Dale, the missive read.

Blatant defiance of front-page directives is no laughing matter, I'm afraid. If one citizen rebels then it paves the way for more to ignore the rules, until the entire power structure we have built and maintained in Cloudbank comes tumbling down. I know that as one of the younger members of our fair city that you've grown up in a different era and have become used to the way things are now. Regardless, Administrative directives are in place for the good of all citizens, and certain actions can undermine the careful balance of power as much as the unrest that simmers in those who dislike the freedom of the absolute vote.

However, I am in complete agreement with you in that you were doing no harm to the closed-

off section of Goldwalk. My fellow administrators did not consider all aspects of your skypainting, and they assumed you'd gone much further into the northwest district to actually make your art. It is clear to me that you did not transgress too far into the offline area, and remained safe at all times.

I would like to discuss this matter further with you in person. There are a few ways your sentence could be lightened, but I'll require your full cooperation. --G. Kendrell.

So there was hope! She twirled on the spot, finally gripping the edges of the terminal when her legs tangled up on each other. A weak giggle at her situation was hardly enough of a reaction, but already her fingers danced with a quick reply. He must have been waiting for her; within a minute the screen popped up with coordinates. He'd see her at once! And not a day too soon.

Oh, she should have dressed better! Farrah skipped the two blocks to her house and barreled inside, leaving the door wide open in her wake. The most sensible dress in her wardrobe would be best for meeting an Admin, so she threw it on and grabbed a coat. The canvas went in one pocket and a nearby jar of chemicals weighted the other. Clutching the brush in her fingers, the skypainter used the familiar object to steady herself as she slipped on shoes and headed out. If she had a chance to demonstrate how her occupation worked that could help her case.

Despite her newly found enthusiasm Farrah still skirted the main walkways and docks. People tended to draw erroneous conclusions and gossip at the slightest change of demeanor, and she didn't want the news to spread before anything got settled. This had to go completely right.

The northwest side of Bracket Towers bustled with life ahead of her, but Farrah craned her neck skywards to follow the lines of the buildings. She assumed from the coordinates that the Administrator would take her to a better place to converse once they met up, so presumably he'd meet her here.

A light tap on the skypainter's shoulder made her turn, then beam up at the broad-shouldered man. "Ms. Yon-Dale." The same greeting from the message, of course. Grant Kendrell offered her his arm with a returned smile. "It is a pleasure to see you. Shall we?"

"Certainly," Farrah answered, placing her hand on his elbow before they turned toward a smaller collection of lit buildings. To preface the walk she asked, "How have you been?"

The administrator glanced down at her before giving an appreciative nod. "Much bereft. The skies over Goldwalk miss their favorite artist, as does the city. It's a shame when the chief among us are restricted. Hopefully, though, we'll be able to rectify that." They shared another careful smile.

She had never before entered the building they walked into, which seemed relatively new and rather small. The empty lobby led to a single hallway down which the two of them walked. Her taller companion didn't seem to be interested in more conversation as of yet, so she held back the questions on the tip of her tongue. How much could Farrah's sentence be shortened?

Would she be able to demonstrate where she'd gone? Perhaps there was a hope for leniency provided she do something for the city.

In the end they stepped into a room at the back where three other people awaited them. Farrah could certainly recognize the acclaimed organizer and event planner Sybil Reisz, as well as Asher Kendrell who made up the other half of the Kendrells and was an editor of the OVC. The third man escaped her memory. His white coat with odd sleeve symbol and pens in place reminded her of a reporter or architect, perhaps.

All three stood from their chairs when Farrah entered with the Administrator. "Well done, Grant," said Ms. Reisz with a tip of her head to him. He inclined his chin before turning to shut the door.

"Why are they here?" Clear eyes darted between the occupants during her demand. There was no reason for a reporter, a socialite, and an unknown to be here unless they could help with her problem. Perhaps they would portray her as a penitent painter to get on Administration's good side? It was unlikely, but possible.

All four ignored her question, sending a rising tide of irritation into the flush on her face. The dark-haired man pulled an odd device from behind his chair and offered it to the broader man; it was some huge teal and good tool with a red eye in the middle and a triangular hilt. Farrah's frustration mounted as the other Kendrell circled behind her. Why wouldn't they acknowledge her? "What's going on?"

"Sit down." His monotonous order gave her a moment's warning before the editor gripped her shoulders with bruising force and led her to a chair. Seething, the skypainter attempted to push up in vain before settling in the seat.

The unknown member stepped over to help Asher keep her in place. "No use to fight it," he explained, oddly calm and willing to talk with her. "You could say we're, doing you a favor. One... which many would die for."

"Royce." Ms. Reisz gave him a sharp look as she tapped the Administrator's arm. The blonde seemed to hardly notice the fact that her colleagues were pinning Farrah down. Her eyes slid over the wriggling woman without a hitch, as if scanning the crowd for someone important. Something more important than this.

Grant Kendrell stared at Farrah with pity in his dark eyes. The finality sent alarms ringing through her head and she struggled even harder, but no scream emerged during the battle. Every ounce of oxygen seemed to have fled her lungs as Asher and Royce tightened their grips. "I'm sorry, Ms. Yon-Dale. I hope you'll understand when we've changed the city to meet its full potential. You, though, are a crucial step in the process." Her silent expression of outrage met stony gazes. How could they *do* something like this in Cloudbank?

There wasn't time. Her suitor wouldn't know where she'd gone. No one would know. They'd think she ran off. They'd think—

The blunt blade pierced her breastbone with barely a sound. A ragged breath slid out of her and she slumped, staring at Grant's fingers on the pommel.

Farrah's body felt cold, frozen and numb, like every hint of warmth had been sucked into the object that stuck out of her chest. Before her eyes the world fragmented and came apart, falling down into endless reams of code and building her anew.

She could see *blue*...

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