

Chaos Angel Spanner

Chapter 31: Pretty City Blues

(Revision 1)

Note: This is a very crude first draft with the plot pretty much out of order. Certain plot elements may or may not make it into the final version. The quality of this version is variable and will be vastly improved by the Final Revision. For all it's worth, this is the chapter I threw Mr. Ian Woon and his sister Marni Woon (anagrams of "NaNoWriMo") into...

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31.1: (no name chosen yet)

los angeles. As soon as they deplane at LAX, Shira's party hire a helicopter to ferry them to Pretty City. Alex and Angela want to sit together in the back seat so they can talk business, so they give Shira the copilot's seat. They float over trendy neighborhoods, shimmering edge cities, burning ghetto war zones, till at last they catch sight of the huge and dazzling complex that has become the fashion and entertainment capital of the Western Hemisphere.

Pretty City™ is the trademarked name of an arcology built out of the ruins of a dead edge city by a developer hailed by some as visionary and scorned by others as mad. Its sole purpose is the manufacture and marketing of beauty. For their utopia of beauty, Romulo Artis and his partners, a pair of billionaire French fashion designer twins, headhunted the elite of the fashion industry from New York, London, Milan, Barcelona, Tokyo. Much of Hollywood now commutes here by automobile, helicopter, and aircar. Artis and his investors funded the extension of the Los Angeles subway system all the way out here; around the station, he built the largest and swankiest shopping mall in the world. Normally, a fashionable West Coaster like Shira would prefer to tube her way from LAX and enter Pretty City from below. But she is headed for the arcology's most exclusive precincts, so she must enter from above. If she wants to get in, much less have a word with the lords of Pretty City, she must also bring someone fashionable enough to serve as a sort of collateral. The famous DJ Alex Plus happens to be Shira's cousin, and she has also played enough celebrity parties to make her way onto the BlackBerries and iPhones of the A-list, so Shira decided to bring her. Angela, of course, came along for protection.

Pretty City's selling point is that it has brought the world's most beautiful people together into one place in one of the world's most fashionable cities. But most of the beauties who live in the arcology were not born beautiful. The best and most exclusive plastic surgeons in LA also work here because they believe

that Pretty City is the one place where they can truly perfect their art. These plastic surgeons in fact have come to believe themselves to be not medical men but artists, and their art is not plastic surgery (the specialty of surgeons who perform reconstructive surgery on the victims of crashes and violence) but Body Resculpting. The body resculptors of Pretty City specialize in transforming plain, ugly, and even merely pretty people into perfect beauties. But Pretty City extracts a price from those who become its professional beauties. It has become notoriously easy to spot the difference between the Resculpted “new pretties” and the untouched “natural beauties”: the body resculptors remove any trace of individuality and personality from the people they transform. The beauty of the Resculpted is anonymous. That of a natural-born beauty like Leila Shelley is not.

The pilot carefully lands his helicopter on one of the landing pads on the roof of the World Fashion City shopping mall. As they disembark, they see the Markoff brothers’ aristocratic but huge and dangerous-looking African assistant Asante Wononai waiting for them. When they reach him, he says in his refined yet unplaceable “Old World” accent, “You are expected.” They follow him to the Jaguar waiting at the edge of the tarmac and then climb into the back seat as he gets into the passenger seat.

Georges asks them, “So what brings you here to Pretty City?”

Shira looks to Angela for permission; Angela nods. Shira says, “Business.”

“So what kind of business do you have in mind?”

“It has to do with someone I love.”

“Ah. A man.”

“No. A woman.”

“I see.” After a pause, Mr. Wononai continues: “You know that all our employees are bound by ironclad contracts, no?”

“Of course I do. I brought my lawyer for a reason.”

“Ah, yes. So what is this business involving this woman you are in love with?”

“One of your ironclad contracts has been forced on her against her will. Not by her parents or by any state authorities, nor because she was sold to Pretty City LLC. It was by the decree of her grandfather, the former puppet governor of Cascadia. Seems she wasn’t flowie enough for him, so he wanted her out of his hair, and what better way than to issue a viceregal decree to conscript her into being a professional beauty in the employ of Pretty City LLC?”

Mr. Wononai looks back toward the back seat and peers at Shira intensely. “You are speaking of Leila Renata Shelley, I see. Well, since this involves the supreme political authority of your state, there is no

legal way to break her contract therefore.”

“But notice I said *former* governor. He was fired by the President last month, so he no longer has the authority to stop me from breaking her contract.

(lines not written yet)

“Hey! It’s Mr. Ian Woon!”

[Chapter 45: The Lion’s Den](#) →